

AN EVALUATION OF CALVIN'S THEOLOGICAL POSITION
AGAINST THE LIBERTINES

by
Chang Sup Shim

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Theologiae Doctor

in the Faculty of Theology at the

Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education

Promoter: Prof. Dr. V. E. d'Assonville

December, 1987

*Nous avons à considerer la volonté de Dieu,
selon qu'il la nous declare.
(Calvin)*

To Peggy and Mother.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to many people who have helped me in the course of my study towards the doctorate degree. I can mention only a few here.

My sincere gratitude to my promoter, Professor V. E. d'Assonville, rector of the Theological School, for his caring advice and valued guidance.

Special thanks must go to Professor W. H. Simpson, who while busy translating Calvin's Institutes into Afrikaans, gave generously of his time and scholarly knowledge. He helped greatly in explaining original manuscripts, making suggestions for the thesis, and with reading and correcting the text.

Warm thanks also to Dr. Rina Brink for tutoring me in Latin, translating various German texts, and for helping me locate original sources.

My appreciation towards the Potchefstroom North church for unfailingly providing financial help for my study and living expenses for my family. My deepest gratitude to all those in South Africa for contributing in this respect.

My gratitude to the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education for granting a full scholarship and a bursary to help cover living expenses.

I also thank Professor L. F. Schulze for kindly lending me his set of Calvin's Commentaries for the full length of my study.

Word of appreciation to Professor Annette Combrink of the English Department for providing answers to last-minute questions.

Without my wife Peggy's help, this thesis would not have been completed. The necessary and painstaking proofreading, editing, and typing were all done by her.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother who has been praying for me throughout my long leave of study abroad.

Soli Deo Gloria.

December, 1987.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. DEFINITION OF THE LIBERTINE SECT	6
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 The Religious Libertines	7
2.3 The Theological or Philosophical Libertines	20
2.4 The Political Libertines	31
2.5 Conclusion	35
3. THE LIBERTINES AND THE EARLY HERETICS	37
3.1 Introduction	37
3.2 The Heresies in II Peter 2 and Jude 10	39
3.3 The Early Heresies: Marcionism, Gnosticism, Manichaeism.	51
3.3.1 Marcionism	53
3.3.1.1 The Beginnings of Marcionism	54
3.3.1.2 Marcionism's Growth and Doctrines	57
3.3.1.3 Apelles and Marcion	62
3.3.2 Gnosticism	64
3.3.2.1 Gnostics and their Teachings	65
3.3.2.2 Gnostic Fanaticism	79
3.3.3 Manichaeism	81
3.3.3.1 Manichaeism and Medieval Heresies	87
3.4 Conclusion	96

4. VIEW OF SCRIPTURE	98
4.1 Introduction	98
4.2 The Duplicitous Nature of the Libertines	101
4.3 Word and Spirit	107
4.5 Conclusion	122
5. THE LIBERTINE DOCTRINE OF PANTHEISM	125
5.1 Introduction	125
5.2 View of God	127
5.3 View of Creation	131
5.4 Pantheistic Determinism and its Results	137
5.4.1 The First Consequence: God's Providence	139
5.4.1.1 The Three Modes of God's Providence	147
5.4.1.1.1 The First Mode: Universal Providence	147
5.4.1.1.2 The Second Mode: Special Ordinance	152
5.4.1.1.3 The Third Mode of Providence	158
5.4.1.2 Providence versus Determinism	164
5.4.2 The Second Consequence	174
5.4.3 The Third Consequence	177
5.5 Conclusion	182
6. CHRISTOLOGY	183
6.1 Introduction	183
6.2 The Humanity of Christ	185
6.2.1 Christ's Humanity in the Institutes	185
6.2.2 The Libertines and Christ's Humanity	189
6.3 Regeneration	191

6.4 Christ and Resurrection	198
6.5 Conclusion	211
 7. ETHICS	 213
7.1 Introduction	213
7.2 On Christian Liberty: Law and Freedom	217
7.3 Concept of Vocation	229
7.4 Views Concerning Ownership of Goods	242
7.5 Conclusion	254
 8. CONCLUSION	 258
 9. BIBLIOGRAPHY	 261

ABBREVIATIONS

- ANF: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers.*
- CCSL: *Corpus Christianorum series Latinorum.*
- CO: *Joannis Calvini Opera quae supersunt omnia.*
- Comm.: *Calvin's Commentaries.*
- CSEL: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.*
- D: *Enchiridion Symbolorum; definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum.*
- EP: *Calvin's treatise Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God.*
- Inst.: *Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion (1559).* Battle's translation. Other editions will be followed by their dates in parentheses.
- MPG: *Migne, Patrologia graeca.*
- MPL: *Migne, Patrologia latina.*
- NCE: *New Catholic Encyclopedia.*
- NHL: *The Nag Hammadi Library.*
- NPNF: *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.*
- OS: *Joannis Calvini opera selecta.*
- SP: *Calvin's treatise The Secret Providence of God.*
- TAL: *Calvin's treatise Against the Libertines.*
- TCT: *The Church Teaches.* English translation of *Enchiridion Symbolorum.*
- WA: *D. Martin Luthers Werke.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the epoch of the sixteenth century Reformation, the sects of the Libertines and the Anabaptists spread like a contagion in western Europe. Their influence upon and conversion of the faithful were a great threat to the reformation being conducted by Calvin. Although according to Calvin, the Libertines were the more dangerous and pernicious of the two sects, few theological studies of them have been undertaken.¹ On the other hand, exhaustive studies have been done on the Anabaptist sect. The reason for the lack of any comprehensive studies on the Libertine

¹ Studies of the Libertine sect that have been made also do not delve deeply into the doctrines and practices of the sect. Cf. W. Karl Schmidt, "Über den mystischem Quietismus zur Zeit Königs Franz I", *Zeitschrift für historische Theologie* 20, s. 1850; G. Auguste Jundt, *Histoire du Pantheisme Populaire au Moyen Age et au Seizième Siècle*, 1875, pp. 119-204; G. Jaujard, "Essai sur les Libertins spirituels de Genève d'après de nouveaux documents", *These zum theologischen Bakkalaureat*, 1890; Karl Müller, "Calvin und die Libertiner", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 40 (1922), pp. 83-129; Wilhelm Niesel, "Calvin und die Libertiner", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 48 (1929), pp. 58-74; George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 1962, pp. 351-355, 598-605; R. W. Collins, *Calvin and the Libertines of Geneva*, 1968; Gerhard Schneider, *Der Libertiner: Zur Geistes- und Sozialgeschichte des Bürgertums im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, 1970; J. C. Margolis, "Reflexions sur l'emploi du terme Libertin au XVIe Siècle", *Aspects du Libertinisme zu XVIe Siècle*, Actes du Colloque International de Sommiers, 1974; Carlos N. Eire, "Calvin and Nicodemism: A Reappraisal", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 10 (1979), pp. 45-69; Allen Verhey, "Calvin's Treatise Against the Libertines", *Calvin Theological Journal*, 15 (1980), pp. 190-219; Benjamin Wirt Farley, Editor's Introduction, *John Calvin: Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, 1982, pp. 161-186. None of the above works fully examines theologically Calvin's *Treatise Against the Libertines*. Some of them argue for or against the validity of Calvin's knowledge of the Libertines (Schmidt, Jaujard, Müller, and Niesel) while others deal with the socio-political aspect (Collins and Schneider). Williams gives a general survey of the Libertine movement and Eire explains the relation between the Libertines and other sectarians.

sect may be attributed to the fact that the movement disappeared into "historical obscurity and the treatise itself seems now, therefore, merely an historical obscurity".²

The Libertine movement which first appeared around 1525 had quickly spread to the representative countries of the Reformation, i.e., the Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium, and Switzerland. By the late 1550's, however, the Libertine sect seems to have been buried in obscurity. In addition, apart from Calvin's *Treatise Against the Libertines*,³ no other lengthy record of the Libertines exists. All of the documents and writings of the Libertines, moreover, have been destroyed and none are extant.⁴ It is a stroke of luck in the midst of misfortune that Calvin has inserted significant extracts of the writings of Pocquet in Chapter 23 of his *Treatise* ("Demonstration of What Has Been Said").⁵ Apart from this, however, sources on the Libertines remain limited.

If the activities and doctrines of the Libertines have been overlooked in theological studies, it has been with a cost. The *Treatise Against the*

² Verhey, p. 190.

³ Calvin's *Treatise Against the Libertines* (or *Treatise* in subsequent references) was published in 1545 with the title *Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des Libertines que nomment Spirituelz*.

⁴ See Müller, pp. 88-89 for documents regarding the Libertines.

⁵ CO VII.225-242.

Libertines is a significant record not only of the Libertine sect as a whole but of Calvin's doctrines of God, Christ, eschatology, and of his ethics as well. While many of Calvin's doctrines are clearly expounded in the **Treatise**, the aim of this present work is not to restate them as this has been amply done in other works on Calvin. Rather, the present thesis will focus on the doctrines of the Libertines which are refuted by Calvin and reexamine and evaluate important points of Calvin's theology as relevant to the **Treatise**.

Format and Method. Calvin's **Treatise** consists of three major sections. The first is a preliminary section which contains a brief preface (Ch. 1), the relationship between the Libertines and the early church heresies (Chs. 2-3), and the origins of the Libertines (Chs. 4-6).: The second section includes the principal doctrines and ethics of the Libertines. Chapters 7 through 10 explores the Libertine understanding of Scripture and Calvin's refutation of it. In the major chapters of 11 through 16, the Libertine pantheistic idea of God, the relationship between God and his creation, and the consequences of pantheistic determinism are treated. Christology is discussed in Chapters 17-18 followed by soteriology in Chapter 22. The significant aspects of the ethics of the Libertines are elaborated in Chapters 19 to 21.

The third section contains excerpts from Pocquet's booklets (Ch. 23) which Calvin includes as testimony to his assertions. In Chapter 24, Calvin discusses writings by an unknown sectarian whose ideas are similar to the Libertines and which, Calvin argues, help the Libertines in their

diabolic schemes to seduce the helpless. Calvin includes these in order to better reveal the errors of the Libertines.

In the brief conclusion, Calvin exhorts the faithful not to become victims of the Libertines. Here, Calvin proclaims that what has been written in the *Treatise* is absolutely necessary in preventing further contamination by the Libertine sect:

I do not ask for people to agree with me, or with my opinion, or my words, unless they have first of all realized that what I am teaching is useful. I do not ask for them to reprove this loathsome teaching, against which I have written, unless they see that it is not only repugnant to God, but so full of detestable errors as to make one's hair stand on end.⁶

The present thesis systematically follows Calvin's line of argument through the main chapters in the *Treatise*.⁷ After the introductory chapters on the definition and origin of the Libertine sect, the present study concentrates on the doctrines of the Libertines which Calvin refutes at length. This study depends largely on the *Treatise* itself and other works by Calvin, namely the *Institutes* and the *Commentaries*. This author is indebted to Farley's excellent introduction of Calvin's *Treatise* which facilitated the arrangement of this study.⁸

⁶ TAL, p. 326 (CO VII.248).

⁷ The third section of the *Treatise* is not dealt with in the present work since they only repeat and validate the main body of Calvin's work.

⁸ In TAL, pp. 161-186.

For the sake of reference and clarity in some cases, the original text of most of the passages quoted from Calvin's works and from the early church fathers' writings will be included in the footnotes.

2. DEFINITION OF THE LIBERTINE SECT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Greek word *λιβερτίνος* (free man) is a transliterated form of the Latin *libertinus* as used by Luke (Acts 6:9). The meaning of this word as free man owes its origin to Jews who had been taken to Rome in the time of Pompey and later liberated.⁹ "Free man" thus originally meant one who, being a descendant of former slaves, was manumitted from slavery. When this word is applied to certain antinomian sects of the early sixteenth century, it takes on a wider significance and refers generally to people who follow their own inclinations without being restricted or restrained by existing constitution, habit, conduct or even language. Consequently, the term *libertinus* denotes a person who thinks and acts freely.

Although in general the term *libertinus* or *libertine* is applied in a religious context, it is also used to classify those libertines in the political and social arena. In its broadest usage, the term *libertine* is used to designate anyone who maintains a freedom of opinion or non-recognition of authority in all spheres of life.

⁹ Bromiley, 1982, p. 360.

In speaking of the Libertines of Calvin's time it can be generally considered that there are three kinds of Libertines: theological, political, and religious Libertines. One must keep in mind that the first two Libertines are limited to only those who theologically and politically opposed Calvin's reformation of the Genevan Church. The religious Libertines denote Libertine Spirituals with whom Calvin specifically deals in his *Treatise Against the Libertines*. Thus the meaning of libertine can be applied broadly but does not embrace all people who are opposed to Calvin. Even among the Libertines, differences can be shown. The Libertine Spirituals especially can be said to differ from the theological and political Libertines in that they are part of a specific group of sectarians who hold their own particular beliefs while the latter simply rose from their opposition to Calvin. Although tracing the movement of the Libertine Spirituals is the main focus of the present chapter, a brief look at the so-called theological and political Libertines may help to further define Calvin's Libertine Spirituals.

2.2 THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTINES

In defining the Libertine Spirituals whom Calvin attacks in his *Treatise*, the inevitable question arises as to the relationship between the Libertine Spirituals and other spiritual sectarians of the early sixteenth century, namely, the sect of the Free Spirit, the Loists, and the Anabaptists as

these are generally considered as closely related.¹⁰ Their relationship is, however, only conjectural based on some of their doctrinal and geographical affinities. Contacts of the Libertines with these sects remain obscure and unanswered.

The heresy of the Free Spirit, according to Cohn, came into existence in conjunction with mysticism from the eleventh century and by 1200, "began to emerge as an identifiable heresy in western Christendom".¹¹ This heresy regarded the Church as an outworn institution which could no longer function as a vessel for the Holy Spirit. They rejected all external sacraments of the Church, claiming that their community was the only vessel of the Holy Spirit. They also claimed to have achieved inward perfection and accordingly fell into antinomianism. A group in Spain towards the close of the twelfth century called the "holy beggars" claimed of having direct knowledge of God and of being united with "the divine essence in a most intimate union" which liberated them from all restraint. And "they could lie or steal or fornicate without qualms of conscience. For since inwardly the soul was wholly absorbed into God, external acts were of no account".¹²

¹⁰ Cohn, 1970, pp. 163-171; Jundt, p. 119f; Balke, 1981, p. 21.

¹¹ Cohn, p. 54.

¹² Cohn, p. 151.

Despite persecution, the sect of the Free Spirit persisted through the centuries and the Netherlands was considered, along with Brabant, as a place where this heresy was deeply rooted. Their number also remained numerous in Low Germany and France. This corresponds to Calvin's geographical information concerning the spread of the Libertines:

It is true that if in general I should hope to include and review everyone who goes under the title of Libertine, as well as those whose ideas are similar to their misguided fantasies, of which I plan to treat in this book, I could not do it. For the sect has comprised different groups, some in Holland, some in Brabant [Belgium], and some in other regions of Lower Germany.¹³

In view of the geographical identity and doctrinal similarities, Cohn concludes that it may be true that the spiritual movement of the sect of the Free Spirit gave rise to that of the Libertines: "...in the midst of the turmoil of the Reformation, the Low Countries and northern France witnessed the spread of a doctrine which was called Spiritual Liberty but which in all essentials was still the old doctrine of the Free Spirit".¹⁴

The other spiritual sect which possesses similar doctrines with the Libertine Spirituals is the Loists. Loy Pruystinck, a slater in Antwerp, believed that every man possessed the Holy Spirit. He sought to win Luther over to his cause and in 1524, sent a group of emissaries to Luther. He was rebuked by Luther who wrote to the Lutheran party in

¹³ TAL, p. 200 (CO VII.159).

¹⁴ Cohn, p. 169. Jundt (p. 120) also concurs regarding the influence of the sect of the Free Spirit on the rise of the Libertine sect: "...apparurent les descendants des Frères du libre esprit et des Hommes de l'intelligence, se donnant à eux-mêmes le nom de Libertins spirituels et renouvelant dans les Pays-Bas, en Suisse et en France des hérésies cent fois condamnées).

Antwerp to warn them against Loy.¹⁵ The Loists, like the Libertines, maintained a pantheistic conception regarding the human soul. The Loist doctrine was spread widely in Brabant and Flanders as well. From the above facts, it is often deduced that the Libertine Spirituals sprang from or were greatly influenced by the Loists.¹⁶

In his introduction to the *Treatise Against the Anabaptists*, Calvin places the Libertines within the all-encompassing sect of the Anabaptists, naming them the more pernicious half. All Anabaptists, Calvin maintains, belong to two principal sects:

The first, although it is full of many perverse and pernicious errors, falls within the bounds of a greater simplicity....The second is a labyrinth, without parallel, of so many absurd views that it is a marvel how creatures who bear the human figure can be so void of sense and reason as to be so duped and fall victim to such brutish fantasies. This sect is called the Libertines.¹⁷

Calvin seems to think of the Libertines as only a branch of the sect of the Anabaptists. Jundt takes this as his point of argument and contends that the Libertines have an independent origin. While pointing out that the different doctrines of the two sects of the Libertines and the Anabaptists could not have failed to influence the other, he observes that certain aspects of the Libertine sect distinguish it from that of the Anabaptists. First, the fundamental idea of the Anabaptists of the need for adult baptism is missing in the Libertine sect. Furthermore, Jundt

¹⁵ Williams, p. 352; Cohn, pp. 169-170. Cf. WA XVIII.541-550.

¹⁶ See Farley's synopsis of this topic in his introduction to TAL, pp. 167-168.

¹⁷ TAL, pp. 39-40 (CO VII.53).

isolates Flanders as the home of the sect of the Free Spirit, associating the origin of the Libertines rather with this sect. Jundt finds that the sect of the Free Spirit and the Libertines both possess the pantheistic tendency of confusing the human and divine spirit and of ignoring the distinction between good and evil.

Could Calvin be mistaken in classifying the Libertines in the Anabaptist sect? Jundt seems to understand Calvin's use of the term Libertine literally. At times, Calvin uses the words Anabaptist and Libertine interchangeably but not because of his being ignorant of their distinctions or because he is ignorant, as Jundt argues, of "the intellectual connection that binds the heretics of his time to those of the past centuries" with the result of being "led by a few accidental resemblances to the linking or the connecting of the sect of the Libertines to that of the Anabaptists".¹⁸ Calvin interchangeably uses these terms only when he describes the two sects in a loose sense in the light of their closeness of beliefs. For example, in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin calls the Libertines Anabaptists on the basis that a belief in perfectionism is clearly common in both sects.¹⁹ In this general use, others join Calvin in considering the Libertines as a branch of the Anabaptists. In his letter to Rodolphe Gualter, Pierre Viret contends that the Libertines are

¹⁸ Jundt, p. 121.

¹⁹ *Inst.* III.3.14 (CO II.443-444).

"a new breed of Anabaptists, whom they call Libertines".²⁰ Thus when Calvin uses the terms interchangeably, it is when he is taking into account their likeness rather than identifying one sect with the other.²¹ One must also acknowledge that both sects were greatly disturbing to the reformed believers in France and were active at the same period in history. Moreover, they held certain common erroneous beliefs and in this sense Calvin may generally consider them as belonging to the same group.

Whatever arguments may be put forth regarding the validity of connecting the Libertine Spirituals with the other sectarians, it is impossible to determine their absolute relationship as there is no historical evidence identifying the Libertines with these sects.²² Rather, the differences between the Libertine Spirituals and the other groups is much greater than assumed by those who attempt to associate the Libertines with the other sects based on the doctrinal and geographical grounds. The distinction between them will be more clearly revealed in examining Calvin's own view of the origin of the Libertine Spirituals in the *Treatise Against the Libertines* and other sources which reveal Calvin's knowledge of the sect.

²⁰ Herminjard, *Correspondances*, IX.329.

²¹ A general tendency of the Reformers was to sometimes call different sectarians by the same name. For example, Bucer calls the Libertines Nicodemites (Herminjard, *Correspondances*, IX.1392).

²² Doumergue, 1969, Vol. VI, pp. 63-67. Cf. Balke, p. 21, especially n. 15.

Karl Müller and Wilhelm Niesel had different opinions regarding Calvin's knowledge of the Libertine sect. The issue was whether Calvin's knowledge of the Libertine sect commands a precise definition of the Libertines as treated in his *Treatise Against the Libertines*. Karl Müller addressed this topic in an article entitled "Calvin und die Libertiner" in 1922.²³ Müller cites Karl Schmidt who was the first to object to Calvin's characterization of the Libertine sect in 1850 and also Jaujard who even doubted the existence of the sect itself.²⁴ Müller regarded the pantheism of the Libertines as a mistaken understanding that the Libertine sect actually represented a mysticism rather than a pantheistic antinomianism.²⁵ Müller insisted that Calvin's opinion of the Libertines was wrongly influenced by the rendering of the Libertines by two Dutch visitors to Strassburg in 1544. They told terrible stories about the sect in their congregation and sought help from Calvin.²⁶ The documents they brought along were to have influenced Calvin to form a prejudiced opinion of the sect.²⁷

²³ In *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 40 (1922), pp. 83-129.

²⁴ Müller, pp. 84-85.

²⁵ Müller, pp. 85, 106, 128.

²⁶ Herminjard, *Correspondances*, IX.1358. Cf. Müller, pp. 122-129.

²⁷ Cf. Verhey, pp. 196-197.

Wilhelm Niesel contests Müller's conclusions in an article with the same title as Müller's.²⁸ In Niesel's opinion, Calvin's knowledge of the Libertines did not depend solely upon the rendering of the two Dutchmen. Rather, Niesel contends, Calvin's familiarity of the sect is manifest already in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*. Calvin's opposition to the Libertine doctrines of Scripture, rebirth and God's activity are refuted in this edition.²⁹ Calvin's differing views on angels and the devil are also treated in the 1543 edition of the *Institutes*. Niesel maintains that Calvin's view of the Libertines was not formed by other witnesses but by personal experience. Calvin had met Quintin personally in Paris before 1534 and by 1538 had definitive views regarding the Libertines.³⁰ Turning our attention to Calvin's own words regarding this matter, Niesel's assertions are confirmed.

In Chapter 4 of the *Treatise Against the Libertines*, Calvin traces the origin of the Libertine sect and its principal leaders. Calvin names Coppin, a Fleming and a native of Lille, as the founder of the sect as early as 1525 and mentions Quintin and Claude Perceval to be part of this group. Coppin was succeeded by Quintin of Hainaut who made himself out to be the founder of the sect or as Calvin describes incisively, the

²⁸ In *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 48 (1929), pp. 58-74.

²⁹ Niesel, p. 60. See especially notes 2,3, and 4.

³⁰ Niesel, p. 61.

movement's "first and principal contriver".³¹ Calvin confesses that he does not know when Quintin first came to France but states that at about 1534 he saw Quintin personally in Paris, being accompanied by Bertrand de Moulins.³² Much of what Calvin first heard of Quintin seems to have been related by Étienne de la Forge who resided with Calvin while working on the *Commentary on Seneca* in Paris and who was later martyred in 1535.³³ According to Étienne de la Forge, Quintin and Bertrand left their country because of certain crimes rather than because of their message.³⁴ The third person in the group of Libertine leaders whom Calvin mentions is Claude Perceval who was especially active in Strassburg.³⁵ Calvin reports that these three men together infected so many people in Paris that "there is hardly a place where they have lived that ought not be completely afraid of their corruption".³⁶ They also spread their doctrines successfully in their own countries, namely

³¹ TAL, p. 201.

³² TAL, p. 201.

³³ Williams, p 599, n. 48. Cf. TAL, p. 201, n. 13.

³⁴ TAL, p. 201 (CO VII.160).

³⁵ Williams, pp. 354; 599.

³⁶ TAL, p. 201 (CO VII.160).

Valenciennes, Liège, and Tournai.³⁷ These three leaders were joined by Anthony Pocquet whom Calvin says he met in 1542 but whom he first came to know when Pocquet attempted unsuccessfully in 1533 to obtain Calvin's endorsement for the advancement of his career.

It is true, as Niesel observes, that when Calvin first wrote against the Libertines in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, it was against Quintin and Bertrand de Moulins since he knew nothing about Coppin and Perceval was only a name to him and Pocquet he met much later.³⁸ Calvin's knowledge of the teachings of the sect, however, is clearly evident in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes* in which he denounces the Libertine view of the relation of Word and Spirit (Inst. I.9.1), of providence (Inst. I.17.3), of the sinful nature of man (Inst. II.1.10), of antinomianism (Inst. II.7.13), and of regeneration and perfectionism (Inst. III.3.14). A perusal of the 1539 edition makes it clear that Calvin already had definitive views of the Libertines which he later extended in the *Treatise*.

Other sources which mention the Libertines validate Calvin's information regarding the Libertine movement. A letter written by Bucer dated 5 July, 1538, and addressed to Queen Marguerite discusses the Libertines in Navarre and France. Bucer characterizes them as timid Nicodemites and warns that they are miserable and pernicious, obscuring the sim-

³⁷ Herminjard, *Correspondances*, IX.1358; 1392. Cf. CO VII.160.

³⁸ Niesel, p. 64.

plicity of the gospel. They have spread in France and converted many intellectual people. Bucer explains that in their belief, man no longer sins because Christ washed out the sin of the world. Bucer further informs that they are contaminating people day by day and seducing them to leave the Church.³⁹

Four letters written in the year 1544, one year before Calvin wrote the *Treatise*, also mention the Libertines. On 26 May, 1544, Valérand Poullain of Strassburg sent a letter to Calvin in which he said that the brethren of Vallenciennes had requested that Calvin write a letter of consolation to them as they were being annoyed by the Quintinists. Poullain suggested that Calvin needed to write regarding the errors of the Libertines.⁴⁰ On 5 September, 1544, Pierre Viret corresponded with Rudolphe Gualther, a pastor of Zurich, informing him of the plague of the Libertines called Catabaptists in Lower Germany, Valenciennes, Liège, and Tournai. They had terrible doctrines and had contaminated many people in Gaul. The Libertine movement is characterized as the most dangerous.⁴¹ William Farel wrote to Calvin on 2 October, 1544 stating that Calvin is the only man who knows the extent of the injury the Libertine sect has caused in Germany and elsewhere. Farel urges Calvin to speak

³⁹ Herminjard, *Correspondances*, V.721.

⁴⁰ Herminjard, *Correspondances*, IX.1358.

⁴¹ Herminjard, *Correspondances*, IX.1392.

out against the sect.^{4 2} Calvin also received a letter from Poullain, dated 13 October, 1544, expressing his joy that Calvin is willing to fight the Libertines. He reports that his brother has informed him of the sect's successes in Lower Germany where they joined up with the followers of David Joris and Loy Pruystinck.^{4 3}

From the above accounts on the origin and activities of the Libertine sect, it can be seen that the Libertines with whom Calvin struggled were an independent group of sectarians. And when Calvin did write in 1545 against the Libertines, his knowledge of the sect was informed and definite. His purpose in writing was to deter any further growth of the Libertine movement which was gaining adherents, the number at his writing approximating four thousand.^{4 4} Calvin was also concerned especially in exposing Quintin's true identity to Queen Marguerite.

Although Calvin's introduction in his **Treatise Against the Anabaptists** seems to suggest that the Libertines were only a sect within the overall Anabaptist movement, a close examination of the **Treatise Against the Libertines** shows that Calvin's Libertine Spirituals were a distinct group of religious fanatics whose mask Calvin set out to unveil.

^{4 2} Herminjard, **Correspondances**, IX.1395.

^{4 3} Herminjard, **Correspondances**, IX.1398.

^{4 4} TAL, p. 203 (CO VII.161). Cf. Williams, p. 600.

In the *Treatise* Calvin defines his Libertine Spirituals as those following the teachings of Quintin. Calvin says that "many who have no idea what the word 'Libertine' means recognize the name of Quintin".⁴⁵ Elsewhere Calvin refers to the Libertines as "Quintin and his gang" whose goal is "to turn heaven and earth upside down, to annihilate all religion, to efface all knowledge of human understanding, to deaden consciences, and to leave no distinction between men and beast".⁴⁶ Calvin here is referring to the consequences of their pantheistic doctrine which makes man and God into one spirit. As Niesel notes, the difference between a member of the Libertine sect and other people lies in the belief that the renewal of mankind is to the Libertines to become like Adam before the Fall.⁴⁷ Calvin's intent is to expose the pantheistic foundation of the Libertines and effectively dispute their antinomian behaviour based on their doctrines. That Calvin is indicating a specific sect is further revealed when he narrows the definition of the sect:

In fact, almost all the disciples of this sect are comprised by these two types, i.e., those who are **fantastics**, who only want to fidget around with extravagant questions and who derive all their pleasure by engaging in useless things, and those who are **profane people**, who have grown tired of carrying Jesus Christ's yoke, and instead have sought to put their consciences to sleep in order to serve Satan without any remorse or scruples.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ TAL, p. 203.

⁴⁶ TAL, p. 204.

⁴⁷ Niesel, p. 67.

⁴⁸ TAL, p. 208 (CO VII.165: Et de faict, quasi tour les disciples de ceste secte, sont comprins en ces deux especes: c'est à dire que ce sont phantastiques, qui ne demandent qu'à remuer questions

The trademark of the Libertines, which will become evident in a later discussion, is that they give themselves up to dissolute, conscienceless living through their pantheistic views.

2.3 THE THEOLOGICAL OR PHILOSOPHICAL LIBERTINES

The theological Libertines, mainly Jerome Bolsec, Jean Trollet, Sabastian Castellio, and Michael Servetus, challenged Calvin on the doctrinal front. The first three commonly rejected Calvin's doctrine of predestination and election, with Servetus being an antitrinitarian. It is notable that with the exception of Trollet they were medical physicians and all were Christian humanists nourished by Renaissance humanism as was Erasmus.

Bolsec served as a physician to Calvin's friend, Monsieur de Falais. Bolsec's great interest, however, was in theology. He was particularly concerned about the doctrine of predestination. He ventured to overthrow the doctrine of God's free election and in October, 1551, openly attacked Calvin's doctrine of predestination, declaring that "Calvin's teaching would make God the author of sin and responsible for the con-

extravagantes, et prennent tout leur plaisir à s'amuser en choses inutiles: ou que ce sont gens profanes, qui se sont lassez de porter le ioug de Iesus Christ, et sur cela ont cherché d'endormir leurs consciences, a fin de servir a Sathan sans aucun remors ne scruple).

demnation of the wicked".⁴⁹ Calvin describes this error of Bolsec in a letter to the ministers of Switzerland:

...he charged God with the blame of all evils, and falsely imputed to him a tyrannical caprice, such as the ancient poets fancifully ascribed to their Jove. He then took up the second head, and affirmed that men are not saved because they have been elected, but that they are elected because they believe; that no one is condemned at the mere pleasure of God; that those only are condemned who deprive themselves of the election common to all.⁵⁰

Although Bolsec attributed all things to God's grace, he contended that the efficacy of grace "rests with the free will of everyone".⁵¹ This is, in fact, compatible with semi-pelagianism.

Both Calvin and Bolsec used passages of the Scriptures and Augustine's sources in their arguments. For this reason, the Council of Geneva was confused in their attempt to arrive at a judgment and sought help from the churches outside Geneva. Bolsec was finally condemned by the Council to permanent exile from the city.⁵² The controversy with Bolsec undoubtedly brought much trouble as is described by Calvin in his letter to Bullinger in January of 1552: "[Bolsec] seditiously disturbed a peaceful Church, who strove to divide us by deadly discord, who,

⁴⁹ Collins, 1968, p. 166.

⁵⁰ Bonnet, 1972, Vol. II, p. 323.

⁵¹ Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 333.

⁵² Collins, pp. 166- 167.

without ever having received the slightest provocation, loaded us with all sorts of abuse".⁵³

Trollet also declared that Calvin made God the author of sin with his doctrine of predestination. Trollet, a native of Geneva, had become a hermit in Burgundy. Returning to Geneva, he asked to be admitted to the ministry. His solicitation was favored by the Council but rejected by Calvin against whom Trollet came to bear an irreconcilable hatred. In his opposition to Calvin, Trollet became a top figure in the ranks of the Libertines.

Trollet objected to Calvin's doctrine of eternal election which he saw as subjecting mankind to eternal condemnation. According to Calvin, Trollet extracted the following passage from the *Institutes* to support his claim:

...all the children of Adam, by his eternal providence, they were devoted, before they were born to perpetual calamity...If they have all been taken out of a corrupt mass, it is no way marvellous that they are liable to condemnation. Let them not therefore accuse God of iniquity, because by his eternal decree they are ordained to condemnation, to which their very nature makes them amenable.⁵⁴

Trollet interpreted the passage as follows. If man is by eternal ordinance and will of God placed under the condition of sinning, it is obvious that Calvin's statement makes God the author of sin and undermines man's responsibility for sinning. Calvin explains that "the opposing party thinks that I contradict myself when I teach that man ought rather to

⁵³ Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 333.

⁵⁴ Inst. (1554), p. 461 in Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 365, n. 1.

search for the cause of his condemnation in his corrupt nature than in the predestination of God".⁵⁵ Calvin explains the contradiction by means of the theory of two causes which states that "There are two causes, the one concealed in the eternal counsel of God, and the other open and manifest in the sin of man".⁵⁶ The first cause is secret and closed to man's comprehension while the second is made known to mankind. Man is not able to unfold the secret of God in order to search for the origin of man's condemnation; rather we can see with clarity that all corruption manifestly proceeds from the depravity of human nature. Thus, while Calvin believes in both causes of God's election and reprobation, Trollet is not convinced that such belief is based on reasonable proof. In respect to this, Calvin is convinced of its certainty: "The council of God does not overrule in a sovereign decree the disposal of everything, although proximate causes may strike our eyes. That were as much as to find a contradiction in these propositions, which are all those of holy writ".⁵⁷

These accusations repeated by Trollet created turmoil in Calvin's relation with Melancthon and even the whole Geneval church. But in the final stage of the controversy, Monseigneurs of Geneva approved of what is written with regard to the doctrine of predestination in Calvin's

⁵⁵ Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 366.

⁵⁶ Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 366.

⁵⁷ Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 367. Cf. p. 379. Cf. Doumergue, Vol. VI, p. 169.

Institutes, and Trollet himself confessed that he misunderstood Calvin and his doctrine, accepting it as sound and holy.⁵⁸

The dispute between Sebastian Castellio and Calvin was a bitter one. Their confrontation involved both dogmatics and canonical matters. As a physician and humanist, Castellio enjoyed literary society and joined the Protestant Reformation. Castellio was appointed rector of a college in Geneva in 1541. Highly competent as instructor and writer, Castellio made an auspicious start in the academic arena.

Several confrontations with Calvin, however, were soon to put an end to his career. The first (non-official) dispute between Calvin and Castellio took place in November, 1542. Castellio wanted to publish his French translation of the New Testament and submitted a manuscript to Calvin for his approval. Calvin, however, saw many problems and criticized that "there would be need of many corrections".⁵⁹ The second and more serious conflict with Calvin occurred in November of 1543. Castellio desired to retire as rector and was seeking the appointment of a ministry. In the course of the examination, his discordant theological opinions were revealed. In particular, Calvin found two points of belief unacceptable: Castellio opposed the creedal confession of Christ's descent into hell and discredited the Song of Solomon as an "obscene and

⁵⁸ Cf. Doumergue, Vol. VI, pp. 163, 165.

⁵⁹ Bonnet, Vol. I, p. 351.

lascivious poem".⁶⁰ Calvin wrote to Viret in March, 1544, regarding these two points:

What Sebastian would be at I know not, in boasting that my friends are surprised and laugh at the thought of my adducing the forty-fifth psalm for the defence of the Song of Solomon, and since the descent of Christ to hell in the Creed is subjoined to the burial, bringing forward for the confirmation of my own interpretation, that expression which he uttered while laughing on the cross.⁶¹

Calvin took Castellio's objection to the canonicity of the Song of Solomon seriously. To Calvin, this jeopardized the authority of the whole of the Scriptures.⁶²

Castellio interpreted Christ's descent into hell literally while Calvin regarded it as being only symbolic of Christ's suffering. Calvin states in his *Institutes*:

This story, although it is repeated by great authors, and even today is earnestly defended as true by many persons, still is nothing but a story. It is childish to enclose the souls of the dead in a prison. What need, then, for Christ's soul to go down there to release them?⁶³

The antagonism increased between the two men as Castellio was refused admittance into the ministry. Castellio exploded publicly against the

⁶⁰ Buisson, 1892, pp. 198-199 in Ozment, 1973, p. 170.

⁶¹ Bonnet, Vol. I, p. 409.

⁶² Wendel, 1963, p. 83.

⁶³ *Inst.* II.16.9 (*CO* II.376: Sed haec fabula tmetsi magnos autores habet, et hodie quoque a multis serio pro veritate defenditur, nohil tamen quam fabula est. Nam concludere in carcere mortuorum animas puerile est: Christi autem animam illuc descendere ut eas manumitteret, quid opus fuit?).

ministers of Geneva and as a result, he was led to resign his post as rector and to depart Geneva in 1544.

Castellio's conflict with Calvin did not stop there. When Michael Servetus was sentenced to die at the stake in October of 1553, Castellio attacked the use of capital punishment in several works. Responding to the capital punishment, Castellio published **Concerning Heretics: Whether They Are to be Persecuted and How They are to be Treated**. Castellio also authored and privately distributed an attack entitled **Against Calvin's Book in which He Tries to Show That Heretics Are to Be Restrained by the Law of the Sword**. This was a devastating attack on Calvin and Calvinism in which Castellio takes excerpts from the *Institutes* to expose "logical contradictions, willful distortions, and staggering arrogance on Calvin's part".⁶⁴ Castellio made it clear that he was not writing to defend the teaching of Servetus but "to expose the false teaching of Calvin".⁶⁵ Taking the execution of Servetus as the start of his argument, Castellio questioned the ethical standards of authority.

Against Calvin's Book was followed by the **Four Dialogues** in which Castellio sought to expose the hypocrisy and contradictions inherent in Calvin's doctrines on predestination, election, free will, and faith. While Calvin's doctrines present God as sovereign and omnipotent and man as the transgressor, Castellio pictures God as absolutely fair to all men.

⁶⁴ Ozment, p. 172.

⁶⁵ *Contra libellum Calvini*, pp. A 3 a in Ozment, p. 173.

The two presuppositions of Castellio's critique of Calvin's doctrines are 1) divine equity or fairness of God towards all men and 2) the dignity of human nature.⁶⁶ Castellio's concepts of the fair God and of human dignity were framed in his belief in the logical. Even God does not transgress the boundaries of the logical. Thus, Castellio wrote that "Whenever we deal with God's power, I say that God can do everything he wills to do, only he does not will to do anything which is either impossible or absurd".⁶⁷ This fair God also created man with the power of willing so that although wounded by sin, he may choose good over evil. This fair God "who is rich in mercy toward all, decided to restore man by his Spirit to [his lost] integrity. As man perished by choosing evil, so should he also be saved by choosing good".⁶⁸ In his other works as well, Castellio's emphasis was on the ability of man to initiate his own salvation by conquering sin.

The struggle between Calvin and Michael Servetus (1511-1553) was a serious and costly one. Found guilty of antitrinitarianism and anabaptism, Servetus was condemned to be burned at the stake.⁶⁹ Servetus, a native of Spain, had discovered the Scriptures to be a source

⁶⁶ Ozment, pp. 184-189.

⁶⁷ Four Dialogues (De praedestinatione) in Ozment, p. 185.

⁶⁸ Four Dialogues (De libero arbitrio) in Ozment, p. 187.

⁶⁹ Williams, p. 614.

of all knowledge, "all philosophy and all science".⁷⁰ His views were influenced by the heterodox soil of Spanish Erasmianism.⁷¹

The first reformer who denounced the anti-trinitarian views of Servetus was Oecolampadius. In his letters to Servetus, he also reprimanded his importunate character.⁷² When Servetus published his book, *On the Errors of the Trinity*, Oecolampadius strongly denounced it.⁷³ The Reformer warned Zwingli, Bullinger, Capito, and Bucer about Servetus's errors at a conference in Zurich.⁷⁴ Bucer also publicly denounced the contents of the book, prohibiting its sale in Strassburg.⁷⁵ Aware of the strong criticism, Servetus took on the name of Villeneuve to conceal his identity and began his medical study in Paris.

⁷⁰ In Collins, p. 168.

⁷¹ Williams, pp. 11-16.

⁷² CO VIII.857: Quasi enim otiosus essem, obtrudis mihi, quidquid de trinitate Sorbona inceptiit.

⁷³ CO VIII.858: Non futeris igitur, quod filius Dei futurus erat homo: sed homo futurus filius Dei. Cf. Doumergue, Vol. VI, pp. 198-199.

⁷⁴ CO VIII.744, n. 1.

⁷⁵ Williams, p. 270.

The Errors of the Trinity consists of seven books, in the first of which Servetus repudiates the formula of the Trinity in the Nicene Creed on the basis that the Trinity is a sophistical invention as a result of a misapplication of the Greek term hypostasis.⁷⁶ Servetus contends that the doctrine of the Trinity is "due to Greek philosophy".⁷⁷ In Servetus's theology, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cannot be viewed as individual or separate from the being of God. Nor can the doctrine of the Trinity be seen as biblical. Servetus explains his view as follows:

The text Romans xi.36 does not refer to three Persons, nor can they be inferred from numerals in a parable. Many passages of Scripture emphasize God and Christ while ignoring the third person. The threefoldness in God sometimes inferred from Exodus iii.6 is to be explained not as three separate beings, but as a distribution of functions. In this passage God sought to keep the Jews from believing in more than one God. The same passage properly explained, and many others, show that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct being, but an activity of God himself....The Old and New Testaments clearly teach one God, the Father, and one Christ, his Son, but nothing of beings.⁷⁸

Christ the Son of God exists only ideally in the mind of God and not as an external being apart from God. The Holy Spirit is "not a separate metaphysical being, but a ministering spirit".⁷⁹

During the next twenty years, Servetus carried on his medical study and managed to conceal his theological views. He continued, however, to

⁷⁶ For explanation of this term, see Harvey, 1964, p. 123.

⁷⁷ Servetus, *On the Errors of the Trinity*, in Wilbur 16 (1932), p. 5. Cf. pp. 67-68.

⁷⁸ Servetus, in Wilbur, p. 5.

⁷⁹ Servetus, in Wilbur, p. 71.

harbor his old ideas and in secrecy wrote his magnum opus, **The Restoration of Christianity (Christianismi Restitutio)**. Servetus sought Calvin's opinion on his work and sent him a copy of his **Restoration**. The **Restoration** contained all the old ideas of Servetus on the Trinity and in addition anabaptism, pantheism, and psychopannychism.^{8.0} Calvin disapproved of Servetus's ideas and sent his **Institutes** as a suggested reading. Calvin's disapproval is evinced in a letter to Farel in 1546:

Servetus lately wrote to me, and coupled with his letter a long volume of his delirious fancies, with the Thrasonic boast, that I should see something astonishing and unheard of. He takes it upon him to come hither, if it be agreeable to me. But I am unwilling to pledge my word for his safety, for if he shall come, I shall never permit him depart alive, provided my authority be of any avail.^{8.1}

Calvin's authority did prevail and Servetus was sentenced to death. In the trials, Servetus attacked Calvin's trinitarian doctrine, calling Calvin's triune God "a devil with three heads like Cerberus whom the ancient poet called the dogs of hell".^{8.2} In the same way, he attacked Calvin's doctrine of infant baptism by saying that this doctrine is "the invention of the Devil and sorcery".^{8.3}

The trial of Servetus was a vexing one for Calvin as the Council was under the influence of Perrin the Libertine. It became hostile to Calvin

^{8.0} Williams, p. 609.

^{8.1} Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 33 (CO XII.283).

^{8.2} **Restitutio Christianismi** in Collins, p. 177. Cf. Doumergue, Vol. VI, p. 229.

^{8.3} Collins, p. 168. Cf. Doumergue, Vol. VI, pp. 246-248.

in some instances and desired to dismantle the system of discipline formulated by Calvin.^{8.4} The case of Servetus, however, was referred to the Swiss Churches which recommended that Servetus be punished.

2.4 THE POLITICAL LIBERTINES

Calvin also had to deal with certain Libertines in Geneva who were violently opposed to his ecclesiastical discipline in Geneva. These were the people who could not bear the yoke of discipline as exercised by the consistory of the Church government and sought to dismantle Genevan law concerning Church order. Parker defines them clearly: "Their motive was not political in the sense that they were opposing to one form of Church government a responsible alternative. It was, however, political in that they were attempting to overturn Genevan law relating to Church order".^{8.5}

The political Libertines were basically opposed to the strict regimen imposed by the Genevan Church and rebelled in the moral and ethical spheres. In the ethical arena, their free spirit was evident in their desire to be free from the authority of the Church. The party of the

^{8.4} Doumerge, pp. 329-330.

^{8.5} Parker, 1975, p. 98.

political Libertines consisted mostly of inter-related families of the Favres, the Bertheliers, the Vandels, the Septs, many of twhom were members of the Council of Geneva.^{8.6}

When Calvin returned to Geneva in 1541, he constituted "The Ecclesiastical Ordinances of the Church of Geneva" and ascertained that neither rank, nor wealth, nor social position was immune from the regulations. Opposition to these strict ordinances steadily grew and crystalized about 1545 or 1546 with the occurrence of a few incidents concerning unethical behaviour.

In December of 1545, Gaspard, the son of François Favre, was imprisoned and again in March of the following year for debauchery and failure to observe Easter Sunday.^{8.7} Another involved the affair of Pierre Ameaux who, as a member of the Little Council, ran a business of manufacturing toys and playing cards which were forbidden in the regulations against gaming. Ameaux attacked Calvin's teachings and accused that Calvin "was only a picard and a wicked man who preached a false doctrine".^{8.8} The Perrins and the Favres caused greater turmoil in the reform of the city. François Favre himself was accused of committing adultery,

^{8.6} Parker, p. 98.

^{8.7} Doumergue, Vol. VI, p. 95.

^{8.8} Doumergue, Vol. VI, p. 84. Cf. Wendel, p. 86.

imprisoned and exiled for a year.⁸⁹ Ami Perrin, the Captain-General of the city was in April, 1546, imprisoned along with a few others for dancing in a private house against regulation. Calvin expressed his concern in a letter to Farel on this matter: "After your departure the dances caused us more about than I supposed...I was incensed, as the vileness of the thing demanded, and I strongly inveighed against the contempt of God, in that they thought nothing of making a mockery of the sacred obtestations we had used. They persisted in their contumacy".⁹⁰ Perrin's wife was violent in her hatred of Calvin: "Wicked man, you eager to drink the blood of our family, but you will leave Geneva before we do".⁹¹ In another instance, Perrin dared to wear the forbidden slashed pants in public.⁹² Although the act itself was not very troublesome, Calvin feared that such behaviour would lead to "the greatest licence".⁹³ In a personal letter to Ami Perrin, Calvin expressed his concern: "how odious would be the imputation which is likely to fall

⁸⁹ Bonnet, p. 53, n. 2. Cf. Doumergue, Vol. VI, pp. 91-92.

⁹⁰ Bonnet, Vol. II, pp. 52-53.

⁹¹ **Extrait des Registeres du Consistoire**, 15 avril 1546, in Doumergue, Vol. VI, p. 96.

⁹² The wearing of slashed clothing was regarded as indecent and forbidden in several areas such as Augsburg, Zurich, Berne, and Geneva. See Doumergue, Vol. VI, p. 100.

⁹³ Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 117.

upon you, that you were apparently free from and unrestrained by the common law, to which everyone is subject?"⁹⁴

The political Libertines continued to plague Calvin's reform and from 1547 onwards, instigated riots, performed ballads and farces, and wore doublets bearing a cross. Calvin denounced all such acts. The political Libertines also conspired to embarrass Calvin by circulating a letter of Calvin's which supposedly said that "ours [the Government] under cover of Christ, hopes to rule without Christ".⁹⁵

The strength of the Libertine party was shown in the 1549 elections in which the Libertine Perrin was elected as first syndic. Pierre Vandel was elected as procurator-general. With the Libertines gaining in number, they demanded changes in the manner of sermons and the Lord's supper. They also complained of the number of ministers in the city. In the years between 1549 and 1559, however, the tide slowly turned to the disadvantage of the Libertines. This period of time saw the emigration of many French protestant refugees into Geneva, thereby threatening the balance of power for the Libertines. The French also improved the economic and intellectual life of Geneva.⁹⁶ By the elections of 1555, the supporters of Calvin gained control of the Geneval Govern-

⁹⁴ Bonnet, Vol. II, p. 57.

⁹⁵ Collins, p. 163.

⁹⁶ Collins, p. 187.

ment and Calvin's disciplinary regime was restored in the Church of Geneva.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Although they had different motives for their opposition to Calvin, both the theological and political Libertines caused great grief to Calvin in his reformation of the Genevan Church. The theological Libertines contested fundamental reformed dogmas whereas the political Libertines threatened Calvin by means of violating his ecclesiastical discipline. Both groups were concerned with liberating themselves from either the Reformer's doctrines or from his disciplinary regimen.

What is true of both groups also is that they were deeply involved in the affairs of the city of Geneva. This is a distinguishing point from that of the Libertine Spirituals. They did not seem to have engaged in the Genevan revolt against Calvin. Although the Libertine leader, Poquet, sojourned at Geneva⁹⁷ and spread his teachings there, no specific connection with the other Libertines can be made. It is only in the case of Benoite Ameaux, wife of Pierre Ameaux, that there is evidence of a religious Libertine associated with a political Libertine. Ameaux, however, asked for a divorce from Benoite because she engaged in immoral

⁹⁷ CO VII.160.

relationships with other men.⁹⁸ It seems likely from this fact that there were occasional Libertine Spirituals in Geneva. It is interesting to note that the theological Libertines share the doctrine of predestination with the Libertine Spirituals which is the most significant point of controversy stated in the *Treatise Against the Libertines*. The political Libertines too share their opposition to authority and antinomian behaviour with the Libertine Spirituals. The *Treatise* itself reflects the doctrines and ethics of the Libertines of Geneva. Despite the similarities, however, the Libertine Spirituals remain distinct in their non-involvement in Genevan affairs and in their overriding pantheistic doctrine. And whereas the main activity of the theological and political Libertines was their opposition to Calvin, that of the Libertine Spirituals seems to have been that of living their carefree and dissolute life based on their pantheistic doctrine and ethics.

⁹⁸ Doumergue, Vol. VI, p. 84.

3. THE LIBERTINES AND THE EARLY HERETICS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In his *Treatise Against the Libertines*, Calvin stresses the point that he is describing only the French-speaking group with regard to its principal leaders, its origin, and teachings.⁹⁹ The *Treatise*, however, actually attests to Calvin's comprehensive knowledge of the origin and teachings of the Libertine sect as a whole. In fact, Calvin was well acquainted with the movement as it was spreading in Holland, Brabant (Belgium), and Lower Germany.¹⁰⁰ The reason which Calvin himself gives for not dealing with the whole movement is not his lack of knowledge about them but their wide expansion and complexity of the different groups.¹⁰¹ While limiting himself to just the French-speaking Libertines, he also confirms in Chapter 2 that his apprehension of the Libertine sect is accurate and sure:

If anyone thinks that I am attributing false teachings to them, I shall demonstrate, within a finger's breadth, that I am only citing their own ideas, using those manners of speech that are customary

⁹⁹ TAL, p. 200 (CO VII.159).

¹⁰⁰ Refer to Chapter 2, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ TAL, p. 200 (CO VII.159).

and understandable, instead of those which they disguise in their jargon, which will be deciphered in their place.¹⁰²

With this firm belief, Calvin traces the origin and teachings of the Libertines back to the heresies of the apostles' period and of the early church. In doing so, Calvin dates the origin of the Libertines to the heresies of the apostles and identifies the core doctrines of the Libertines with those of the early heresies of the Gnostics, the Marcionites, and the Manichaeans.

To grasp the full extent of Calvin's knowledge of the Libertines, it is therefore necessary in the first place to investigate the teachings of these heresies and their frequent emergence and development in early ecclesiastical history. The following investigation will not entail a comprehensive research but will be an introductory work for the purpose of delineating Calvin's understanding of the Libertine sect. It will trace the similarities and affinities between the Libertines of the *Treatise* and the heresies of earlier periods to which Calvin makes comparisons and briefly state its origins and developments to medieval times.

¹⁰² TAL, pp. 193-194 (CO VII.156: Si quelqu'un pense que ie leur impose rien à faulses enseignes, ie monstrey cy apres au doigt, que ie ne fais que reciter simplement leurs propos, usant seulement de façons de parler entendues et accoustumées, au lieu qu'ilz les desguisent en leur gergon, qui sera deschiffré en son lieu).

3.2 THE HERESIES IN II PETER 2 AND JUDE 10

It is notable and intriguing to see at the outset in his *Treatise* that Calvin connects and compares the Libertines of the sixteenth century to the evildoers in the apostles' time. Although Calvin adamantly calls the Libertines the most pernicious of all heretical sects in the history of Christianity,¹⁰³ he also sees a clear connection between the Libertine sect and the false teachers described by the apostles. In their ignorance, Calvin observes, the Libertines "do not even know that [the sect] has always existed".¹⁰⁴ Calvin refuses to acknowledge any newness of the Libertines "with respect to the principal articles of all their teachings".¹⁰⁵

In Chapter 2, Calvin lists passages from II Peter 2 and Jude which record the existence of "a sect of evildoers". Its likeness to the Libertine sect is such that through these passages, the Holy Spirit has worked to put us on guard against such evildoers in the future. Furthermore, by recognizing similar elements in the Libertine sect, Calvin asserts that he

¹⁰³ TAL, p. 190 (CO VII.153: Combien que toutes sectes d'heretiques soyent pestes mortelles en la Chrestienté: toutesfois nous ne lisons point en toutes les histoires anciennes qu'il y en ait iamais eu une si pernicieuse, que celle qui se nomme aujourd'hui des Libertins).

¹⁰⁴ TAL, p. 190 (CO VII.153).

¹⁰⁵ TAL, 191 (CO VII.154).

has been able to more fully comprehend the ways in which heretical sects continue to exist.

The reason Calvin identifies the Libertines with the apostolic false prophets becomes clear when one investigates the various peculiarities of the evildoers as remarked by Peter and Jude. The following table shows a clear picture of the interrelationship between the false prophets and the Libertines.

1. They enter the church secretly under disguise.

II Peter 2:1: "who will secretly introduce sects of perdition".¹⁰⁶

Jude 4: "There are certain men crept in unawares".¹⁰⁷

TAL, Ch. 8: Calvin explicitly states that the Libertines conceal their wicked doctrine under disguised words.

2. They deny orthodox beliefs concerning God and Christ.

II Peter 2:1: "Even denying the Lord who bought them".¹⁰⁸

Jude 4: "...denying God who is the only Master, and our Lord Jesus Christ".¹⁰⁹

TAL, Ch. 11-17: The Libertine pantheistic concept of God and Christology directly conflict with the

¹⁰⁶ CO LV.458: qui subinducunt sectas perditionis.

¹⁰⁷ CO LV.489: Subingressi enim sunt quidam homines.

¹⁰⁸ CO LV.458: etiam Dominum, qui eos redemit.

¹⁰⁹ CO LV.489: et Deum, qui solus est herus, et Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum negantes.

orthodox beliefs. Calvin's argument against these
is central in the *Treatise*.

3. They are antinomian.

a. They are morally corrupted.

II Peter 2:2: "Many shall follow their shameful
licentiousness".¹¹⁰

Jude 4: "[They are] ungodly men who turn the grace
of our God into lasciviousness".¹¹¹

TAL, Ch. 19-21: Immorality is one of the main
characteristics of the Libertine heresy. A lack
of distinction between good and evil is the basis
for their immorality.

b. They reject authority.

II Peter 2:10: "[They] despise lordship...are not
afraid to speak evil of dignities".¹¹²

Jude 8: "[They] truly reject lordship and speak ill of
the glorious ones".¹¹³

4. They are fanatic.

II Peter 2:18: "They speak great swelling words of
vanity".¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ CO LV.458: multi sequentur eorum exitia.

¹¹¹ CO LV.489: impii, Dei nostri gratiam transferentes in lasciviam.

¹¹² CO LV.463: dominationem despiciunt...excellencias non verentur
probrio afficere.

¹¹³ CO LV.492: dominationem vero reiiciunt, et in glorias maledicta
congerunt.

¹¹⁴ CO LV.468: plusquam fastuosa vanitatis verba sonuerint.

Jude 8: "Likewise also these filthy dreamers...".¹¹⁵

TAL, Chs. 2, 7, and 10: Calvin also characterizes the Libertines as "loudmouthed boasters" whose words are up in the clouds.

It is notable to see that Peter employed the term pareisagein (παρεισάγειν) and Jude used the term pareisaduo (παρεισδύω) when they described the emergence of the false teachers in the Church. The term pareisagein means to "bring in under false pretenses and pareisaduo means to "slip in unnoticed". Calvin uses subsingressi (Jude 4)¹¹⁶ and subinducunt (2 Peter 2:1),¹¹⁷ both of which convey the same meaning to the Greek texts. The apostles' use of this term shows clearly that the false teachers in Peter and Jude secretly crept in the Church with their disguised beliefs by which the orthodox beliefs were threatened.¹¹⁸ The Libertine sect, as Calvin points out, also assume the same disguise under which their false intentions are always hidden: "They so disguise their meaning that one can neither determine what their subject matter is or whether they are affirming or denying something...They never reveal the abominable mysteries which are hidden

¹¹⁵ CO LV.492: Similiter isti quoque somniis delusi.

¹¹⁶ See note no. 107.

¹¹⁷ See note no. 106.

¹¹⁸ Bigg, 1946, p. 271. Cf. Nicoll, Vol. 5., 1910, pp. 133, 257 and Scott, 1968, p. 1333.

under their words...Thus by using guile they hide behind such obscurities the way brigands lurk in caves".¹¹⁹ The tendency to disguise or to be secretive is the mark of heresies in the apostles' time as well as those throughout the history of Christianity.

The doctrinal blasphemy of the false teachers in Peter and Jude rests in their denying God and the Lord. According to Peter (II Peter 2:1), the false teachers repudiated orthodox Christology.¹²⁰ In Peter, the atoning significance of Jesus is especially at issue,¹²¹ just as it is in the Libertine Christology. The significance of the term "bought" is that it describes Christ's saving act by shedding his blood for men. Metaphorically, it connotes the buying of slaves by a Master to whom the slaves owe allegiance.¹²²

Jude 4 characterizes the false teachers' blasphemy as denying both God and the Lord: "and denying the only Master and our Lord Jesus

¹¹⁹ TAL, p. 213 (CO II.168: "...mais ilz en deguisent tellement la signification, que iamaiz on ne sait quelle est le subiect de la matiere dont ilz parlent, ne que c'est qu'ilz veulent affermer ou nier...ilz ne revelent les mysteres d'abominations, qui sont cachez dessoubz...Ainsi ilz se cachent par astuce soubz ces ambages, comme brigans en leurs cavernes).

¹²⁰ Kelly, 1969, p. 327; Bigg, p. 272.

¹²¹ Buttrick, 1962, Vol. XII, p. 187.

¹²² Kelly, p. 327; Buttrick, Vol. XII, p. 187.

Christ".¹²³ Here, however, the denial seems to undoubtedly include both God and Christ whereas in Peter, the object of denial indicates Christ only. It is noteworthy to see that some MSS on which the Textus Receptus (the received text) rests and the Syriac version insert θεον after δεσποτην.¹²⁴ This renders the translation as including both God and Jesus Christ. Martin Luther seems to follow this textual basis, translating the phrase as "And they deny God, that he alone is Lord, and our Lord Jesus Christ".¹²⁵ Calvin also distinguishes clearly between God and Jesus Christ.¹²⁶ Many Bible versions and commentators accept this translation: "the only Master and our Lord Jesus Christ".¹²⁷ Kelly also agrees with this view of accepting Master as God by giving historical evidence from early Christian writings and from the New Testament.¹²⁸ It is difficult, however, to be certain of such translation, because in the

¹²³ Aland et al., 1975, p. 832.

¹²⁴ Kelly, p. 252.

¹²⁵ Buttrick, Vol. XII, p. 325.

¹²⁶ CO LV.489: et Deum, qui solus est herus, et Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum negantes).

¹²⁷ Buttrick, Vol. XII, p. 325.

¹²⁸ Kelly, pp. 252-253.

best MSS, the word θεον does not actually appear in the text.¹²⁹ In his translation of the Vulgate version, R. A. Knox applies both Master and Lord to Jesus Christ.¹³⁰ Charles Bigg's *Critical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Jude* also does not accept the application of the term Master to God.

While the former position which interprets Lord as both God and Christ seems to depend upon several ancient manuscripts (K.L.P) and upon the writings of the early church fathers, the latter position tends to comply with the grammatical relevance of the text. This is warranted by the fact that there is a definite article τόν before μόνον δεσπότην and none before Κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν . The whole phrase, thus, seems to apply to a single person, Jesus Christ. This contention, however, cannot be seen as definitive. The article is often absent before the words denoting Lord, God, and the like.¹³¹ μόνος also appears in Jude 25 indicating a distinction between God and Christ. Furthermore, δεσπότης in the New Testament except in II Peter 2:1 refers to God the Father instead of the Son.¹³² The translation of the clause is, therefore, tenuous and its precise meaning different according to the

¹²⁹ Buttrick, Vol. XII, p. 325.

¹³⁰ Buttrick, Vol. XII, p. 325.

¹³¹ Kelly, p. 252.

¹³² Rowston, 1971, p. 19.

position taken. It is true that the word God does not actually appear in the text, but the implication of the context would seem to warrant its inclusion. And when Calvin refers to the beliefs of the false teachers to those of the Libertines, he admits that they rejected both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In Calvin's orthodox faith, the denial of Christ is also associated with the denial of God. Moreover, the false teachers in Jude 4 are Gnostic heretics who deny God through the denial of Christ.¹³³

The third charge which can be made against the false teachers is their immorality. The heretical teachers and their followers who deny God and Christ naturally fall into licentiousness. ἀσελεῖα in both Peter and Jude stand for sensuality or indecency. In Greek ethics, it particularly denotes sexual indulgence.¹³⁴ Jude treats sexual license as a corollary of heresies (Cf. 4, 6, 8, 13, 16, 18, 23). Peter also is emphatic in suggesting that one implies the other. The authors of both epistles provide a picture of both indecency of life and habitual sexual indulgence. Such licentiousness of the errorists also includes exploitation of profit. II Peter 3 tells of deceptive business activities of these false teachers. This is, as Irenaeus also explains, a characteristic shared by the early heretics.¹³⁵ The immoral conduct of the errorists is apparently

¹³³ Rowston, pp. 19-21.

¹³⁴ Kelly, p. 251.

¹³⁵ Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 1.13.3 (ANF 1.335; MPG VII(1).583); Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 5.18.2 (NPNF 1.235; MPG XX.478).

based on their misapprehension of freedom (Jude 4; II Peter 2:19), which the Libertines also misinterpreted and fell into moral and spiritual corruption.

Along with the immoral behaviour of the early heretics, another antinomian tendency reported by the apostles is their rejection of "authority" (II Peter 2:10) or "the glorious ones" (Jude 8). Modern commentators refer to authority as "angelic beings"¹³⁶ or as "the power and majesty of the Lord".¹³⁷ While these commentators prefer to attach a theological interpretation, Calvin chooses the practical. Calvin associates authority to civil or ecclesiastical authorities or rulers.¹³⁸ In his *Commentaries on II Peter and Jude*, Calvin links the antinomianism of the false teachers to the fanatics of his time, whom he describes as the Libertines.¹³⁹ Calvin understands the rejection of authority by the early heretics to be like that of the Libertines. The antinomianism of the early heretics appears in Gal. 5:13, I Peter 2:16, and I Cor. 7:20-23. These early proto-libertines were yokeless, subjecting neither to the lordship of God nor to the authority of the orthodox Church leaders. This tendency toward disobedience to the existing authority of the Church is

¹³⁶ Buttrick, p. 329.

¹³⁷ Bigg, p. 279. Cf. Kelly, p. 262.

¹³⁸ Comm. II Pet., 2:10 (CO LV.450-451).

¹³⁹ Comm. II Pet., 2:18 (CO LV.468-470); Comm. Jude 13 (CO LV.496). Concerning the Anabaptists' view of civil authority, see Balke, p. 59f. and 260f.

a typical characteristic of heretics. Thus when Calvin compares the Libertines of his own times with the false teachers in Peter and Jude, antinomianism is revealed as common to these heresies.

Fanaticism also emerges as a characteristic shared by the false teachers of Peter and Jude and the Libertines. The ecstasy of the false teachers is reported to be found in their language. They speak the bombastic words of vanity (ὑπέρογκα γὰρ ματαιότητος φθεγγόμενοι). The word φθεγγόμαι employed by Peter refers to "a portentous prophetic utterance".¹⁴⁰ In Jude, the false teachers are described as "dreamers". The Greek word ἐνυπνιαζόμενοι (dreaming) refers here to "vision experiences alleged to be the mediums of divine revelation".¹⁴¹ Kelly explains that the false teachers are called dreamers "not in the sense that they indulge in wishful thinking, but because they have ecstatic visionary experiences, or claim to have them, and seek to justify their doctrines and practices on the strength of these".¹⁴² Such ecstatic experiences are also a characteristic of Gnosticism¹⁴³ which Calvin applies to the Libertines:

¹⁴⁰ Bigg, p. 284. Cf Buttrick, Vol. XII, p. 194.

¹⁴¹ Buttrick, Vol. XII, p. 328.

¹⁴² Kelly, p. 261.

¹⁴³ Epiphanius, Pan. haer., 1.26.3 (MPG XLI.335-338).

There are fanatics of a similar kind at this day, who call themselves by the plausible title of Libertines or free-men. For they talk most confidently of the Spirit and of spiritual things, as though they roared out from above the clouds, and fascinate many by their tricks and wiles, so that you may say that the Apostle has correctly prophesied of them.¹⁴⁴

Calvin clearly sees similar elements in both the Libertines and the heretics of the apostles' Letters. Just as the early heretics were enemies of the Apostles' attempts to proclaim the gospel, the Libertines threaten Calvin's attempts to reform the church. To Calvin, the Libertine sect is only a later offspring of the false teachers in Peter and Jude, a sect made up not only of doctrinal heretics but of antinomianists who are "subject neither to law nor reason".¹⁴⁵

Calvin's exposition of the two biblical accounts shows his understanding of the affinity existing between the two sects. Calvin understands the description of the false teachers in the Letters as reflecting upon the Libertines of the Treatise. The earlier sect had abused Christian liberty, revelling in carnal pleasures; the Libertines also allow themselves freedom of conscience, "thus confounding all order, they mock both the fear of God and the faithful and have as little respect for His judgment as they

¹⁴⁴ **Comm. II Pet.**, 2:18 (CO LV.468-469: Nec secus hodie phrenetici quidam, qui plausibili titulo se Libertinos vocant. Nam plenis buccis spiritum et spiritualia crepantes, quasi supra nubes tonarent, multos suis praestigiis fascinant: ut dicas apostolum de his proprie vaticinatum esse); Cf. **Comm. Jude**, 13 (CO LV.496).

¹⁴⁵ **TAL**, p. 193 (CO VII.156: n'estoit subject à loy ny à raison).

have for any decent human consideration".¹⁴⁶ Calvin also sees it fit to use the same kind of language to describe the Libertines as the language used by the apostles. The earlier heretics were likened to "mists driven about by a storm"; the Libertines are described by Calvin as "ecstatically entranced above the highest clouds".¹⁴⁷ Peter's evildoers "entice" and Calvin's Libertines use a strange language "for the express purpose of arousing their hearers' admiration".¹⁴⁸ Licentiousness, disorder, beastliness, and boastfulness--these are descriptions Calvin sees applicable to both the apostles' sects and the Libertines.

In his Commentaries written six years later, Calvin thus connects the heresies in the two biblical Letters to that of the Libertines:

There are fanatics of a similar kind at this day, who call themselves by the plausible title of Libertines or free-men.¹⁴⁹

Such, as it has been before stated, are the fanatics of our day, who call themselves Libertines.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ TAL, p. 193 (CO VII.155-156: Ainsi confondent tout ordre, se moquant tant de la crainte de Dieu qu'ont les fideles, et du regard de son iugement, que de toute consideration d'honnesteté humaine.

¹⁴⁷ TAL, p. 193 (CO VII.155).

¹⁴⁸ TAL, p.193 (CO VII.155).

¹⁴⁹ Comm. II Pet., 2:18 (CO LV.468-469: Nec secus hodie phrenetici quidam, qui plausibili titulo se Libertinos vocant).

¹⁵⁰ Comm. Jude, 13 (CO LV.496: Tales (ut prius dictum est) hodie sunt fanatici homines qui se Libertinos vocant).

Although we do not know how Calvin came to deduce the relationship between the two sectarian groups, the false teachers and the Libertines, Calvin's linking of the Libertines to the earlier sects seems reliable and accurate. He shows clearly that their doctrines and their codes of behaviour coincide and without difficulty, he traces the origin of the Libertine sect back to the apostles' opponents. Although in Chapter 4 Calvin states that he will trace the Libertine origin from Quintin, he actually goes further back to the time of the apostles. We can see from Calvin's historical tracing that he comprehends the Libertine movement not only as an isolated occurrence in his own time but as part of the whole ecclesiastical history. This becomes more evident in the following section which deals with Calvin's further tracing of the origin of the Libertine sect.

3.3 THE EARLY HERESIES: MARCIONISM, GnosticISM, MANICHAISM.

After referring in Chapter 2 to the sects in II Peter 2 and Jude 10 in connection with the Libertines, in Chapter 3, Calvin elaborates upon the connection between the Libertines and the early church heretics, the Gnostics, the Marcionites, and the Manichaeans. Calvin indicates how heresies have appeared since the time of the apostles and how they have managed to annoy the church in the beginning. To Calvin, the appearance of the Libertine sect, however, is the most vexing considering that heresies have been generally relegated to absurdity:

...the Christian church was for some time somewhat vexed by them. But since everyone recognized how absurd they were, they held them in horror. So much is this so that for the past twelve hundred years not a single person in the entire world has willed to adhere to a heresy--or at least has not dared to profess one--until today, when these wretches, who are called the Libertines, were incited by Satan to blaspheme, not simply in a way similar to the others, but by adding still further damnable errors.¹⁵¹

Calvin understands the occurrence of the Libertine heresy in view of the early heresies he describes in Chapter 3. The point Calvin is making is that the Libertines "have only revived these old heresies...taken something from each, creating a mass of confusion, only in the end to outdo all the others, transcending them in folly and impudence".¹⁵²

The background heresies which Calvin mentions affirm Calvin's view that heresies tend to reoccur, only in slightly altered and disguised forms. Tracing the origins, teachings, and historical development of these earlier heresies will therefore shed light upon the appearance of the Libertine sect as well as comment upon the occurrence of heresies in general.

¹⁵¹ TAL, p. 195 (CO VII.156: ...pour un temps l'Eglise Chrestienne en fut aucunement vexée. Mais depuis que on eut congneu l'absurdité si grande, chacun en eut horreur. Tellement que depuis douze cens ans, il ne s'est trouvé un seul homme en tout le monde, qui y ait voulu adherer, au moins qui en ait osé faire profession, iusque aujourdhuy, que ces malheureux, qui se nomment Libertins, ont esté incitez de Sathan, non seulement pour blasphemer en semblable façon que les autres, mais pour adiouter encor des erreurs plus execrables).

¹⁵² TAL, p. 197 (CO VII.158: ...nous avons à noter, qu'ilz n'ont faict que resusciter ces vieilles heresies que i'ay recitées, prenant de chacune quelque piece, pour en faire un monceau de confusion: sinon que en la fin ilz ont gagné ce point, d'estre plus debordez que tous les autres, et les surmonter tant en folles qu'en impudence).

3.3.1 MARCIONISM

One of the first heretics in the Christian era was Marcion. Although the Gnostic heresy had more widely spread and penetrated into the early Christian faith, it was Marcionism which was more menacing to the foundation of the church.¹⁵³ The Gnostics had founded only schools, but Marcion, who was expelled from the orthodox church, founded his own institutional church. With his own church, Marcion stood directly in opposition to the Christian Church. Marcion's church, moreover, expanded rapidly and widely, both in number and geographic area. The reason for this rapid expansion, Quasten tells us, is that Marcion "established a hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons. The liturgical meetings were very similar to those of the Roman Church. For this reason he gained more adherents than any other Gnostic".¹⁵⁴ Within half a generation after the establishment of his church, the Marcionite church had spread and become known world-wide. Justin Martyr reports that Marcion "has made many in every race of man".¹⁵⁵ Consequently, Marcion had become "a serious rival to the catholic church".¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ With regard to the danger posed by Marcionite churches to the Catholic Church, see Blackman, 1948, p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ Quasten, 1962, Vol. I, p. 268.

¹⁵⁵ In Richardson, 1970, p. 258; Justin Martyr, *First Apol.*, 26 (ANF I.171; MPG VI.367-370).

¹⁵⁶ Evans, 1971, intro. p. ix.

Apart from the doctrinal differences which existed between Marcion and the orthodox church, Marcion was the most significant opponent to the Church for the reason that he had established his own church which was experiencing great expansion. He threatened the stability of the Church itself, which the early church fathers like Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian stoutly defended. To someone like Polycarp, Marcion was "the first-born of Satan".¹⁵⁷ The faith of Christianity was at stake and the heretical epidemic needed to be stopped. The same kind of menacing threat is attributed to the Libertines by Calvin, and he sets out to expose the threat in order to put an end to it.

3.3.1.1 The Beginnings of Marcionism

In tracing the history and character of Marcionism,¹⁵⁸ one must depend solely upon the writings supplied by the opponents of the movement, namely the early church fathers. The only work which Marcion ever

¹⁵⁷ Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 3.3.4 (ANF I.416; MPG VII.(1).853: *Cognosco te primogenitum Satanae*).

¹⁵⁸ More than any other work, Von Harnack's comprehensive monograph on Marcion describes remarkably and critically the history and character of Marcionism: Cf. Von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, 2nd ed., 1924 (Volume 45 of the *Texte und Untersuchungen Zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, ed. by Von Harnack and Schmidt). Yet according to Blackman, Von Harnack overestimated the significance of Marcionism in the early church. Cf. Blackman, *intro.*, p. 2. It is my intention to use mostly the early fathers' sources rather than depending on Von Harnack or Blackman.

wrote, a doctrinal work entitled **Antitheses**, has not been preserved.¹⁵⁹ The various writings of the early church fathers correspond remarkably well, however, and it is generally agreed that these accounts are reliable and correct in providing information as to the origin and teachings of Marcionism. Tertullian supplies the most voluminous works on Marcion,¹⁶⁰ some of which were greatly indebted to the previous writers: Irenaeus, Theophilus, and Justin Martyr.¹⁶¹

Calvin names Cerdon as Marcion's predecessor and source of Marcionism's doctrines. Irenaeus tells us that Cerdon in turn had taken his ideas from the followers of Simon.¹⁶² This Simon is the Simon Magus reported in the book of Acts, commonly acknowledged as the founder of the first heresy of the Christian era.¹⁶³ Simon's connection with Cerdon is at best tenuous and indirect, but Cerdon's influence on Marcion, we know, is much more direct and substantial. According to Irenaeus, Marcion and Cerdon were in Rome at approximately the same time (c. 135-140 a. d.) and Marcion

¹⁵⁹ Quasten, Vol. I, p. 268.

¹⁶⁰ Tertullian wrote five books against Marcion titled **Adversus Marcionem** (ANF III.271-474; CCSL I.441-726).

¹⁶¹ Evans, intro., p. xx

¹⁶² Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, IV.11.2 (NPNF I.183; MPG XX.327-330).

¹⁶³ Mead, 1979, intro., p. 3.

later continued and extended Cerdon's school in Rome.¹⁶⁴ Cerdon was a Syrian Gnostic who, as Calvin summarizes, proclaimed the doctrine of two gods and rejected the unity of the two Testaments and the resurrection of Christ, thereby preaching doceticism.¹⁶⁵ The extent to which Cerdon influenced Marcion or at least the extent to which they were similar in their doctrinal views is evinced in their doctrinal affiliation:

It is not possible to distinguish his teachings from those of his pupil, Marcion. Hippolytus(x. 15) treats Cerdon and Marcion together, making no attempt to distinguish their doctrines. Irenaeus...and the best syntagma of Hippolytus(represented by Pseudo-Tertullian's *Adv. Haer.* and by Epiphanius) distinguish the two, treating Cerdon separately but very briefly. The doctrines of Cerdon, however, given by them, are identical with or at least very similar to the known view of Marcion. If they were really Cerdon's positions before Marcion came to him, then his influence over Marcion was most decided.¹⁶⁶

It is without doubt that Cerdon influenced Marcion in his teachings. Marcion's concept of dualism, however, seems to have been formulated "before his affiliation with Cerdon".¹⁶⁷ Cerdon's role in Marcion's dualistic view was probably to provide a stimulus for his view to be further developed and articulated. Calvin's regarding Cerdon as Marcion's predecessor, however, is not invalidated when considering the early fathers' accounts. Rather, Calvin adds in his *Treatise* that

¹⁶⁴ Quasten, Vol. I, p. 269.

¹⁶⁵ TAL, p. 195 (CO VII.156).

¹⁶⁶ Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 4.11.n.2 (NPNF I.182-183; MPG XX.327-330).

¹⁶⁷ Pelikan, 1971, Vol. I, p. 72. See also Blackman, p. 69.

Marcion's teachings are but a thin disguise of Cerdon's (a trait which Calvin despises in the Libertines and in fact in all professed heretics):

Next came Marcion, who disguised somewhat Cerdon's ideas as he wanted the glory of inventing new theories rather than being known for dressing up what his predecessor had said badly; he was similar to him.¹⁶⁸

3.3.1.2 Marcionism's Growth and Doctrines

A native of Sinope, in Asia Minor, Marcion was born into a prominent Christian family. His father was a bishop and he was reared as a Christian. It may be naturally assumed, therefore, that he came to Rome as a faithful orthodox Christian.¹⁶⁹ This assumption, however, is invalidated by the fact that soon after he arrived in Rome, the Church of Rome demanded written proof of his faith. His teachings had caused sharp opposition from the leaders of the Church and in 144 A.D., he was excommunicated. In fact, Marcion had been excommunicated by his father before he came to Rome.¹⁷⁰ This last fact reveals that Marcion's belief was already not congenial to the orthodox faith when he was in

¹⁶⁸ TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.156: Depuis vint Marcion, qui en deguisant aucunement les propos d'iceluy, plustost pour avoir ceste gloire d'estre inventeur de quelque opinion, que pour donner couleur à ce qui avoit esté mal dict au paravant, fut quasi semblable à luy).

¹⁶⁹ Evans, intro., p. ix.

¹⁷⁰ Quasten, Vol. I, p. 168.

Asia Minor and had faced opposition there. It may be for this reason that Marcion had decided to travel to Rome where he anticipated that his teachings would be better accepted and have a better chance of "being disseminated than one which found only local acceptance in the provinces".¹⁷¹

Marcion arrived in Rome a wealthy man. He made a generous gift to the Church of Rome and soon gained much influence. His excommunication did not diminish his power, and his own church was successful in attracting many adherents. Marcionism's reach was wide and until the middle of the fifth century, many Marcionite communities thrived, especially in Syria.¹⁷² And although the movement started to decline in the third century, it did not disappear completely and was absorbed into later movements like Manichaeism. Blackman points out this fact:

In the West it is noteworthy that as Marcionism grew weaker, Manichaeism grew stronger, and it is a fair assumption, considering certain points of affinity between the teaching of Marcion and that of Mani, that is so far as Marcionites did not die out or become Catholic Christians, many of them joined the Manichaeans.¹⁷³

The overriding emphasis in Marcion's theology is his dualism. Marcion saw two irreconcilable forces in the world: good and evil. For Marcion, the presence of two fruits indicated the presence of two kinds of trees. With his dualistic frame of mind, Marcion formulated his view of two gods,

¹⁷¹ Blackman, p. 2.

¹⁷² Quasten, Vol. 1, p. 268.

¹⁷³ Blackman, pp. 3-4.

a view which immediately conflicted with the monotheistic view of God of the fathers of the Catholic Church.¹⁷⁴

According to Marcion, God in the Old Testament is infinitely inferior to God as revealed in the New Testament. The former is seen as "evil", "lustful", "contradictory"¹⁷⁵ or "just" and "judicial" as opposed to "good".¹⁷⁶ Marcion regards the Old Testament God as the Creator of the world, the Demiurge, who is less divine than the good God, Father of Jesus Christ. The good God was wholly different from the God who created the material world. Of Marcion's dissociation of two gods, Tertullian demands, "who can draw a distinction, and say that there are two gods, one just and the other good, when He ought to be believed to be both one and the other, whose commandment is both 'just and good?'"¹⁷⁷

Marcion's dualism appears also in his view of Christology, a view which can be identified with the Gnostic position. According to Marcion's dualistic view, the authentic Christ, the Christ of the New Testament, is not the same Messiah of the Jews prophesied in the Old Testament.

¹⁷⁴ Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 1.27.1-4 (ANF I.352-353; MPG VII(1).687-689); Tertullian, *Marc.*, 1.6.1-4 (ANF III.275; CCSL I.447); Hippolytus, *Ref.*, 7.17-19 (ANF V.110-112).

¹⁷⁵ Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 1.27.2; 3.12.12 (ANF I.352, 435; MPG VII(1).687-689, 905-906).

¹⁷⁶ Tertullian, *Marc.*, 5.18.12 (ANF III.467-470; CCSL I.720).

¹⁷⁷ Tertullian, *Marc.*, 5.13.15 (ANF III.458; CCSL I.704: *Quis discernit duos deos, iustum alium bonum alium, cum is utrumque debeat credi, cuius praeceptum et bonum et iustum est?*).

Just as with the two gods of the Old and New Testament, there is absolute difference between the two christs. As Tertullian points out, "Between these (Christs in Judaism and in Christianity) he interposes the separation of a great and absolute difference--as great as lies between what is just and what is good; as great as lies between the law and the gospel; as great, (in short), as is the difference between Judaism and Christianity".¹⁷⁸

Not only was there absolute difference between the two christs, Christ had not come as man at all. To Marcion, Christ as being born of woman with a body of a man meant that He had come from the Creator whereas the true Christ could not become a man with a material body since the true good God as revealed in Jesus is divine and therefore cannot possess human substance.¹⁷⁹ Thus, with no relation to human substance, Marcion's Christ appeared suddenly full-grown in the fifteenth year of Tiberius.¹⁸⁰

This true Christ whose appearance was sudden and unforeseen nevertheless did die on the cross to redeem mankind. Marcion's idea of Christ's appearance on earth, however, was clearly docetic. As Calvin accuses

¹⁷⁸ Tertullian, *Marc.*, 46.3 (ANF III.351; CCSL I.552: Inter hos magnam et omnem differentiam scindit, quantam inter iustum et bonum, quantam inter legem et euangelium, quantam inter Iudaismum et Christianismum).

¹⁷⁹ Tertullian, *Marc.*, 3.10.1; 3.11.1 (ANF III.329, 330; CCSL I.521).

¹⁸⁰ Tertullian, *Marc.*, 1.15.1 (ANF III.281-282; CCSL I.456).

it of Cerdon, Marcion too "held that Jesus had appeared and suffered only as a phantom".¹⁸¹ Without a material body, Christ could suffer only a quasi passion. Moreover, Christ's shedding of blood was to redeem only the soul and not the body as well. Marcion limited Christ's redemptive work to the soul only, while "the body remains subject to the power of the demiurge and is destined for destruction".¹⁸²

As a consequence of his dualistic view of God and Christ, Marcion discriminated between the Old and the New Testament, between law and gospel. Marcion rejected the entire teaching of the Old Testament, the ceremonial law as well as the moral law, and labelled the whole of the Old Testament as unworthy of the true God in Christ.¹⁸³ Marcion did not allow the Old Testament the status of Scripture since doing so would have gone against his view of creation.¹⁸⁴ For Christ had not participated in the creation and differs from the Christ prophesied in the Old Testament. Granting unity between the two Testaments would also have destroyed Marcion's view of the coming of Christ as having been sudden.

¹⁸¹ TAL, p. 195 (CO VII.156: De Iesus Christ il disoit qu'il estoit apparu et avait souffert, seulement par phantasie).

¹⁸² Quasten, Vol. I, p. 270.

¹⁸³ Tertullian, Marc., 2.21.1 (ANF III.313-314; CCSL I.499).

¹⁸⁴ Pelikan, Vol. I, p. 78.

Marcion went further than just rejecting the Old Testament. He also rejected a number of the New Testament writings which did not accord with his dualistic separation of two gods and two christs. Marcion granted the Pauline Epistles the status of true gospel, but applied discrimination to the works of other apostles. In Marcion's opinion, the other disciples had misunderstood Jesus and their gospels were contaminated by their Jewish preconceptions. The gospel of Luke is the one New Testament gospel which Marcion is willing to accept on account of Luke's companionship with Paul, but he also discards Luke's narrative of Christ's birth as this contradicted with his docetic idea of Christ.

3.3.1.3 Apelles and Marcion

When Calvin compares the Marcionites with the Gnostics, he takes Apelles, a famous disciple of Marcion, as a prominent figure representing Marcion's doctrines as he takes Valentinus to represent the Gnostics. But Apelles' position differs greatly from the two most important points of Marcion's doctrinal position: Apelles does not accept Marcion's two principle doctrines of God nor does he accept Marcion's docetic Christology.¹⁸⁵ If Apelles' teachings are not consistent with Marcion's, Calvin's presupposition of comparing Apelles with the Gnostics does not provide

¹⁸⁵ Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 5.13.2 (NPNF I.227; MPG XX.462; Tertullian, *Carn.*, 6.3 (ANF III.526-527; CCSL II.883- 884).

a solid ground for his attempt to link all these early heretics according to their doctrinal connection and similarity.

It is very true that Apelles' idea of one principle and his acceptance of Christ's human substance are quite dissimilar to his master Marcion's and seem almost to resemble the orthodox view of God and Christology. Apelles, however, rejected the Old Testament and asserted that Christ's body was made up of the four elements of the stars.^{18.6} Despite Apelles' acceptance of one God, the early fathers could not be persuaded to accept his view of one God and Christology as being the same as theirs. Eusebius cites Rhodo's account of his opposition to both Marcion and Apelles, including his disapproval of Apelles' view of one principle:

When I said to (Apelles), tell me how you know this or how can you assert that there is one principle, he replied that the prophecies reputed themselves, because they have said nothing true; for they are inconsistent, and false, and self contradictory. But how there is one principle he said that he did not know, but that he was thus persuaded....Thereupon I laughed and reproved him because, though calling himself a teacher, he knew not how to confirm what he taught.^{18.7}

As long as Apelles separated the Old Testament from the New Testament, his assertion of one God could not be appreciated according to the fathers' position that the principle of one God should be justified only when the continuity and unity of the two Testaments are accepted. In this respect, Calvin follows the fathers' position and does not hesitate to proclaim that Apelles does not differ greatly from his teacher Marcion.

^{18.6} Tertullian, *Carn.*, 6.3 (ANF III.526-527; CCL II.883-884).

^{18.7} Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 5.13.5 (NPNF I.228; MPG XX.462).

On this ground, Calvin lines Apelles with the Gnostics in their connection with the Libertines.¹⁸⁸

3.3.2 GNOSTICISM

Calvin never saw or read the original Gnostic writings which have been discovered only since the mid-eighteenth century. All of Calvin's knowledge of the Gnostics thus relies upon the patristic polemical writings in opposition to Gnosticism. Yet studies of the Gnostic material prove that the writings of the patristic fathers concerning the Gnostics do not deviate greatly from the information provided by the Gnostic documents: "Though detailed study of them will continue for a long time, it is already established that they reinforce the reliability of the patristic descriptions of the sects".¹⁸⁹

Because of the extreme complexity regarding Gnosticism's origin and thought, it is not easy to reach the core of Gnostic teachings unless one appreciates and evaluates the complete documents of the early fathers or the original Gnostic writings. Irenaeus points out the various factions in just the Valentinus group which was only one among many Gnostic

¹⁸⁸ TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.157).

¹⁸⁹ NCE, p. 524

sects: "Let us look now at the inconstant opinion of those heretics (for there are some two or three of them), how they do not agree in treating the same points, but alike, in things and names, set forth opinions mutually discordant".¹⁹⁰

These various Gnostic systems do not, however, obscure the principal themes of the Gnostic doctrine especially those related to the Christian doctrines which the early fathers advocated against the Gnostic position, i.e., the concept of God, the doctrine of salvation, Christology, resurrection and fanaticism. It is surprising, moreover, to see that in spite of the divergence of the Gnostic origins and thought, their fundamental position concerning God, Christ, salvation, man, and universe scarcely differs from what the early fathers and Calvin describe and attack in their writings.

3.3.2.1 Gnostics and their Teachings

Calvin introduces the Gnostics as follows: "Close to this same time appeared the Gnostics, who were thus called because they attributed to themselves a superior understanding".¹⁹¹ He then summarizes three

¹⁹⁰ Irenaeus, *Haer.*, 1.11.1 (ANF I.332; MPG VII(1).559: Videamus nunc et horum inconstantem sententiam, cum sint duo vel tres, quemadmodum de eisdem non eadem dicunt, sed et nominibus, et rebus contraria respondent).

¹⁹¹ TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.156: Presque de ce mesme temps, furent aussi

principal teachings of the Gnostics, namely, their dualism, their identifying the soul with the substance of God, and their spiritual fanaticism.¹⁹² The second of these is related to the pantheistic determinism of the Libertines as treated in chapters 13 to 16 of the Treatise. Gnostic spiritual fanaticism is similar to the fanatic character of the Libertines.

One of the Gnostic principles which Calvin pinpoints and which Irenaeus also took issue with is the Gnostic doctrine of "two principles".¹⁹³ Some of the original works of Nag Hammadi, however, seem to contest Calvin's and Irenaeus' contention. The most influential of Gnostic writings, the Valentinian sources especially, is dominated by the theme of the oneness of God rather than of dualism. The author of one of these Valentinian sources in the The Tripartite Tractate of Nag Hammadi describes the origin of all being, God, as one God:

He is a sole Lord....no one is a god for him nor is anyone a father to him. For he is unbegotten and there is no other who begot him, no another who created him....In proper sense, then, the only Father and God is the one whom no one else begot. As for the universe, he is the one who begot it and created it.¹⁹⁴

In Valentinus' original teaching, therefore, oneness of God is central. This fact is depicted repeatedly in other places. For example, in A

les Gnostiques, qui se nommoient ainsi, pour s'attribuer une excellente congnoissance par dessus les autres).

¹⁹² TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.157).

¹⁹³ TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.157: deux principes); Irenaeus, Haer., 2.1-3 (ANF I.359-362; MPG VII(1).709-718).

¹⁹⁴ The Tripartite Tractate, 51.24-52.5, NHL, p. 55.

Valentinian Exposition, the author says, "...the Father, that (is, the Root) of the all, the (Ineffable One who) dwells in the Monad. (He dwells alone) in silence. And he possessed the All dwelling within him".¹⁹⁵ The same idea appears more explicitly in Interpretation of Knowledge: "Now this is his teaching; Do not call out a father upon the earth. Your Father, who is in heaven, is one".¹⁹⁶

Considering the above quotations, is Irenaeus' evaluation of the Valentinian concept of God erroneous? Irenaeus never budes from his contention that the Valentinian God is not monotheistic. Rather, Irenaeus pronounces that Valentinians conceal their true features in a veil. Irenaeus describes and condemns the double faces of Valentinians:

Such men are to outward appearance sheep; for they appear to be like us, by what they say in public, repeating the same words as we do; but inwardly they are like wolves. Their doctrine is homicidal, conjuring up, as it does, a number of gods, and simulating many fathers, but lowering and dividing the Son of God in many ways.¹⁹⁷

Further examination of the Valentinian writings show that Irenaeus' accusations do have a basis. Although the Valentinians also assert that all things start from a single, supreme God, they also subscribe to a hierarchial system which has many gods under this one supreme God.

¹⁹⁵ A Valentinian Exposition, 22.15-25, NHL, p. 436.

¹⁹⁶ The Interpretation of Knowledge, 9.29, NHL, p. 430.

¹⁹⁷ Haer., 3.16.8 (ANF I.443; MPG VII(1).927: qui a foris quidem oves, (per eam enim quam habent extrinsecus loquelam, similes nobis apparent, eadem nobiscum loquentes) intrinsecus vero lupi. Sententia enim eorum homicidialis, deos quidem plures confingens, et patres multos simulans; comminuens autem et per multa dividens Filiam Dei).

Valentinians contend that theirs is a monotheistic system, but they create from this single God many divergent spiritual beings (aeons) which they endow with divinity. It is this system of deistic beings present in the Valentinian concept of God which Irenaeus finds disturbing and absolutely heretical. The idea that there are many deified spiritual beings in addition to God is alien to orthodox monotheism which teaches that there is only one God with no other gods besides him. Moreover, the Valentinians not only distinguish between the supreme God from the lesser deified beings but also distinguish God from the Creator or the Demiurge. This Creator is, like that of Marcionism, the Creator of all physical matter and therefore, a lesser god. This pluralistic system of gods could only be absolutely inadmissible to Irenaeus. Although the Valentinians assert that their concept of God is also monotheistic in that they also uphold one supreme God over all other gods, a God who is invisible, incomprehensible, and primal,¹⁹⁸ it is indisputable that both a dualistic and pluralistic concept of God exists in their system of the cosmos. It is this simultaneous existence of various systems and the Valentinian assertion that theirs is still a monotheistic system which Irenaeus points to when he declares that they are disguising their real doctrines: "It appears, then, that their tongues alone, forsooth, have conceded the unity (of God) while their (real) opinion and their understanding (by their habit of investigating profanities) have fallen away from (this doctrine of) unity, and taken up the notion of manifold deities...."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ The Tripartite Tractate, 51.1 ff., NHL, p. 55 ff.

¹⁹⁹ Haer., 4.33.3 (ANF I.507; MPG VII(1).1072: *Linguas itaque eorum videlicet solas in unitatem cessisse; sententiam vero eorum et sensum*

Several Gnostic writings confirm Irenaeus' accusation that the Gnostic concept of God incorporates dualism and polytheism. In the essay **On the Origin of the World**, the author discloses that there is tension between the many divine entities, in effect indicating that the position of the supreme God is tenuous. "The first Father" which the Valentinians equate with the highest God, says to the other gods and their angels, "I do not need anything....I am god and no other one exists except me". Against this arrogance of the first Father, other divine entities respond, "But when he said these things, he sinned against all of the immortal(imperishable) ones....Moreover when Pistis saw the impiety of the chief ruler, she was angry, without being seen, she said, 'you err, Samael,' i.e. 'The blind god.' 'An enlightened, immortal man exists before you'".²⁰⁰

A similar discourse is found in the **The Hypostasis of the Archons**: "'It is I who am God; there is none (apart from me)'. When he said this, he sinned against (the Entirety). And this speech got up to Incorruptibility; then there was a voice that came forth from Incompatibility, saying, 'You are mistaken, Samael'--which is, 'god of the blind'".²⁰¹

quae profunde sunt scrutari, decidentem ab unitate, incidere in multiforme Dei iudicium...).

²⁰⁰ **On the Origin of the World**, 103.10-20, NHL, p. 165.

²⁰¹ **The Hypostasis of the Archons**, 86.30-87.4, NHL, p. 153.

In yet another text, a god besides the first God chides the latter of his insane persistence on being the only supreme being:

And he is impious in his madness which is in him. For he said, 'I am God and there is no other God beside me,' for he is ignorant of his strength, the place from which he had come...And he saw the creation which surrounds him and the multitudes of angels around him which had come forth from him, he said to them, 'I am a jealous God, and there is no other God beside me'. But by announcing this he indicated to the angels that another God does exist; for if there were no other one, of whom would he be jealous?²⁰²

It was against this false assertion of monotheism that Irenaeus along with other early fathers, Hippolytus and Tertullian, devoted a great part of his energies in order to refute Gnostic dualism.²⁰³ Unanimous agreement in the writings of Irenaeus and the Gnostics sufficiently shows that the pluralistic concept of God in Gnosticism is derived not only from the fact that Gnosticism had spread greatly to encompass a wide geographical area²⁰⁴ but that Gnosticism had incorporated many heterogeneous thoughts like Zoroastrianism, Babylonian religion, Hellenistic philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and even Buddhism.²⁰⁵ Such Gnosticism is syncretic. Commenting on the many influences and thoughts which Gnosticism incorporated, Quispel observes, "it is quite justifiable to call it a world religion".²⁰⁶

²⁰² The Apocriphon of John, 11.18-13.13, NHL, pp. 105-106.

²⁰³ Kelly, 1978, p. 110.

²⁰⁴ Grant, 1959, p. 6; Grant, 1961, p. 16.

²⁰⁵ Van Groningen, 1967, pp. 6-18.

²⁰⁶ In Van Unnik, 1960, p. 23.

Despite the existence of various systems of thought and the resulting variety of gods in Gnosticism, one basic idea remains in all the various forms of Gnosticism, that of dualism. There are varying opinions and little agreement about what dualism means in Gnosticism.²⁰⁷ Gnosticism, however, basically upholds "an absolute dualism between the two basic entities--the spiritualized material and the earthbound material".²⁰⁸ Gnosticism understands the spiritualized material as "a type of ethereal material existence" which is good. Gnosticism regards earthbound material as evil. This sharp distinction between the two realms of reality as good and evil is the basis of dualism. This dualism is a fundamental Gnostic tenet in understanding God, cosmos, Christ, man, and man's salvation.

In the Gnostic concept of God, there is always tension and sharp cleavage between the perfect, unknown, supreme God and the imperfect, less divine God, the Demiurge.²⁰⁹ The Demiurge which separated from the supreme good God is associated with the creation of the world which is considered evil by Gnosticism. The Demiurge is therefore the originator of evil in Gnosticism. Thus, Gnosticism ascribes Cain's murder of Abel to the Demiurge.²¹⁰ The author of *The Apocryphon of John* also calls

²⁰⁷ Jonas, 1958, pp. 42ff.

²⁰⁸ Van Groningen, p. 178.

²⁰⁹ Haardt, 1971, p. 4-5.

²¹⁰ *A Valentinian Exposition*, 38.24-26, NHL, p. 440.

the Demiurge "the abortion of darkness".²¹¹ Such sharp distinction between the highest supreme God and the inferior bad God shows two different realities of divine beings in the Gnostic concept of God.

The Gnostic concept of cosmology also contains dualism. There are two realms of the cosmos in Gnosticism. One is the supra-spiritual which constitutes the Realm of Light (pleroma), and the other is the anti-spiritual realm of the phenomenal world.²¹² While Judaism and Christianity maintain that the universe simply consists of heaven, earth, and sea, Gnosticism believes in "a complete supra-mundane world" beyond the universe.²¹³ This distinction between the phenomenal world and the supra-mundane world clearly utilizes dualism. A more clear idea of dualism in Gnostic cosmology appears in their idea of the creation of the world. In Gnosticism, creation of the phenomenal world was formed by the Demiurge and the fallen Sophia. A distinct boundary between this evil, phenomenal world and the true, ideal world of the various divine beings (aeons) exists.²¹⁴ Dualism in the Gnostic view of cosmology consists in its principle of creation of the world as well as in the existence of two distinctive realms of the universe.

²¹¹ 46.10, in Haardt, p. 5.

²¹² Wilson, 1958, pp. 202-207.

²¹³ Wilson, p. 202.

²¹⁴ Wilson, p. 203.

Gnostic dualism is also manifest in their understanding of Christ. It is based on their dichotomous world-view which maintains that the spiritual is good and the material evil. It follows that the substance of Christ's body cannot be material or corporeal. Resurrection of the flesh is rejected by the Gnostics. The Gnostic Christ is therefore a docetic christ. Many texts from the Nag Hammadi collection attest to this Gnostic view, one of which is from Acts of John: "I will tell you another glory, brethren; sometimes when I meant to touch him I encountered material, solid body; but at other times again when I felt him, his substance was immaterial and incorporeal...as if it did not exist at all".²¹⁵

Gnostics repudiate the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a unique event which has actually occurred in the past and symbolize it as a spiritual vision. The actual event of the resurrection is of no importance to the Gnostics. What matters is that they experience Christ's presence spiritually in the present. The idea of bodily resurrection is in fact ridiculed by the Gnostics.²¹⁶ The Gnostic Christology clearly is derived from their dualistic concept of good and evil, of spirit and material.

Gnosticism holds a trichotomous nature of man: spirit, soul, and body.²¹⁷ But behind this triple division, Gnosticism sharply distinguishes spirit from body and soul. Spirit is considered as "light-dew"

²¹⁵ In Pagels, 1981, p. 88.

²¹⁶ Pagels, pp. 4-32.

²¹⁷ Haardt, p. 6; Jonas, p. 44.

or "light-spark" which is imprisoned in man and the world. Both body and soul belong to "the side of darkness rather than that of light".²¹⁸ This twofold division (spirit and body/soul) in man is fundamentally antithetic; one is destined to the realm of light, the other remains in darkness.

Dualism is also revealed in the Gnostic idea of gnosis, a fundamental tenet of Gnosticism which Calvin has mentioned in his introduction of the Gnostics. According to the Gnostics, gnosis or special knowledge is the only means by which man is able to redeem himself from the evil powers of this world and to return to absolute perfection. True redemption can be attained only through gnostic knowledge.²¹⁹ This gnosis is essential for an understanding of the world and the self, and for overcoming the evil in the world in order to reach the perfect world. Salvation is possible only with the help of gnosis which allows insight into the dualistic nature of the world and which thus allows a transfer from the evil, material world to spiritual perfection.

In view of the fact that dualism pervades Gnosticism in its concept of the world, of God, of Christ, of man and his salvation, Calvin has captured a basic feature of Gnosticism when he describes the heretical sect as "positing two principles, one good, the other evil, and maintaining that souls that are kept pure in human body return to the nature of a good

²¹⁸ Haardt, p. 6.

²¹⁹ Pelikan, Vol. I, p. 82.

God, while those that are soiled by the impurities of the world return to an evil (nature)".²²⁰

When Calvin states that the Gnostics believe that "the soul is the substance of God"²²¹, he is referring to the pantheistic feature of Gnosticism. The presence of pantheism in Cerdon's heresy was also pointed out by Calvin: "everything shared its substance".²²²

The whole structure of the Gnostic view of cosmology and anthropology is based on the pantheistic idea. According to the Gnostic view of cosmology, the act of creation by God is not creation but procreation. The existence of the aeons or archons and all other ethereal, spiritual deities is possible by means of "emanation". Even the world is not created but emanated from its creator, Sophia. The world was created by Sophia extending herself "to cause a being to come into existence out of herself".²²³

The process of emanation in the creation of ethereal beings is explained in The Tripartite Tractate. Nothing that exists has come into being separate from one another such that "their begetting is like a process of extension, as the Father extends himself to those whom he desires,

²²⁰ TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.157: ...faisans deux principes, l'un bon et l'autre mauvais: disans que les ames qui se sont gardées pures au corps humain, s'en retournent à la nature du bon Dieu: et celles qui se sont souillées des immunditez du monde, au mauvais).

²²¹ TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.156-157: ...l'ame estre de la substance de Dieu).

²²² TAL, p. 195 (CO VII.156: ...tout...estre de la propre substance).

²²³ Foerster, 1972, p. 103.

so that those who have come forth from him might become him as well".²²⁴ All existing ethereal entities in the realm of pleroma, a heavenly realm, are nothing but emanations from one another. The process is further elaborated in *The Tractate* as follows:

Just as the present aeon, although a unity, is divided into ages and ages are divided into years, and years are divided into seasons and seasons into months, and months into days, and days into hours, and hours into moments, so too the aeon of the Truth, being a unity and multiplicity, is honored with little and great names according to the power of each to grasp it--by way of analogy, like a spring which is what it is, yet flows into trees with branches and fruit, or like a human body, which is partitioned in an indivisible way into members of members, primary members and secondary great (and) small.²²⁵

Despite the fact that the supreme God remains unknown and is invisible, being absolutely transcendent, all ethereal beings are seen as connected to each other by a series of emanations coming from this supreme God. Irenaeus offers the following explanation of this pagan idea of creation, an idea completely adverse to the orthodox faith: "These Eons having been produced for the glory of the Father...sent forth emanations by means of 'conjunction'".²²⁶ Because of this process of emanation, there is no intrinsic separation of individual beings in Gnostic thought. All beings are connected to one another through the process of emanation. Nothing can exist without there being substantial identification between any two entities. It follows that all ethereal beings are deified as a result since the source of the emanation process is God: "'aeon' become 'an

²²⁴ *The Tripartite Tractate*, 73.24-29, NHL, p. 66.

²²⁵ *The Tripartite Tractate*, 73.29-74.19, p. 67.

²²⁶ *Haer.*, 1.1.2 (ANF I.316; MPG VII(1).450: Hos autem Aeons in gloriam Patris emissos...emississe emissiones in conjugatione).

emanation from divine substance, subsisting coordinately and coeternally with the deity".²²⁷ The Gnostic concept of emanation or procreation thus indicates a mutual sharing of essence by all beings.

The same pantheistic idea is also present in the Gnostic view of man. According to this pantheism, man also has a divine spark within which comes from God Himself.²²⁸ This "divine spark" is understood by the Gnostics as an extension of divine power which makes man capable of redemption on his own and of eventually becoming a god himself. The Gnostics find a biblical indication of such divine possibilities of man in a book like *The Gospel of Thomas*: When Jesus' disciples asked, "'Show us the place where you are...', 'Jesus answered, 'whoever has ears, let him hear. There is light within a man of light, and he (or:it) lights up the whole world. If he (or:it) does not shine, he (or:it) is darkness'.²²⁹ Another passage which reveals this inner potential in humanity appears in the same Gospel: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you".²³⁰

²²⁷ Pelikan, Vol. I, p. 85.

²²⁸ NCE, p. 525.

²²⁹ 38.4-10, NHL, p. 121.

²³⁰ 45.30-33, NHL, p. 234.

Thus, according the Gnostic view of soteriology, human salvation is not to be achieved by human faith or by the power of God. Human salvation rather depends on "the assimilation of esoteric knowledge" or the "light within", which is endowed by the substance of God. Through this operation of "gnosis" or "divine spark", man can ascend to the realm of pleroma. **The Gospel of Truth** explains: "...one has knowledge, he receives what is his own, and draws it to himself...whoever is to have knowledge in this way knows where he comes from, and where he is going".^{2 3 1} Gnostic redemption can therefore be likened to "the process of divine descent and reascent",^{2 3 2} a process almost tantamount to the transmigration of the soul in Buddhism.

Two further significant indications with regard to the inner divine spark of man as basis for cross communication between God and man are described radically in **The Gospel of Philip**:

...God created humanity; (but now human beings) created god. That is the way it is in the world--human beings make gods, and worship their creation. It would be appropriate for the gods to worship human beings!^{2 3 3}

You saw the spirit, you became spirit. You saw Christ, you became Christ. You saw (the Father, you) shall become Father.^{2 3 4}

^{2 3 1} 21.11-22.15, NHL, p. 40.

^{2 3 2} NCE, p. 526

^{2 3 3} 71.35-72.4, NHL, p. 143.

^{2 3 4} 61.29-35, NHL, p. 137.

Gnostic pantheism is taken to radical extremes in the above two passages. Man's divine inner light or his gnosis not only allows him to achieve salvation but actually allows him to become Christ and God. In Gnostic pantheism, "humanity itself manifests the divine life and divine revelation".²³⁵ The Gnostic idea of divinity in all created things, i.e., Gnostic pantheism, corresponds to the concept of pantheism of the Libertines which will be explored later in this thesis.

3.3.2.2 Gnostic Fanaticism

One of the recurring tendencies in heresies is that of excessive spirituality. This has been pointed out by the Apostles Peter and Jude and by Calvin in describing the Libertines who are "entranced above the highest clouds". Calvin indicates that this spiritual excessiveness or fanaticism was also practised by the Gnostics in the form of spiritual babbling: "...they employed an obscure jargon for babbling spiritual things, which no one could understand".²³⁶

According to Hippolytus, Simon Magus, the originator of Gnosticism, maintained that there is in each human being an infinite power which is

²³⁵ Pagels, p. 147.

²³⁶ TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.157: ...ilz avoyent un gergon obscur pour gasouiller des choses spirituelles, sans qu'on y entendist note).

...I see! I see indescribable depths. How shall I tell you...How (shall I describe) the universe? I (am mind and) I see another mind, the one that (moves) the soul! I see the one that moves me from pure forgetfulness. You give me power! I see myself! I want to speak! Fear restrains me. I have found the beginning of the power that is above all powers, the one that has no beginning. I see a fountain bubbling with life...I have seen!^{2 3 9}

Calvin repeatedly condemns and shows his abhorrence of this kind of ecstatic, spiritual display of various heretical sects. This kind of emphasis on the spiritual is what leads to the rejection of reason and to the

²⁴⁰ The Discourse on the Eighth and Ninth, 56.17-22, NHL, p. 294.

embracing of a free spirit which links up with antinomian behaviour. This antinomian behaviour is manifest in the Libertine view in which "law and reason constitute a bondage which they do not want to hear mentioned".²⁴¹ Overemphasis of the spiritual experience, especially when it means Spirit over and above Scripture, is particularly upsetting to Calvin as we can see in chapters 9 and 10 of the *Treatise*.

3.3.3 MANICHAISM

Thus far, Calvin has only briefly mentioned the most significant tenets of the Marcionites and the Gnostics that have relevance to those of the Libertines. Calvin now turns to the Manichaeian sect and contends that "because from the earliest times the Manichaeian sect was already renowned among the others, enjoyed a multitude of followers, endured the longest, and picked up ideas from everywhere, filling itself with copious false doctrines, it is essential for us to treat it as a unique mirror in order to show what we maintain".²⁴² Thus Calvin takes the Manichaeian sect as representative and as most revealing of all heretical sects.

²⁴¹ TAL, pp. 193-194 (CO VII.156: Car cela leur est une servitude, de laquelle ilz ne veulent ouyr parler).

²⁴² TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.157: Mais pource que la secte des Manichiens a esté iadis renommée entre les autres, d'autant qu'elle a eu plus grande multitude de sectateurs, et a esté de plus longue durée, et aussi qu'elle a ramassé plusieurs pieces de tous costez, à fin d'estre plus copieuse et abondante en faulses doctrines, il nous la faudra prendre singulierement pour miroir, à fin de monstrier ce que nous pretendons).

The Manichaeen heresy can indeed be said to have lasted the longest of the heretical sects Calvin mentions. Not only did the heresy itself endure, but its label or name of "Manichaeen" was used as the proper name to represent all heretical movements occurring throughout the medieval period, especially where any dualistic tendencies were noted in them.²⁴³ It is also agreed among scholars that the Manichaeen sect did pick up ideas from everywhere; its teachings accepted and fused many different pagan religions and cultures of the ancient world. The sect's geographical dissemination covered the whole Roman Empire and other territories beyond it, even reaching China.

A core characteristic of the Manichaeen sect was, as Calvin points out, their "rejecting the Old Testament and scoffing at the law and the Prophets".²⁴⁴ It is odd, however, that Calvin never mentions the rejection of the Old Testament when he deals with the two previous sects since it is in fact generally known that it was the Marcionites who had destroyed the unity of the Scripture by denying the Old Testament. Calvin's associating the Manichaeen sect with the rejection of the Old Testament may be explained as follows. Firstly, Calvin's knowledge of the Manichaeans relies completely upon Augustine's account of the Manichaeen sect which describes the Manichaeen view of the Scripture. One can see in the *Institutes* of Calvin that he accepts Augustine's ac-

²⁴³ Runciman, 1947, p. 17.

²⁴⁴ TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.157: Iceux donc reiectans le vieil Testament et se moquans de la Loy et des Prophetes).

count and utilizes it in his attack on the Manichaeans.²⁴⁵ Another reason that the Manichaeans' view of Scripture especially warranted Calvin's attention may be the fact that unlike the other heresies, the Manichaeans had their own canonical books which they upheld in opposition to the orthodox Christian Scriptures.²⁴⁶ Calvin's understanding of the Manichaeans' erroneous views of Scripture is supported in Augustine's Reply to Faustus the Manichaean. Faustus was a contemporary of Augustine and was "undoubtedly the acutest, most unscrupulous opponent of orthodox christianity".²⁴⁷ Augustine reports that Faustus denounced "the entire Old Testament system" including the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. He even denounced parts of the New Testament such as the genealogical records of the gospels on the grounds that Christ could not be born of a woman. Faustus' concept of the New Testament included only the teaching of Christ which he thought fit to be called "the gospel". The historical event of Christ is rejected and only the teachings of Christ accepted. Faustus seemingly accepted the gospel but only on his terms: "Do I believe the gospel? Certainly. Do I therefore believe that Christ was born? Certainly not....Do I then admit the truth of the gospel? Yes; understanding by the gospel the preaching of Christ".²⁴⁸ Calvin

²⁴⁵ Inst., I.7.3, pp. 76-77 (CO II.57); II.11.3, p. 452 (CO II.331); II.13.1, pp. 474-475 (CO II.347); IV.14.26, pp. 1302-1303 (CO II.961); etc.

²⁴⁶ NPNF IV. Pref., p. 34.

²⁴⁷ NPNF IV.155.

²⁴⁸ NPNF IV.156 (CSEL XXV.253: Accipis euangelium? et maxime. proinde ergo et natum accipis Christum? non ita est...scias me, ut dixi, accipere euangelium, id est praedicationem Christi).

decries just this kind of attitude toward the gospels of the New Testament in the sect as a whole: "From the New Testament they accepted here and there what was in agreement with their ideas and cut out whatever displeased them or was contrary to their views".²⁴⁹ Their partial acceptance of the gospel was most irritating to Calvin, whose reformation emphasized the belief of the whole Scripture as the ultimate authority of faith and conduct.

The Manichaeans could not accept the whole of the Scriptures because to them, there was a sharp distinction between the Old and the New Testaments. The cause of this distinction is rooted in their view of God as revealed in the two Testaments. For the Manichaeans understood God in the two Testaments as radically different. They denied God of the Old Testament as the true God. As God of the patriarchs, He could only be a finite being.²⁵⁰ In fact, they believed that the God of the Old Testament was evil and cruel.²⁵¹ As Calvin explains, they "accused God, who is revealed there, of cruelty and an excessive harshness".²⁵² Only the God of the New Testament was the true God. Of this Manichaean contention, Augustine points out their error: "...it evidently can not

²⁴⁹ TAL, pp. 196-197 (CO VII.157: Du nouveau Testament, ilz en prenoient ce qui leur venoit à propos ça et là, retrenchant tout ce qui ne leur plaisoit point, ou estoit contraire à leur opinion).

²⁵⁰ NPNF IV.319-320 (CSEL XXV.725).

²⁵¹ NPNF IV.46.

²⁵² TAL, p. 196 (CO VII.157: ...accusoyent le Dieu, qui est la monstré, de cruauté et trop excessive rigueur).

be said that it is one God who shows his wrath, and makes known his power in the vessels of wrath filled for destruction, and another God who shows his riches in the vessels of mercy".²⁵³

Because the Manichaeans could not accept the God of the Old Testament, it naturally followed that they rejected the whole of the Old Testament. The Manichaeans radically distinguished between law and gospel and condemned the orthodox acceptance of Scripture. The Old Testament just could not be accepted on the same level as the New Testament. They rejected the law, both the observances and the moral precepts, and refused to accept the lives and prophecies of the prophets.²⁵⁴ They therefore denied the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ, also putting forth that Christ could not be a physical, human descendant of David.²⁵⁵

In addition to the Manichaeans' erroneous view of Scripture, another fundamental principle of the Manichaeans which they have in common with the earlier heresies thus far mentioned is that of dualism. Their view of God, Christ, world, and man is dictated by their dualistic outlook. The Manichaeans understand everything according to the theory of their two principles: light and darkness. Everything is regarded as being

²⁵³ NPNF IV.265 (CSEL XXV.569: certe hic nullo modo dici potest alium deum esse, qui ostendit iram et demonstrat potentiam suam in uasis, quae perfecta sunt ad perditionem, et alium, qui ostendit diuitias in uasis misericordiae).

²⁵⁴ NPNF IV.167 (CSEL XXV.268); IV.22.1-5, pp. 272-274 (CSEL XXV.591-595); IV.33.1-3, pp. 340-342 (CSEL XXV.784-789).

²⁵⁵ NPNF IV.177 (CSEL XXV.313-314).

divided into two realms from the beginning: good and evil. Calvin explains this dualism in the Manichaeian view of man which he had also discerned in their concept of God:

Similarly they posited two souls in man, one which came from the good God and which they said had been tainted by inferior things, but which nevertheless they wanted to purify until by degrees it returned to its first origin. As for the other, they said it could not be corrected but would forever return to the realm of darkness, of which it consisted.^{2 5 6}

In the above statement, Calvin clearly documents the Manichaeians' dualistic view of human existence. He does not, however, mention their doctrine of Christ and of creation which also are based on dualism. Calvin seems to be deliberately excluding these elements, because they have been mentioned in his summary of Marcionite and Gnostic doctrines. Instead of repeating the same topics, Calvin tends to point out novel elements in each heresy which will be relevant to his discussion later of the Libertine sect. The focus is on how the doctrinal affinities of these earlier heresies link up with that of the Libertines.

The point which must be clarified at this time is whether there exists a real historical continuity from the early heresies and on through to those of the medieval period and finally to the Libertines. In this respect, the heretical movements of the medieval period must prove to be the linking chain between the early heresies and the Libertines. Considering that

^{2 5 6} TAL, p. 197 (CO VII.157: Semblablement ilz constituoyent deux ames en l'homme: l'une venante du bon Dieu, laquelle ilz disoyent estre souillée par ces choses inferieures, et pourtant qu'il convenoit la purifier, iusques à ce que par degrez elle revint à son origine premiere. Touchant de l'autre, ilz disoyent qu'elle ne se pouvoit corriger, mais qu'elle s'en retourne tousiours au commencement des tenebres, dont elle est).

Manichaeism is the representative heretical sect in the early period and in the medieval period, it must be shown to have survived in one form or another in medieval heresies.

3.3.3.1 Manichaeism and Medieval Heresies

It has been mentioned earlier that the teachings of Marcionism and Gnosticism were absorbed into those of Manichaeism. Moving historically throughout the medieval period, one also finds that Manichaean teachings such as the dualistic concept of two principles and of two gods, the docetic idea of Christ, and the rejection of the Old Testament among others are commonly shared by the medieval heresies.^{2 5 7} Manichaean doctrines appeared in such medieval heretical groups as the Paulicians, Bogomils, Patarenes, Cathars, Albanenses, and Albigenses among others. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the term Manichaean was often used as an umbrella term to cover these and other medieval heresies. And their doctrines can easily be found in the documents of medieval heretics and in the decrees of the Roman Catholic Councils.

^{2 5 7} Lambert, 1977, pp. 1-22; 119-128.

A full account of the Paulician history and beliefs is given by Peter of Sicily who was an ambassador in Tephrike, the Paulician capital.²⁵⁸ Although their doctrines remain largely a matter of conjecture because they have been recounted by people hostile to them, these are generally considered reliable facts which historians have used without question.²⁵⁹ According to these accounts, the Paulicians profess six doctrines.²⁶⁰ The first article describes the doctrine of two principles which mainly links with their concept of two Gods, good and evil.²⁶¹ The fifth article indicates that they reject the Old Testament and retain only parts of the New Testament.²⁶² The docetic idea of Christ is also illumined in the fourth article where they discredit any value to the Cross, on which Christ had only seemed to die.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ MPG CIV.

²⁵⁹ Runciman, p. 181.

²⁶⁰ MPG CIV.1254-1258.

²⁶¹ MPG CIV.1254: apud illos axioma principia duo confiteri, melum scilicet Deum et bonum.

²⁶² MPG CIV.1255: Quintum est, quod nullum recipiunt Veteris Testamenti librum, deceptores ac fures prophetas appellantes, sicut postea proprio in loco accuratius ostendetur; nec nisi sancta quatuor Evangelia, et apostoli Pauli quatuordecim Epistolas, Jacobi catholicam, Joannis tres, sancti Judae catholicam, et apostolorum Actus uti sunt apud nos sine ullius verbi mutatione.

²⁶³ MPG CIV.1255.

While the Paulicians were spreading from Armenia to the Eastern Byzantine Empire and to the Balkans through several centuries up to the twelfth century, the Bogomils emerged in Bulgaria about the tenth century and had great influence on the medieval heresies.²⁶⁴ Two accounts of the Bogomils which have been handed down are contained in the *Panoplia Dogmatica* of Euthymius Zigabenus²⁶⁵ and in an account by Cosmas who was a Bulgar priest almost contemporary with Bogomil. Both are hostile to the Bogomil heresy but authoritative in their accounts.²⁶⁶ Cosmas describes the Bogomils as simply being dualists who reject the Old Testament. They believe that the Devil created the world and consider material things to be evil. Their Christ is a docetic Christ who never became man except in appearance.²⁶⁷ Although Zigabenus reports that they are not absolute dualists and accept some parts of the Old Testament contradicting Cosmas' account, it seems certain that they are overall tinged with dualism. The Bogomils spread into the territory of Serbia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, and finally came to Western Europe.²⁶⁸ The Bogomils extended successfully into the Bulgarian Empire in the early thirteenth

²⁶⁴ Wakefield and Evans, 1969, pp. 13-14.

²⁶⁵ MPG CXXX.

²⁶⁶ Runciman, p. 73.

²⁶⁷ Wakefield and Evans, p. 15.

²⁶⁸ Wakefield and Evans, p. 16.

century and their religion became a state religion in Bosnia. The Bogomils in Bosnia and Palmatia were commonly called Patarines and held the same dualism.²⁶⁹

In the West, the Cathars were prominent dualists. They were stimulated by the spirit of the Bogomils carried by the crusaders.²⁷⁰ Like the Bogomils, the Cathars attribute the whole creation of the material world to the Devil's work. The Cathars maintain the two principles on the basis of an absolute opposition of good to evil. In a treatise, *The Book of the Two Principles*, written by a thirteenth century Italian Cathar, the author tackles the problem of how to reconcile the existence of evil with the existence of God. The author resolves the problem "by asserting an absolute duality of gods, creators, and creations...an absolute opposition of good to evil...and by denying the existence of free will among the creatures of good".²⁷¹ The Cathars distinguish the material world from God and build up between them a sequence of eons which are divine beings. Christ is the chief of these eons who can not be materialized in his incarnation because matter is wholly evil. So in the Cathar belief, Christ can not be in any way human. He only seems to be in human form. As Runciman explains, "On the whole the Cathars tended to be docetist. It was simpler to believe that this Christ-eon being divine only seemed

²⁶⁹ Wakefield and Evans, p. 16.

²⁷⁰ Wakefield and Evans, p. 27.

²⁷¹ Wakefield and Evans, p. 511.

to assume human form and only seemed to be crucified; for if matter is wholly bad then a divine Being can not be clothed in it".²⁷² The Cathars' identifying the Creator with the Devil resulted in their disregarding the Old Testament. They claimed that even Abraham and Moses as with the other patriarchs of the Old Testament were inspired by the Devil, and so denied the Old Testament itself except for the books of the Prophets, the Psalms and the five books of Solomon.²⁷³

In the thirteen century, Rainerius Sacconi, a Dominican friar and inquisitor, wrote *Summa de Catharis et Cathars et Pauperibus de Lugduno* in which the doctrines of the Albanenses are given. According to this account, the Albanenses held the same beliefs as the Cathars. There were two groups in the Albanenses: a group of Belesmanza and of John of Lugio. The former group maintained a strong dualistic principle, upheld the docetic idea of Christ, and rejected the Old Testament. Concerning the two principles, Rainerius reports that "there are from eternity two principles, to wit, of good and of evil."²⁷⁴ The docetic idea of Christ is also seen clearly: "The Son of God did not acquire human nature in reality....Neither did He really eat, drink, or suffer, nor was He really dead and buried, nor was His resurrection real, but all these

²⁷² Runciman, p. 149.

²⁷³ Runciman, pp. 150-151.

²⁷⁴ *Summa of Rainerius* 17, in Wakefield and Evans, p. 338.

things were in appearance only".²⁷⁵ They also rejected the Old Testament by denying all the fathers in the Old Testament.²⁷⁶

The Albigensians also share the characteristics of the Cathars. The manuscript concerning the Albigensian tenets is provided by Antoine Dondaine under the title, "Durand de Huesca et la polemique anti-cathare" in *Archivum fratrum praedicatorum*.²⁷⁷ The Albigensians also maintain that "there are two gods, that is, a good God and a strange god".²⁷⁸ Regarding the Old Testament, they hold that the Mosaic law was given by the evil god and therefore unworthy of upholding. To them, Christ did not actually appear in the world; He did so only in a spiritual sense.

These three characteristics of Albigensian heresy are made more clear in another tract written by Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*. The tenth article in Part I of the tract deals with the Albigensian tenets of God and Scripture. With regard to God, "the heretics postulated two creators, to wit, one of the invisible world, whom they called the benign

²⁷⁵ Wakefield and Evans., p. 338.

²⁷⁶ Wakefield and Evans., p. 338.

²⁷⁷ Vol. XXIX(1959), pp. 268-271, cited in Wakefield and Evans, p. 231.

²⁷⁸ Wakefield and Evans, p. 231.

God, and one of the visible world, or the malign God".^{2 7 9} They are also reported as rejecting the Old Testament on the basis of the concept of two different gods: "They ascribed the New Testament to the benign God, the Old Testament to the malign one; the latter book they wholly rejected, except for a few passages which have found their way into the New Testament and which on this account they esteemed worthy of acceptance".^{2 8 0} On the docetic idea of Christ, Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay explains that "the heretics even affirmed in their secret assemblies that the Christ who was born in terrestrial and visible Bethlehem and crucified in Jerusalem was evil, and that Mary Magdalen was his concubine and the very woman taken in adultery of whom we read in the Gospel; for the good Christ, they said, never ate nor drank nor took on real flesh, and was never of this world, except in a spiritual sense in the body of Paul".^{2 8 1}

We have seen that all these medieval heresies mentioned above hold doctrines which are common in the Manichaeans. In addition to these existing historical documents, the decrees of the Roman Catholic Councils also attest to the influence and existence of Manichaeism in terms of doctrinal affinity among the medieval heresies. The Church specifically repudiated the following doctrines of Manichaeism in the medieval heresies:

^{2 7 9} *Historia Albigensis* I.10, in Wakefield and Evans, p. 237.

^{2 8 0} Wakefield and Evans, pp. 237-238.

^{2 8 1} Wakefield and Evans, p. 238.

"Pantheism, emanationism, and dualism and its doctrinal positions on the true nature of God's creative act, the origin of the world, and the origin of man".^{2 8.2}

At Braga in 561, the Church held councils against the errors of Priscillian, a devotee of Manichaeism. The Church condemned the Manichaean doctrines of pantheism, creation, and dualism as follows:

If anyone believes that human souls or angels are composed of the substance of God...let him be anathema.^{2 8.3}

If anyone says that the devil was not first a good angel made by God, or that his nature was not work of God, but claims that the devil sprang from the darkness and had no creator at all, rather that he is himself the beginning and substance of evil...Let him be anathema.^{2 8.4}

If anyone believes that human souls are linked to some foreordained sign of destiny, as Priscillian and the pagans have declared: Let him be anathema.^{2 8.5}

About half a century after Manichaeism appeared in the early medieval heresies such as Paulicianism, Bogomilism, and Catharism, the spirit of Manichaeism appeared also in the heresies of the Waldensians and the Albigensians. In 1208, Innocent the XIIIth ordered a confession against the errors of the Waldensians infected with Manichaeism. This profession of faith emphasized the unity of the Old and the New Testaments and

^{2 8.2} TCT, p. 142.

^{2 8.3} TCT 325(D 235).

^{2 8.4} TCT 327 (D 237).

^{2 8.5} TCT 329 (D 239).

strongly upheld monotheism.²⁸⁶ In the fourth Lateran Council of 1215, a similar profession was made against Albigensianism which showed signs of Manichaeism and Gnostic errors of creation and the power of God.²⁸⁷ In this profession, the Council stressed the existence of "only one true God" against the concept of the two gods contended by the heresies. The Council further put forth that the universe, both spiritual and corporeal, both angelic or visible, is created by one God. The origin of everything is this one God.²⁸⁸

Another profession of faith made against the Manichaean doctrines of heresies is promulgated in the decree of the Council of Florence, 1442. The existence of one God as the creator of the universe and the unity of the two Testaments are distinctly upheld by the Council:

The holy Roman Church firmly believes...that the one true God...is the creator of all things visible and invisible....It professes that one and the same God is the author of the Old and the New Testament, that is, of the law, of the prophets, and of the Gospel because the holy men of both Testament have spoken under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit....Furthermore, the church anathematizes the foolish doctrine of the Manichaeans who have set down two first causes, one of visible things and the other of invisible things, and who have said that there is one God of the New Testament and another God of the Old Testament.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ TCT 334 (D 421).

²⁸⁷ TCT, p. 146.

²⁸⁸ TCT 335 (D 428).

²⁸⁹ TCT 343-344 (D 706-707).

It is not difficult to see through both the historical documents and the decrees of the Roman Councils that heresies of the medieval period shared many significant tenets in their beliefs. It is also clearly observable that such tenets are akin to those of Manichaeism in many aspects. Although one may not prove a direct historical connection between the Manichaeans and these medieval sects, the similarities in doctrine are clear enough that one may suggest that a transmission of Manichaeism into these heresies took place. In this sense, a case for historical conjunction between the early heresies and the medieval heresies can be made.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In tracing the history of heresies from the early to the medieval ones, their similarities stand out strikingly. They basically err in their views of God, Christ, and Scripture. Although the various heresies maintain doctrines which are slightly different from each other, their dualistic doctrine of two principles is fundamental to all of them. As for God, all of them contend that there are two gods: the good and the bad. The latter is linked with the created, material world which is always evil while the good God is linked with the spiritual realm which is always good. In this context, Christ as the Son of God can not be materialized. He seems to appear in human form, but He in fact never became human. The Old and New Testament are also viewed in this context. Since the creator God appears in the Old Testament, so the Old Testament is malign

and imputed to the Devil. On the other hand, the New Testament is understood as being good because it tells about the good God, Christ.

Pantheism is another concept shared by heretics like the Gnostics and Manichaeans in the early church and the Cathars of the medieval age. Of the Cathars, Runciman indicates that they were "essentially believers in pantheism throughout the celestial realm....They build up a sequence of eons between God Himself and the material world, all of which were filled with divinity. The Holy Ghost emanated from God....The Son, or Christ, was chief of these eons...".²⁹⁰ Fanaticism and immorality are also characteristics shared by the various heresies and which were attacked by the orthodox church.

It is not possible to discover every tenet which the various heresies held in common, but the doctrinal affinities which can be ascertained are sufficient enough to link them together. This is exactly what Calvin intends in his exposition of the early heresies. In tracing these earlier heresies, Calvin provides the background to the occurrence of the Libertine movement. In doing so, the Libertines are placed in an ecclesiastical history which illumines the doctrines of the Libertines as well as of the earlier heresies.

²⁹⁰ Runciman, p. 149.

4. VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Calvin asserts in his *Institutes* that "no one is able to gain even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he be a student of the [sic] Scripture".²⁹¹ For Calvin, a true knowledge of God and of ourselves is impossible without reference to Scripture. Indeed, his opus magnum, the *Institutes*, is devoted to the discovery of true Christian doctrine as found in the Bible. In his introduction to the reader, Calvin clearly sets forth his intention: "it has been my purpose in this labor to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the divine Word, in order that they may be able both to have easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling".²⁹² In this regard, Wilhelm Niesel properly states as follows: "Hence the aim of Calvin's theology

²⁹¹ *Inst.* I.6.2, p. 72 (CO II.54: nec quemquam posse vel minimum gustum rectae sanaeque doctrinae percipere, nisi qui scripturae fuerit discipulus).

²⁹² *Inst.* To the reader, p. 4 (CO II.1: Porro hoc mihi in isto labore propositum fuit, sacrae theologiae candidatos ad divini verbi lectionem ita praeparare et instruere, ut et facilem ad eam aditum habere, et inoffenso in ea gradu pergere queant).

seems to be not an unfolding of 'philosophia humana' but an exposition of the 'philosophia christiana' which God gives us in the Bible".²⁹³

For Calvin, sola scriptura is the only signpost which leads one to truth. By this everything, whether it be Church or tradition, must be examined. In fact, Calvin's fight against both the Roman Catholic Church and the Radical groups revolved around his firm belief in sola scriptura. It was with this regula fidei that two thousand years of Church and tradition needed to be reexamined and corrected.²⁹⁴ Radical groups such as the Anabaptists and the Libertines also fell into their errors because of their discrediting of Scripture.²⁹⁵

In view of Calvin's stand on Scripture, it is not surprising that he so vehemently repudiates the view of Scripture put forth by the Libertines. The chapters 7 through 10 of the *Treatise* can be regarded as treating the subject of Scripture. Calvin's exposition begins with an account

²⁹³ Niesel, 1980, p. 24.

²⁹⁴ While the Roman Catholic Church maintained that both Church (or tradition) and Scripture constitute the ultimate authority for the rule of the faithful (even going so far as placing the Church over the authority of Scripture), Calvin contends that the ultimate authority of our faith consists only in sola scriptura. See regarding this fundamental conflict, see Calvin's *Reply to Sadolet* in Calvin: *Theological Treatises*, tr. by Reid, 1954, pp. 230-231; 241; 255. See also John C. Olin's introduction in his *A Reformation Debate*, 1979, pp. 29-21.

²⁹⁵ For the Anabaptists' view of Scripture, see Balke, p. 98f and pp. 309-320.

of the style of speech and general behaviour of the Libertines. In Chapters 7 and 8, Calvin introduces the Libertine sect as a double-dealing and double-speaking group which bases their actions on their peculiar concept of Scripture. To the Libertines, the Scriptures fully support their actions. Calvin accuses, however, that the Libertines are wrongly using the Scriptures to suit their purpose. In Chapter 8, Calvin indicates the points of departure from his own understanding of Scripture and of God and Christ as embodied in Scripture. Chapters 9 and 10 further pinpoint the blasphemy of the Libertines. The fundamental problem of the Libertines is seen as their overemphasis of the Holy Spirit over and against the Holy Scriptures. Calvin's aim in these chapters is to prove the error of the Libertines' understanding of Scripture and of the Holy Spirit by examining Scripture itself.

The present chapter will first briefly consider Calvin's description of the characteristics of the Libertines themselves. Then Calvin's exposition on the Libertines' view of Scripture and of the Spirit will be carefully followed to shed light on the Libertine hermeneutics. In doing so, we should be able to better understand both the Libertines as sectarians and Calvin as a firm believer in the authority of Scripture.

4.2 THE DUPLICITOUS NATURE OF THE LIBERTINES

In Chapters 7 and 8 of the *Treatise*, the Libertines are revealed as fickle and dishonest. They possess a jargon which they use mainly to "disguise their meaning [so] that one can neither determine what their subject matter is or whether they are affirming or denying something".²⁹⁶ The aim of the Libertines, Calvin observes, is to confuse and beguile their listeners with their lofty way of speaking. Their style of speech impressed the simple-minded and as Calvin accuses, hid their true colors.

Calvin's main criticism of the Libertines' style of speech lies not only in his observation that common sense condemns their deceptiveness but in the decree of God which commands that the tongue be used for a specific purpose: "For God created the tongue for the purpose of expressing thought in order that we might be able to communicate with each other".²⁹⁷ The prime example of this purpose is to be seen in the Scriptures. Even though God is clothed in majesty, He "accommodates Himself to our smallness" by using "toward us an unrefined way of speaking in order to be understood".²⁹⁸ Given this fact, being deceptive

²⁹⁶ TAL, p. 213 (CO VII. 168: mais ilz en deguisent tellement la signification, que iamais on ne sait quelle est le subiect de la matiere dont ilz parlent, ne que c'est qu'ilz veulent affermer ou nier).

²⁹⁷ TAL, p. 214 (CO VII.169: Car la langue est creée de Dieu pour exprimer la cogitation, à ce que nous puissions communiquer ensemble; Cf. Inst. II.8.47-48, pp. 411-413 (CO II.300-301)).

²⁹⁸ TAL, p. 215 (CO VII.169).

in speech is not only perverse but contrary to God's wish that the tongue or language be used to communicate simply and effectively.²⁹⁹ As such, the problem of the Libertines in this respect is their lack of understanding of Scripture itself.

Calvin further describes the Libertines as extending their deceptiveness to their actions. In language and in action, the Libertines make it a practice to confuse and deceive. The preposterousness of this, Calvin explains, is further seen in that "they are very proud of this and hold to it fiercely".³⁰⁰ According to Calvin's account, the Libertines seem to have delighted in their inconstancy as well as in duplicity. Against this attitude and behaviour of the Libertines, Calvin insists on the virtues of simplicity and steadfastness: "simplicity is the highest virtue we can recommend".³⁰¹

A further dimension of this deceptiveness of the Libertines is that they believe it to be justified on the basis of Scripture. Calvin relates that the Libertines name certain passages from the Scriptures to prove that

²⁹⁹ Cf. *Inst.* III.20.33, pp. 896-897 (CO II.659-660). On the topic of prayer, Calvin contends that the language "must be a language which can be generally understood by the whole assembly", and adds that "we must unquestionably feel that, either in public prayer or in private, the tongue without the mind must be highly displeasing to God" (*Inst.* II.8.47, pp. 411-412 (CO II.300-301)). In general, the tongue should not serve any false charges or reports either in judicial testimony or in private conversation. The tongue which declares the truth, should serve "both the good reputé and the advantage of our neighbors".

³⁰⁰ *TAL*, p. 216 (CO VII.170: ilz prennent une grand gloire en cela, et s'en tiennent bien fiers).

³⁰¹ *TAL*, p. 216 (CO VII.170: Car puis que c'est la principale vertu que nous devons avoir en recommandation, que Simplicité).

God and Christ both acted deceptively. The Libertines, according to Calvin, made God into a mocking simulator and Christ into a teller of riddles. The Libertines cite Psalm 2:4 ("He who sits in the heavens laughs at them") to support their belief that God sits amused in heaven at the expense of those who suffer. Calvin explains that God only delays punishment on the wicked but "these villains interpret it to make God into a scoffer who mimics Himself for the purpose of deceiving the world".³⁰²

The Libertines put Christ into the same category as God. Because Christ spoke in parables which are difficult to understand, the Libertines claim that Christ entertained Himself with the bafflement of His hearers. Calvin acquiesces that the parables "require exposition",³⁰³ but argues that the problem lies in the Libertines' total miscomprehension of the nature of God and Christ as it is manifest in the Word of God. The evidence is clearly marked in the Scriptures, Calvin argues.

Referring to Isaiah, Calvin discusses the true and just nature of God. God's steadfastness is to be witnessed in his affirmation that He "never spoke by stealth nor in darkness, nor did He ever command the people of Israel to seek Him in vain (Isa. 45:19)".³⁰⁴ Commenting on this pas-

³⁰² TAL, p. 217 (CO VII.171: Ces villains prennent cela pour faire Dieu un gaudisseur, qui se contreface pour abuser le monde).

³⁰³ TAL, p. 218 (CO VII.171).

³⁰⁴ TAL, p. 218 (CO VII.171-172: qu'il n'avoit point parlé en cachette, ne par dessoubz terre: qu'il n'avoit point commandé en vain au peuple d'Israel, de le chercher (Es. 45, 19)).

sage in Isaiah, Calvin observes that "God cannot be comprehended by human faculties," but he reminds us that in Isaiah, God

solemnly declares that he does not invite us in vain, though he delay his assistance; for what he has promised is most certain, and, as he plainly shewed to whom we ought to betake ourselves, and on whom we ought to rely, so he will give practical demonstration that the hope of those who relied on his word was not vain, or without foundation.³⁰⁵

Furthermore, "the Lord has taught nothing that is obscure, or ambiguous, or false".³⁰⁶

As with God, Jesus Christ is a shining example of the certainty of the Word of God. Christ came not to obscure but to enlighten since He Himself is light. He is, as is written, the "sun of righteousness"(Mal. 4:2).³⁰⁷ This name, Calvin states in his *Commentaries*, is appropriate since "it is the peculiar office of Christ to illuminate" and since Christ was "from the beginning the true light, which illuminates every man that cometh into the world".³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ *Comm. Isa. 45:19* (CO XXXVII.144-145: Testatur autem se non frustra nos invitare, etiamsi differat auxilium suum: certissimum enim esse quod promisit. Ut aperte docuit quo nobis confugiendum, in quo conquiescendum esset: ita re ipsa comprobaturum, non inanem fuisse eorum spem qui in eius verbo acquieverunt).

³⁰⁶ *Comm. Isa. 45:19* (CO XXXVII.145).

³⁰⁷ *TAL*, p. 218 (CO VII.172).

³⁰⁸ *Comm. Mal. 4:2* (CO XLIV.490).

After showing that the nature of God and Christ is clarity and truthfulness, Calvin further maintains that the gospel or the Word of God can be nothing less but clear and unambiguous. Indeed, Calvin argues, "We should take pride in possessing a doctrine that is clear, pure, certain, and open to everyone, and should say that those who use obscurity utilize a shameful veil in order to cover up their turpitude".³⁰⁹ The indirect way of the parables, Calvin points out, is not to confuse but "rather the better to impress His teaching upon the hearts of the faithful and give it a greater luster".³¹⁰ Moreover, the difficulty with the parables lies not in that they have double meanings but in that the hearers have hardened hearts. Calvin concedes the point that "Scripture is somewhat dark and hard to be understood" but maintains that this "ought to be ascribed to the dulness and slowness of our apprehension, and not to the Scripture; for blind or weak-sighted men have no right to accuse the sun, because they cannot look at him".³¹¹

Thus, the question is not whether the parables of Jesus are difficult to understand; rather, as Calvin stresses, "one must consider the source

³⁰⁹ TAL, p. 219 (CO VII.172: C'est qu'il se vante d'avoir une doctrine claire, pure, certaine, facile à tout le monde, disant, que celui qui use d'obscurité, emprunte un voile de honte, pour couvrir sa turpitude).

³¹⁰ TAL p. 219 (CO VII.172: mais plustost pour mieux imprimer sa doctrine aux cueurs des fideles, et luy donner plus de lustre).

³¹¹ Comm. Isa. 45:19 (CO XXXVII.145-146: Hoc quidem verum est, sed hebetudini sensus nostri et tarditati, non scripturae imputandum: nec enim accusandus est sol a caecis aut luscitiosis, quod eum intueri non possint).

of their failure [to understand]".³¹² Any blindness to the clarity of the gospel, Calvin maintains, should be assigned to the veil of unbelief which obscures the gospel. The gospel is a manifestation of truth (manifestatione veritatis)³¹³ in which the faithful can have complete confidence. Whatever cunning the Libertines may apply to their distortion of the truthfulness of the Scriptures, Calvin concludes, the truth of Scripture is such that "anyone who still cannot see anything in this great light...must be blinded by the devil".³¹⁴

Calvin's understanding of the Scripture is clear and certain: The Scripture is a clear manifestation of the Word of God. This is confirmed in the true and just nature of God and Jesus Himself. Thus, Calvin exhorts: "Let them remove and cast away all veils, which are signs of shame, and let them teach us a pure and clear gospel, one which is not difficult to understand, except for those who are alienated in their minds because of their own unbelief (II Cor. 4:3)".³¹⁵ Commenting on the passage in II Corinthians, Calvin reiterates this point: "The sum is this--that the blindness of unbelievers detracts nothing from the

³¹² TAL, p. 219 (CO VII.172).

³¹³ Comm. II Cor. 4:2 (CO L.49).

³¹⁴ TAL, p. 218 (CO VII.172).

³¹⁵ TAL, p. 219 (CO VII. 172-173: qu'ilz facent comme saint Paul: qu'ilz ostent et reiectent tousvoiles, qui sont signes de honte, et nous enseignent un Evangile pur et net, et qui ne soit difficile à entendre, sinon à ceux qui seront alienez de leur sens par incredulité).

clearness of his gospel; for the sun is not less resplendent, that the blind do not perceive his light".³¹⁶

4.3 WORD AND SPIRIT

In Chapter 8 of the *Treatise* Calvin depicted the Libertines as being totally blind to the clarity of the gospel and using it instead to support their diabolic and deceptive practices. In Chapter 9, Calvin further attacks the Libertines and their doctrine of Scripture. Calvin indicates that the Libertines' key hermeneutical principle regarding Scripture is this: "that Scripture, taken in its natural sense, is but a dead letter and only kills. Thus they abandon it in order to come to the life-giving Spirit".³¹⁷ Scripture is not accepted by the Libertines as the sacred Word of God that it is, but they distort it to suit their advantage. Calvin maintains that in rejecting the authority of Scripture, the Libertines pursue two goals:

First of all...that one should not hold to the simple sense of Scripture, but one should play around with it by means of allegorical interpretation. Second...one should not be content with what is written, or acquiesce in it at all, but one should speculate higher and look for new revelations.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Comm. II Cor. 4:4 (CO L.51).

³¹⁷ TAL, p. 222 (CO VII.174: que l'Escriture, prinse en son sens naturel, ne'est que lettre morte, et qui occist: et pourtant que il la faunt laisser pour venir à l'Esprit vivifiant).

³¹⁸ TAL, p. 222 (CO VII.174: c'est premierement qu'on ne se tienne

In attempting to better understand the practice of allegorizing the Scriptures which Calvin accuses the Libertines of, a brief look at the Priscillianists will be helpful. In tracing the history of heresies, Calvin has already mentioned the allegorical practice of the Priscillianists. Calvin again brings them into discussion, associating them with the Libertines and their tendency to speak with a double tongue. It is interesting to note that Farley insists that Calvin is referring to Priscilla, a Montanist prophetess.³¹⁹ This contention may be based on the premise that the Libertines and the Montanists are alike in their spiritually-oriented understanding of Scripture. It is true that Montanus and his followers pursued extra-revelatory prophecies and stressed the guidance of the Spirit rather than of Scripture.³²⁰ The Montanists' interpretation of Scripture was dominated by prophetic ecstasy. In interpreting Revelations 12:14, they identified the city of New Jerusalem as Pepaza Frigia in Asia Minor.³²¹

A close examination of Montanist texts, however, reveal no clear instance of the practice of allegorizing the Scriptures.³²² Although the Libertines

point au simple sens de l'Escriture, mais qu'on s'enioie par expositions allegoriques: secondement, qu'on ne se arreste pas à ce qui est escrit, pour y acquiescer du tout, mais qu'on specule plus haut, et qu'on cherche revelations nouvelles).

³¹⁹ See TAL, p. 198, n. 28.

³²⁰ Eusebius, Ecc. Hist. (NPNF I.231-233; MPG XX.465-473).

³²¹ Realencyklopadie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche, 1903, vol. 13, pp. 420-423.

³²² See Bonwetsch, 1914, pp. 3-32.

and the Montanists (or Priscillianists) share a common characteristic of spirituality, the Priscillianists mentioned by Calvin certainly do not refer to those followers of Priscilla, the Montanist prophetess. The Priscillianists cited by Calvin more correctly refer to those belonging to a group founded in Spain during the fourth century under the guidance of Priscillian.

Priscillian was a bishop of Avila who was excommunicated by the Church. Priscillian called on the believers to renounce baptism and to turn to an ascetic life. He also emphasized special spiritual study of the Scriptures and was interested in the occult.^{3 2 3}

Two sources can be cited to support the argument that Calvin was referring to this Priscillian of Avila. The first is a reply by St. Augustine^{3 2 4} to the request of Consentius to condemn the Priscillianists. Consentius was a Spanish theologian in the fifth century who was confronted with the Priscillianist heresy. He especially asked Augustine for criticism against the Priscillianists' practice of concealing their heretical doctrines with denial and lies. In reply, Augustine first condemns the Priscillianists as being worse than any other heretics. Augustine also indicates that the Priscillianists believed in pantheism: they believe that

^{3 2 3} Chadwick, 1976, p. 8.

^{3 2 4} Augustine, *Con. Mend.* (NPNF III.481-500; MPL XL.518-547).

"the soul is part of God, and of the same nature and substance with Him".³²⁵

A further close similarity between the Libertines and the Priscillianists is revealed in Augustine's censure of the Priscillianists' tendency to hide behind a double heart:

For they alone, or at least they in the greatest degree, are found to make a dogma of lying for the purpose of hiding their truth, as they call it: and this so great evil therefore to esteem just, because they say that in the heart must be held that which is true, but with the mouth to utter unto aliens a false thing, is no sin.³²⁶

This double-faced character of the Priscillianists coincides remarkably with that which Calvin accuses the Libertines of in their answers regarding Scripture.³²⁷ Considering the above, it seems most probable that Calvin had in mind the same Priscillianists which Augustine had condemned in his treatise rather than the followers of Montanus.

The extant texts of the Priscillianists provide more concrete support for the connection made by Calvin between the Priscillianists and the Libertines. Priscillian: Tractatus contains eleven tracts expounding the

³²⁵ Augustine, *Con. Mend.* (NPNF III.484; MPL XL.523: anima sit pars Dei, et ejusdem cujus est ille naturae atque substantiae).

³²⁶ Augustine, *Con. Mend.* (NPNF III.482; MPL XL.519: Ipsi enim sali, vel certe maxime ipsi reperiuntur, ad occultandam suam quam putant veritatem, dogmatizare mendacium: atque hoc tam magnum malum ideo justum existimare, quia dicunt in corde retinendum esse quod verum est; ore autem ad alienos proferre falsum, nullum esse peccatum).

³²⁷ TAL, pp. 216-225 (CO VII.170-176).

doctrines of the Priscillianists. Among these, the fifth and the sixth are of particular interest. The fifth (*Tractatus Genesis*) defends the position of allegorizing the Old Testament while the sixth (*Tractatus Exodi*) again makes the same claims for the spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament.³²⁸ Chadwick's observation that the Priscillianists are following in the footsteps of Origen provides insight into the nature of the allegorizing tendency of the Priscillianists:

Priscillian's exegesis often follows the Origenist tradition found in Hilary where numbers and animals are of deep allegorical significance. The very order in which the psalms occur in the Psalter is symbolic (viii, pp. 87-88), a doctrine almost certainly derived from Hilary who explains, following Origen, that originally the psalms were unnumbered but were gathered together in one volume by Ezra and received their numbering from the seventy translators of the Greek Old Testament according to their spiritual meaning.³²⁹

In respect to the above discussion, it can be argued that the Priscillianists mentioned by Calvin refer to those originating in Spain under Priscillian of Avila. These would be the same group of heretics portrayed as liars by Augustine in his *Contra Mendacium*.

Calvin also associates the Libertines with the papists and accuses that "both of them together hold this principle in common: to change Scripture into allegories and to long for a better and more perfect wisdom than we find in it. And together both as a coverup appeal to Saint Paul's statement that 'the letter kills' (II Cor. 3:6)".³³⁰ Calvin here censures

³²⁸ CSEL, XVIII.65-68; 69-81. For explanation, see Chadwick, pp. 62-81.

³²⁹ Chadwick, p. 74.

³³⁰ TAL, p. 222 (CO VII.174: neantmoins tous les deux ont ce principe

the Roman Catholics on the one hand and the Libertines on the other. To Calvin, both groups fail to grasp the simple truth of Scripture and infer meanings and images for which Scripture does not provide material. Although the *Institutes* do not contain specific passages concerning the papists' allegorical methods, Calvin's *Commentaries* provide numerous examples.³³¹ To take one example, Calvin assails the papists for their allegorical interpretation of Psalms 24:7 ("Be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors that the King of glory may come in"):

From the natural sense of these words we may perceive how foolishly and falsely the Papists have abused this passage for confirmation of the gross and ridiculous notion by which they introduce Christ as knocking at the door of the infernal regions in order to obtain admission. Let us therefore learn from this to handle the holy Word of God with sobriety and reverence and to hold Papists in detestation who as it were, make sport of corrupting it and falsifying it in this manner by their impiety.³³²

It is an undoubtable truth to Calvin that Scripture stands on its own and is a lucid document containing the Word of God which needs no interpretation, especially allegorical. Calvin clearly states in his *Treatise* that any such allegorizing of Scripture is "to corrupt it terribly".³³³

commun ensemble, de transfigurer l'Escriture en allegorie, et d'affecter une sagesse meilleure et plus parfaite, que celle que nous y avons. Et tous deux d'un accord prennent pour couleur ceste sentence de saint Paul, que la lettre occist).

³³¹ Cf. Vander Kolk, 1951, pp. 117-135.

³³² *Comm. Ps.* 24:7 (CO XXXI.249: Quam vero stulte ac turpiter hoc loco abusi sint papistae ad crassa ludibra quibus Christum ad inferos penetrantem inducunt, ex genuino verborum sensu plus satis patet. Hinc vero discamus sanctum Dei verbum sobrie reverenterque tractare, ac papistas detestari, qui in eo pervertendo nefariis suis sacrilegiis quasi impune ludunt).

³³³ TAL, p. 222 (CO VII.174).

In refuting the practice of allegorizing the Scriptures, Calvin turns his attention to the explication of the passage in II Corinthians (3:6). The "letter " which kills, Calvin asserts, refers to the law or the Old Testament as opposed to the "spirit" which refers to the gospel. Calvin explains that Paul "calls the gospel a 'spiritual' doctrine, since Jesus Christ is included in it and vivifies the Word, making it efficacious in our hearts by His Spirit".³³⁴ Calvin explains in his *Commentary on the Corinthians* that this passage has been used to infer that "Paul here furnishes us with a key for expounding Scripture by allegories, while nothing is further from his intention".³³⁵ This understanding, Calvin further explains, was given impetus by Origen who interpreted the "letter as representing the literal sense of Scripture and the "spirit" as representing its spiritual sense. Calvin sees the apostle Paul's intention as being far from such a conclusion. The contrast is not made to give rise to two different readings of Scripture but in order to define the role of the law as compared to the gospel. Furthermore, the "letter" or the law to Calvin signifies outward preaching which does not reach the heart and is therefore dead. By "spirit", Calvin understands it to mean a "living doctrine, of such a nature as worketh effectually (I Thess. ii.13) on the minds of men, through the grace of the Spirit".³³⁶ Calvin concludes:

³³⁴ TAL, p. 223 (CO VII.174).

³³⁵ *Comm. II Cor. 3:6* (CO L.39: clam a Paulo tradi scripturae per allegorias exponendae: quum tamen hoc sit ab eius mente alienissimum).

³³⁶ *Comm. II Cor. 3:6* (CO L.39: per spiritum vero doctrinam vivam, quae efficaciter operetur in animis per gratiam spiritus).

By the term letter, therefore, is meant literal preaching--that is, dead and ineffectual, perceived only by the ear. By the term spirit, on the other hand, is meant spiritual doctrine, that is, what is not merely uttered with the mouth, but effectually makes its way to the souls of men with a lively feeling.³³⁷

This is succinctly stated in the *Treatise* where Calvin says that when the law remains literal, it "'kills' inasmuch as we can only find condemnation in it".³³⁸

To Calvin, the authority of Scripture is never in doubt. Scripture can never be dead or killing, only its delivery and acceptance. It is literal when it is devoid of the grace of Christ; the "letter" "in itself is useless".³³⁹ Or, as Calvin elaborates, "God conferred distinguished honour upon the law, which nevertheless, is nothing in comparison with the gospel".³⁴⁰ Acceptance in the heart is crucial to Calvin. And this acceptance is made possible by the preaching of and acceptance of the gospel which "'gives life,' since it makes available the grace of Jesus Christ, by which it bears fruit in us to salvation".³⁴¹

³³⁷ Comm. II Cor. 3:6 (CO L.39: *Litera ergo perinde valet ac literalis praedicatio, hoc est, mortua et inefficax, quae tantum auribus percipitur. Spiritus autem est doctrina spiritualis, hoc est, quae non ore tantum pronuntiatur, sed efficaciter in animas usque vivo sensu penetrat*).

³³⁸ TAL, p. 223 (CO VII.174).

³³⁹ Comm. Rom. 2:29 (CO XLIX.45).

³⁴⁰ Comm. II Cor. 3:7 (CO L.41: *quod legem Deus magno honore dignatus est: quae tamen nihil ad evangelium*).

³⁴¹ TAL, p. 223 (CO VII.174; *Tractatus Omnes* 511: *Evangelium vivificare, quod afferat gratiam Christi, per quam in nobis fructum edit at salutem*).

The Libertines then, to Calvin, have no basis on which to build their case for allegorical interpretations of Scripture. The passage in Corinthians which the Libertines use to support their belief refers not to Scripture itself but to the law which on its own is stale and dead. This, Calvin maintains, is the "simple sense from which nothing else should be drawn out".^{3 4 2}

Calvin's rejection of the Libertine tendency to allegorize is based on his doctrine of the authority of Scripture. To Calvin, to allegorize the simple and clear meaning of Scripture is but to deprive Scripture of all its authority. In commenting on the book of Galatians, Calvin repudiates Origen and others who are "torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense" and states that this act "was undoubtedly a contrivance of Satan to undermine the authority of Scripture, and to take away from the reading of it the true advantage".^{3 4 3}

The Libertines saw the Scriptures as a fertile ground of many spiritual meanings. This view not only led to a misreading of the true meaning of Scripture but to the impairing of the authority of Scripture. For Calvin, the Bible speaks with the authority it has on the basis of two points. The first resides in the fact that God Himself is the author of the Bible, the origin of which is then divine: "The Scriptures obtain full authority among believers only when men regard them as having

^{3 4 2} TAL, p. 223 (CO VII.174).

^{3 4 3} Comm. Gal. 4:22 (CO L.236).

sprung from heaven, as if there the living words of God were heard".³⁴⁴ The actual words of the Bible are recorded by the writers, in whose minds the Holy Spirit has transmitted the meaning of God's Word.³⁴⁵ Thus an important principle of Calvin's hermeneutics is that interpretation should take into account the spirit or the mind of the writer of the Scriptures, or "in some way picking out and understanding what the author had in mind when he wrote".³⁴⁶ Apart from these two basic hermeneutic principles, God's self-revelation and the author's intention, any imaginings of spiritual meaning or allegory are considered to be "a device of Satan".³⁴⁷ Allegorical interpretation is seen as an outcome of sheer human imagination. The true meaning of the Scriptures cannot be extracted by the ingenious operation of the human mind. The true meaning of the Scriptures is found in the expression of God's activity in the contents of the Bible. No human imagination or spiritual interpretation can concur with "heavenly doctrine" (*doctrina coelestis*).³⁴⁸ Spiritual imagination or allegorizing leads only to the invention of a new

³⁴⁴ *Inst.* I.7.1, p. 74 (CO II.56: non alio iure plenam apud fideles auctoritatem obtinent, quam ubi statuunt e coelo fluxisse, ac si vivae ipsae Dei voces illic exaudirentur).

³⁴⁵ Cf. *Inst.* IV.17.25, pp. 1391-1392 (CO II.1024).

³⁴⁶ Edwards, 1968, p. 112.

³⁴⁷ *Comm. Gal.* 4:22 (CO L.236-237).

³⁴⁸ *Inst.* I.6.2;3, pp. 71-73 (CO II.54-55).

doctrine. Hence, when Calvin assails the Libertine practice of allegory, his doctrine of the unity of the Word and Spirit is involved.

In the second conclusion which the Libertines arrive at, Scripture is held in opposition to the Spirit with Spirit held in high esteem over and against Scripture. The result of this, Calvin accuses, is "to lead us beyond the limits of Scripture".³⁴⁹ In rejecting Scripture as the final word of God, the Libertines overemphasize the Holy Spirit as the sole ruler of Christian life. The issue here is how Calvin and the Libertines differ in their understanding of the role of the Spirit in relation to Scripture.

The importance of the Spirit is unquestioned in Calvin's theology. The working of the Holy Spirit is seen as absolutely necessary in the attaining of the knowledge of God as revealed in His Word: "Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit".³⁵⁰ The power of the Spirit resides in its gift of providing certainty and completeness to the Word of God.

While the importance of the Spirit is strongly asserted by Calvin, its specific task and interrelationship with the Word of God is stressed even more. In the *Treatise against the Libertines*, this is especially true.

³⁴⁹ TAL, p. 223 (CO VII.174). In his *Reply to Sadolet* (Reid, p. 230), Calvin also attacks that both the Pope and the Anabaptist "boast extravagantly of the Spirit [and] inevitably tend to sink and bury the Word of God".

³⁵⁰ Inst. I.8.13, p. 92 (CO II.69: Quare tum vere demum ad salvificam Dei cognitionem scriptura satisfaciet, ubi interiori spiritus sancti persuasione fundata fuerit eius certitudo).

Of course, Calvin's exposition in the *Treatise* is influenced by the particular circumstance of his attack against the Libertines' abuse of the role of the Spirit. Nevertheless, his exposition corresponds to his general doctrine of the Spirit.

In listing the capacities which the Spirit does not fill, Calvin clearly sets forth a definition of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not create new doctrines nor does it move anyone to discover "strange subjects not found in Scripture" nor does it work to instill mistrust for Scripture.³⁵¹ The Spirit never works in opposition to Scripture. It does not add or retract from Scripture.

The Spirit does perform the crucial act of illuminating and interpreting Scripture. The testimony of the Spirit works to clarify the Word of God, to make it comprehensible and reveal its truthfulness. As insisted by Calvin, the purpose of the Spirit is to reveal the true meaning of Scripture.³⁵² In other words, "the work of the Spirit is not to supplement the revelation made in Scripture, nor to supersede it, but to authenticate it".³⁵³ Revelations originate and end in Scripture. In this

³⁵¹ TAL, p. 224 (CO VII.175).

³⁵² TAL, p. 224 (CO VII.175-176).

³⁵³ Richard, 1974, p. 154.

respect, any "so-called revelations must always be tested by Scripture".³⁵⁴ This idea is formulated clearly in the *Institutes*:

Therefore the Spirit, promised to us, has not the task of inventing new and unheard of revelations, or of forging a new kind of doctrine, to lead us away from the received doctrine of the gospel, but of sealing with our minds with that very doctrine which is commended by the gospel.³⁵⁵

In the *Commentary on John*, Calvin calls the Holy Spirit "the inward Teacher" of Christ's instructions and also indicates that the Spirit "will not be a builder of new revelations". Calvin also specifically mentions the Anabaptists and the Libertines who hold the principle that the Spirit reveals something loftier than is contained in Scripture and sternly warns that "the spirit that introduces any doctrine or invention apart from the Gospel is a deceiving spirit, and not the Spirit of Christ".³⁵⁶ Commenting on another passage in John, Calvin reiterates this point:

There are many fanatics who disdain the outward preaching, and talk in lofty terms about secret revelations and inspirations...But we see how Christ joins these two things together; and therefore, though there is no faith till the Spirit of God seal our minds and hearts, still we must not go seek visions or oracles in the clouds, but the word, which is near us, in our mouth and heart, (Rom. x.8,) must keep all our senses bound and fixed on itself....³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Balke, p. 98.

³⁵⁵ *Inst.* I.9.1, p. 94 (CO II.70: Non ergo promissi nobis spiritus officium est, novas et inauditas revelationes confingere, aut novum doctrinae genus procudere, quo a recepta evangelii doctrina abducamur; sed illam ipsam, quae per evangelium commendatur, doctrinam mentibus nostris obsignare).

³⁵⁶ *Comm.* John 14:26 (CO XLVII.335).

³⁵⁷ *Comm.* John 15:27 (CO XLVII.354: Contra vero plerisque fanaticis sordet externa praedicatio, dum magnifice arcanas revelationes...Atqui videmus ut duo haec simul Christus coniungat.

When the Libertines look for revelations outside of Scripture, it is because they are ignorant of the fact that "Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know".³⁵⁸ In fact, disregarding Scripture leads to the loss of the Spirit itself: "We choke out the light of God's Spirit if we cut ourselves off from His Word".³⁵⁹ Indeed, "only when its proper reverence and dignity are given to the Word does the Holy Spirit show forth His power".³⁶⁰

The relationship between the Spirit and Scripture can thus be characterized as reciprocally correlated. While they fulfill very different roles, neither is fully functional without the other. This interrelatedness explains Calvin's assertion that "Spirit and Scripture are one and the same".³⁶¹ They coexist in a mutual relationship which nevertheless clearly defines their separate roles:

Tametsi igitur nulla est fides, donec mentes nostras illustret Dei spiritus et corda obsignet, non tamen ex nubibus petendae sunt visiones vel oracula: sed verbum, quod prope nos est, in ore nostro et corde sensus omnes nostros sibi devinctos et in se defixos habere debet...).

³⁵⁸ **Inst.** III.21.3, p. 924 (**CO** II.681: Est enim scriptura schola spiritus sancti, in qua ut nihil praetermissum est scitu et necessarium et utile, sic nihil praetermissum est scitu et necessarium et utile, sic nihil docetur nisi quod scire conducat).

³⁵⁹ **TAL**, p. 224-225 (**CO** VII.176: En quoy il denote, que c'est suffoquer la clarté de l'Esprit de Dieu, que de se retirer de sa parole).

³⁶⁰ **Inst.** I.9.3, p. 95 (**CO** II.71: ut vim tum demum suam proferat atque exserat ubi sua constat verbo reverentia ac dignitas).

³⁶¹ **TAL**, p. 224 (**CO** VII.176: il ne signifie point une chose diverse de l'Ecriture). The Spirit can never be superior to Scripture in Calvin's thought. Cf. **Tractatus Omnes** 511: verbo autem Spiritus

For by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit, who cause us to contemplate God's face, shines; and that we in turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognize him in his own image, namely, in the Word.³⁶²

The office of the Holy Spirit in all its power resides in its interpretative function and not in independently conveying secret meanings beyond the Word.

Rather than usurping the primacy of Scripture, the Spirit strengthens the position of Scripture, making us uphold and obey it even more. Calvin's final exhortation summarizes his refutation of the Libertine refusal of Scripture and upholds the final authority of Scripture:

Let us hold, I say, to the pure and plain Word of God, where He has clearly revealed His will to us. And let us pray that by His Holy Spirit He will want to implant it in our hearts, which is His true office.³⁶³

nihil eum superiore loco a Scriptura diuersum significare hinc apparet

³⁶² *Inst.* I.9.3, p. 93 (CO II.71: Mutuo enim quodam nexu Dominus verbi spiritusque sui certitudinem inter se copulavit; ut solida verbi religio animis nostris insidat, ubi affulget spiritus qui nos illic Dei faciem contemplari faciat; ut vicissim nullo hallucinationis timore spiritum amplexemur, ubi illum in sua imagine, hoc est in verbo, recognoscimus).

³⁶³ *TAL*, p. 225 (CO VII.176: Tenons nous, dis ie, à la pure et simple parolle de Dieu, où il nous a pleinement revelé sa volonté: et prions le que par son saint Esprit il la vueille imprimer en noz cueurs: comme c'est son vray office).

4.5 CONCLUSION

In contrast with Calvin's view discussed above, the Libertines manipulate Scriptural passages to satisfy their distortion of the relationship between Scripture and Spirit. They emphasize the Spirit over and against Scripture to the extent that the Spirit wholly consumes the authority of Scripture as being the Word of God. Calvin further accuses the Libertines of categorizing everything as being "Spirit," saying "that the Word of God is nothing but 'Spirit,' and that Jesus Christ is equally 'Spirit,' and that we must be 'Spirits' with Him, and that our life must be 'spirit[ual itself]'"'.³⁶⁴

As to the Word of God being "Spirit," Calvin rebuts this misapplication by explicating Christ's words in John 6:63. When Christ equates the Word of God with the Spirit, Calvin explains, He meant that the Word of God is spiritual, not Spirit itself. God's Word is spiritual "because it calls us upwards to seek Christ in his heavenly glory, through the guidance of the Spirit, by faith, and not by our carnal perception".³⁶⁵ And when Christ is referred to as "Spirit" by Paul, Calvin argues, the

³⁶⁴ TAL, p. 227 (CO VII.177: et que la parolle de Dieu n'est que esprit, et que Iesus Christ semblablement est esprit, et qu'il nous faut estre espritz avec luy, et que nostre vie doit estre esprit).

³⁶⁵ Comm. John 6:63 (CO XLVII.160).

apostle meant that Christ is life-giving being that He is "the soul of the law".³⁶⁶

In assailing the frequent abuse of the word Spirit, Calvin does not only condemn the false doctrine of the Spirit espoused by the Libertines. Calvin notes that the Libertines practice a self-righteous holiness or spirituality in order to appear holy or divine. The danger of this, Calvin relates, is that the Libertines or "a large number of fickle persons subjecting the Word of God to such a sensuous understanding" blaspheme God with the shameless and casual style of living.³⁶⁷ Not only is this true but many simple folk who come in contact with this "spiritual" group fall prey to their lofty talk and self-ordained divineness. Calvin is greatly concerned with this ethical aspect of the Libertine behaviour, a topic which will be further elaborated in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Furthermore, Calvin's discussion of the Libertine abuse of the word Spirit leads us to the topic of the next chapter in the present work. Although Calvin comments that "these fanatics have something else in mind, whose meaning escapes us,"³⁶⁸ it appears that the conclusion arrived at by the Libertines derive from their peculiar pantheistic doctrine of one spirit. According to their pantheistic doctrine, God, Christ, Spirit, in fact, all

³⁶⁶ TAL, p. 227 (CO VII.177).

³⁶⁷ TAL, p. 227 (CO VII.177).

³⁶⁸ TAL, p 226 (CO VII.177).

created things, belong to and are part of this one spirit. It seems natural, therefore, that the Libertines would have applied the word "Spirit" to include God, Christ, and consequently the Word of God.

5. THE LIBERTINE DOCTRINE OF PANTHEISM

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first ten chapters of his *Treatise*, Calvin traced the historical background of the Libertine sect in relation to earlier heresies as well as showing the origins of the sect itself. His intention in doing so was not only to provide the history as background but to emphasize the danger of the Libertine movement and to protect the pious from further contamination. From chapter 11 onwards, Calvin deals directly with the doctrines of the Libertines. Chapters 11 to 16 specifically discuss the "first article" of the Libertine faith--the pantheistic doctrine that there is only one immortal spirit.

These six chapters treat fundamental themes of Christian faith: God, creation, and providence. According to Farley, chapters 11 and 12 treat the theme of God and creation and the remaining four of providence.³⁶⁹ Verhey also divides the chapters in the same way.³⁷⁰ The six chapters, however, seem to constitute one single argument. The subjects of God, creation, and providence arise from the Libertine doctrine of one spirit. Furthermore, Calvin basically presents the Libertine doctrine and its

³⁶⁹ In *TAL*, p. 174-178.

³⁷⁰ Verhey, p. 190.

implications in chapters 11 to 13 and as he outlines at the end of chapter 13, embarks upon the refutation of the doctrine in chapters 14 to 16. Calvin's own intention and method seem to be to present the Libertine views first in chapters 11 to 13 and then to present an exposition of his own orthodox position against the heretical views of the Libertines. The present chapter will thus follow this method of treating the first three chapters as preliminary to Calvin's own defense of his position against the Libertines.

The following discussion is therefore divided into two sections. The first covers chapters 11 through 13 and concerns the Libertine view of God and creation. This view is actually an outcome of Libertinistic pantheism, which is revealed as the prime cause of Libertine errors whether doctrinal or ethical. It is true that Calvin himself does not discuss the Libertine concept of God separately but as part of their main doctrine of one immortal spirit. Furthermore, Calvin is concerned more with explaining the consequences of this doctrine than with the doctrine itself. The Libertine view of God, therefore, is discussed in the light of their main doctrine, pantheism. The Libertine view of creation--the human soul, angels, the devil, the world, sin, and man--also stems from their pantheism. Calvin shows that in the Libertine thought, nothing exists in their own essence apart from God. In chapter 13, Calvin outlines the nature and implication of the Libertines' erroneous view of God and his creatures. He concludes by deducing three consequences of Libertinistic pantheism, thereby introducing the next three chapters.

The second section (chapters 14 through 16) deals with Calvin's main concern--God's providence over and against Libertinistic pantheistic determinism. Chapter 14 especially reveals Calvin's strong belief in God's role not only as Creator but also as perpetual Ruler and Provider of mankind. This providential care of God which does not disregard the freedom of his creatures, especially of man, proves the Libertine doctrine of pantheistic determinism to be in error. Calvin's explanation of the three modes of God's providence and his understanding of God's care and man's free will show how different they are from the Libertine concept of determinism. A discussion of the consequences of determinism, the Libertines' disregarding conscience and judgment, follows. These two consequences also stem from the main issue of providence. They will thus be treated in this context.

5.2 VIEW OF GOD

The first article of the Libertine faith propounds, according to Calvin, that "there is only one divine spirit that exists and indwells every creature".³⁷¹ Calvin himself says that he can only concede this but counters that there are dangerous, hidden implications of which we must be aware. This doctrine has its beginnings in the thought of certain

³⁷¹ TAL, p. 230 (CO VII.178-179: qu'il n'y a qu'un seul esprit, de Dieu, qui soit et qui vive en toutes creatures).

ancient philosophers³⁷² and is similar to the views of earlier heretical sects such as the Gnostics who contended that the human soul was the substance of God. This "ancient pagan supposition"³⁷³ which the Libertines have revived has the effect of equating the Creator with the created beings. The Libertine contention that there is one spirit sustaining all life indicates by implication that there is one and only one substance in life. To the Libertines, therefore, God is the one universal essence or spirit which indwells every creature. Calvin sees danger in

³⁷² As Farley points out, no specific philosopher(s) is indicated by Calvin. One can, however, deduce that the Epicurians and the Stoics may be in Calvin's mind. His treatise, **Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God** of 1542 specifically censures the Epicurians and the Stoics for their erroneous concept of providence. (EP x.4, p. 165; x.7, pp. 169-170 (CO VIII.350, 353-354)). Ford Lewis Battles also contends that Calvin identifies the Epicurian notion of providence with that of the Libertines. Theron claims that the Stoics maintained a deterministic pantheism (Theron, 1968, p. 34. Cf. also Nuovo, 1964, pp. 130ff. See especially pp. 147-169 and 170-171 regarding pantheism). Another ancient philosopher whom Calvin may have in mind is Aristotle. Aristotle's possible connection with pantheism is mentioned in Calvin's *Institutes* I.5.5, pp. 56-68 (CO II.44-45). Seneca may also figure in the list of possible philosophers. Calvin names Seneca as one of the ancients who upheld a pantheistic idea: "One of the ancients seems aptly to have remarked, 'Whatever we see, and whatever we do not see, is God'. According to this he fancied that divinity was poured out into the various parts of the world" (Inst. I.13.1., p. 121 (CO II.89-90)). One of Seneca's works seems to confirm Calvin's observation: "When the mind contacts those regions it is nurtured, grows, and returns to its origin just as though freed from its chains. As proof of its divinity it has this: divine things cause it pleasure, and it dwells among them not as being alien things but things of its own nature....Here, finally, the mind learns what it long sought: here it begins to know God. What is God? The mind of the Universe. What is God? All that you see, all that you do not see" (in Corcoran, 1971, pref. 12-13, pp. 10-11). Although definite identity can not be determined as to whom Calvin refers to in the *Treatise*, Calvin's mention of ancient philosophers underscores his repeated emphasis that heretical thoughts continue throughout ages.

³⁷³ TAL, p. 231.

such Libertinistic pantheism because it depreciates the orthodox view of God and creatures.

Concerning the Libertine concept of God, two significant points must be inferred in comparison with Calvin's view of God. Firstly, the Libertine God is an impersonal, spiritual being who has no character. He is not the Creator but the universal spirit in all things. He has nothing to do with the creation of the world or with the creatures of that world. In comparison, Calvin's doctrine is quite the opposite. He contends that God is the personal, triune God who is not merely the Creator but the sustainer as well: "God did not so create the world once that he did afterward depart from his work; but that it standeth by his power, and that the same God is the governor thereof who was the Creator".³⁷⁴

God is not impersonal like an idol. When He rules, He manifests His characteristics of kindness, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment, clemency, power, and truth.³⁷⁵ Calvin dedicates the whole of chapter 13 of the *Institutes* to defending the triune, personal God in his refutation of the kind of unorthodox position which he observes in the secular philosophers like Seneca and in such heresies like Manichaeism.³⁷⁶ Like-

³⁷⁴ **Comm. Acts 17:28** (CO XLVIII.417: non ita semel conditum fuisse mundum a Deo, ut postea ab opere suo discederet: sed virtute eius stare, et eundem esse perpetuum gubernatorem qui semel Creator fuit).

³⁷⁵ **Inst. I.10.2**, pp. 97-98 (CO II.72-74).

³⁷⁶ **Inst. I.13.1-29**, pp. 120-159 (CO II.117-134).

wise, Calvin opposes the philosophers' idea of fortune or chance and instead maintains that God's will and goodness work in his continuing care over all of his creatures.³⁷⁷ Thus, Calvin's view of the personal God greatly differs from the impersonal God of the Libertines.

The second error of the Libertines is their concept of equating the Creator with the creatures. This is similar to that of the heresies of the early Church as mentioned in Chapter 3 of the present work and also to that of the pagan philosophers. On this point, Calvin strongly emphasizes the unique essence of God and asserts the total difference existing between God and his creatures. Not only is God so different, but He is an infinite, immortal, eternal Being who cannot be comprehended by his creatures. Calvin concedes to the Libertine contention that God is an immortal Being and therefore the source and origin of everything, but he cannot but repudiate the contention that God shares the same substance with his creatures.³⁷⁸ This pantheistic concept of God which confuses the Creator with the creatures in the end leads one to eradicate the individual existence of the creatures.

³⁷⁷ Inst. I.16.2-3, pp. 198-201 (CO II.155-157).

³⁷⁸ TAL, p. 231 (CO VII.179).

5.3 VIEW OF CREATION

Calvin attempts to explain explicitly through two chapters in the *Treatise* (11 and 12) the Libertines' erroneous view of the human soul, angels, the devil, the world, sin, and man. Calvin informs us that the Libertines "understand all of these things under a single word, i.e., 'imagination'.³⁷⁹ These things are only a product of imagination or cuider, "frivolous fantasies" which we have conceived.³⁸⁰ Farley elaborates,

Calvin implies that the Libertines used the term **cuiders** to designate something which is not 'real' but only the product of human 'imagination' or 'fantasy.' Things are **cuiders** because people 'conceptualize' them incorrectly; that is, these things are not what people 'presume' or 'suppose' them to be. For the Libertines the 'devil,' the 'world,' 'sin,' and the 'old man' are **cuiders**.³⁸¹

Calvin contends that on this cuider proposition, the Libertines undermine the existence of human souls and angels, and at the same time they "eradicate the essence and nature of both human souls and angels".³⁸²

Concerning human souls, the Libertines assert that "instead of our souls...it is God who lives in us, who gives strength to our bodies, who

³⁷⁹ TAL, p. 234 (CO VII.181: Pour ceste cause ilz comprennent toutes ces choses en un mot: assavoir, Cuider).

³⁸⁰ TAL, p. 234 (CO VII.181: ...phantasies frivoles qu'on conçoit).

³⁸¹ In TAL, p. 178.

³⁸² TAL, p. 230 (CO VII.179: Par ce moyen ilz aneantissent l'essence tant des ames humaines, que des nature Angeliques).

supports all those actions in us that pertain to life".³⁸³ Against this Libertine rejection of the existence of human souls or their confusion of God with the human soul, Calvin indicates clearly that our souls are created distinctively and individually by God. It is true that God has formed the human being in His image, but He also gave each created being a separate essence.³⁸⁴ Later Calvin elaborates upon the same theme in the *Commentary on the First Epistle to Timothy*(1556).³⁸⁵ Here Calvin points out the absolute difference between the human soul and God in terms of immortality. Since the differences are so apparent to Calvin, he can only ridicule the Libertine explanation that no differences exist between human souls and God. The soul's essence is such that it departs from man and "each goes to the place which it has prepared for itself" at the end of life.³⁸⁶ This, Calvin stresses, is a simple and clear teaching of the Scriptures.

Concerning the existence of angels, the Libertines also hold the same position. Calvin contends that according to them angels become "only inspirations or movements and not creatures possessing their own es-

³⁸³ TAL, p. 231 (CO VII.179: Au lieu de noz ames, ilz disent que c'est Dieu qui vit en nous; qui donne vigueur à nos corps: qui nous soustient et faict en nous toutes les actions appartenantes à la vie).

³⁸⁴ TAL, p. 232 (CO VII.180).

³⁸⁵ Comm. I Tim. 4:16.

³⁸⁶ TAL, p. 233 (CO VII.180).

sence".³⁸⁷ In the 1543 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin mentions the erroneous notion regarding angels of "some restless men" whom Lewis Battles connects to the Libertines. These men contend that "[angels] are nothing but good inspirations or impulses which God arouses in men's minds".³⁸⁸ Against this nonsense, Calvin argues from the numerous evidences of the Scripture that "they are, indeed, spirits having a real existence".³⁸⁹ Now against this Libertine doctrine which deprives both angels and human souls of individual existence, Calvin counters that each creature has its "unique being and substance. It is quite another thing to say that every creature comes from God and that what God has created is God Himself".³⁹⁰

The Libertines also place the devil, sin, and all of the vices of the world under this umbrella term *cuides*. And as these are only imagined, they become "only vain thoughts which we ought to forget as dreams".³⁹¹ The devil then is dismissed as a nonexistent entity, just as angels are deprived of their essence. Calvin comments on this presumption of the Libertines in the *Institutes* as well: "Inasmuch as we have before refuted

³⁸⁷ TAL, p. 231 (CO VII.179: ...ilz feignent que les Anges ne sont qu'inspirations ou mouvemens, et non pas creatures ayans essence).

³⁸⁸ Inst. I.14.19, p. 169 (CO II.130: ...de sanctis angelis...nihil esse quam inspirationes vel motiones bonas, quas in mentibus hominum Deus excitat).

³⁸⁹ Inst. I.14.9., p. 169 (CO II.123: ...clarissime evincitur re vera esse spiritus naturae subsistentis).

³⁹⁰ TAL, p. 231 (CO VII.179: Mais de là il ne s'ensuit pas, qu'il n'ait donné un estre et une substance propre aux creatures. C'est bien autre chose de dire, que toutes creatures viennent de Dieu, et que ce que Dieu a créé soit Dieu mesme).

³⁹¹ TAL, p. 234 (CO VII.181: mais ilz veulent dire que ce sont vaines pensées, lesquelles on doit oblir comme songes).

that trifling philosophy about the holy angels which teaches that they are nothing but good inspirations or impulses which God arouses in men's minds, so also in this place ought those men to be refuted who babble of devils as nothing else than evil emotions or perturbations which come upon us from flesh".³⁹²

As the devil and thus evil are supposed to exist only in the imagination, sin also is imputed to the workings of *cuider*. In fact, the Libertines conclude that sin has been abolished and deny its reality. This view can be amply seen in Monsieur Anthony Pocquet's writings as provided by Calvin in chapter 23 of the *Treatise*. Pocquet contends that sin came into existence only when Adam and Eve was made to see it: "And earlier they had not seen their will and were not ashamed of their nakedness. They had not seen their sin, but when they saw sin, sin was necessarily imputed to them and everything was changed. For their happiness was changed into labor and misery, and the earth and all that it produces was cursed. Man was changed into vanity".³⁹³ Moreover, Pocquet designates sin as being dead with the coming of Christ: "Now we are vivified with the second Adam, who is Christ, no longer seeing sin, since it is dead. For grace was made from sin by our Father in Jesus Christ.

³⁹² *Inst.* I.14.19, p. 169 (CO II.130: Quemadmodum autem superius refutavimus nugatoriam illam de sanctis angelis philosophiam, quae docet nihil esse quam inspirationes vel motiones bonas, quas in mentibus hominum Deus excitat, sic et hoc loco refellendi sunt qui diabolos nihil quam malos affectus aut perturbationes esse nugantur, quae nobis ingeruntur a carne nostra).

³⁹³ *TAL*, p. 313 (CO VII.237-238: Et paravant ilz ne veoyent point leur vouloir, et n'estoyent point vergougneux de leur humanité. Ilz ne veoyent point leur peché: mais quand ilz veoyent peché, il leur feut imputé à peché, et luy fut tout changé au contraire. Car le delice fut converty en labeur et misere, et la maudicte, et tout ce qu'elle produi soit. L'homme a esté tourné en vanité).

Whence then comes this fear and terror of death and of being cast into hell? In reality one can set it aside as an error; one can make fun of it as a vain thought".³⁹⁴ From such accounts, Calvin can only conclude that the Libertines actually have no concept of sin or evil. As Calvin explains, for the Libertines "there is no evil, provided we are not conscious of it".³⁹⁵ The Libertines conclude that man's soul may be tainted by the devil and the world but as these are only products of the fancy as well, the soul "is only a smoke that passes and constitutes nothing lasting".³⁹⁶

The danger of this way of understanding is clearly evident to Calvin. It blinds one to the real nature of man and conceals "all the concupiscences of our vicious nature".³⁹⁷ To Calvin, the sinful nature of man is very much a reality, and human beings must constantly be aware of it. The devil too is very much a real entity which would gladly take advantage of the erroneous belief that it does not exist. To deny Satan a real existence is to be ignorant of all its tricks "to the end that

³⁹⁴ TAL, p. 314 (CO VII.238: Maintenant nous sommes vivifiez avec le second Adam qui est Christ, ne plus voyant le peché, pourveu qu'il est mort. Car du peché est faict grace par nostre pere en Iesus Christ. Dont nous viendrait donc ceste paour et crainte de mort ne d'enfer deietté? Dequoy les peut on ainsi bouter en erreur, les abusez qui ne sont tous que vanité).

³⁹⁵ TAL, p. 314 (CO VII.239: qu'il n'y a point de mal, moyenant que n'en ayons nul sentiment).

³⁹⁶ TAL, p. 235 (CO VII.181: et pourtant, que ce n'est qu'une fumée qui passe, et non pas chose permanente).

³⁹⁷ TAL, p. 236 (CO VII.182: toutes les concupiscences de nostre nature vitieuse).

one no longer thinks about them, until one is mortally wounded by them and has received an incurable disease".³⁹⁸

Calvin forcefully reminds us of the teaching of Scripture that evil and sin are real³⁹⁹ and that man's nature has been corrupted by his disobedience to God. Calvin further asserts that the soul of man, although perverted by sin, still exists as "a spiritual substance endowed with sense and reason, in order to understand and pass judgments, and endowed also with will, in order to choose and desire those things that his life wants".⁴⁰⁰ In the eyes of Calvin, reducing man's soul and nature to imagination and denying the reality of evil and sin in this world are totally impudent acts of resisting the truth of Scripture which must be guarded against for the salvation of man's soul.

³⁹⁸ TAL, p. 236 (CO VII.182: à fin qu'on n'y pense plus, iusque à ce qu'on en soit navré mortellement, et qu'on ait receu une playe incurable).

³⁹⁹ Calvin's concept of sin is more inclusive than Augustine's although he borrowed this idea from Augustine. To Calvin, concupiscence itself is regarded as sinful, but in Augustine's thought it can be sinful only when it becomes actualized (Inst. III.3.10, pp. 602-603 (CO II.441-442)).

⁴⁰⁰ TAL, p. 237 (CO VII.183: ...l'ame de l'homme est une substance spirituelle, douée de sens et raisons, pour entendre et iuger: douée aussi de volonté, pour eslire et appetere les choses où son mouvement la pousse).

5.4 PANTHEISTIC DETERMINISM AND ITS RESULTS

At the beginning of chapter 13 of the *Treatise*, Calvin summarizes the nature and implication of the Libertine doctrine of one spirit while at the same time arriving at the most important conclusion of the doctrine:

After creating a single spirit among themselves, by means of which they destroy the nature of both the angels of heaven and the devils of hell, as well as human souls, the Libertines maintain that this single spirit constitutes everything. By this they do not mean what the [sic] Scripture means when it says that at the same time all creatures subsist in Him, are equally guided by Him, are subject to His providence, and serve His will, each according to its order. But they mean that everything in the world must be seen directly as His doing.⁴⁰¹

As God is the single substance sustaining all life, all that occurs in the world is imputed to the will of God. As Calvin explains, the Libertine doctrine of one spirit and substance leads inevitably to pantheistic determinism: "In making this claim they attribute nothing to the will of man, no more than if he were a stone. And they cast aside every distinction between good and evil, since nothing can be badly made in their view, seeing that God is its author".⁴⁰² Calvin illustrates this pantheistic

⁴⁰¹ TAL, p. 238 (CO VII.183: Après avoir forgé un seul esprit à leur poste, en détruisant la nature tant des Anges du ciel, que des diables d'enfer, et semblablement des ames humaines, ilz disent que c'est ce seul esprit qui faict tout: non pas pour signifier ce que l'escriture entend, quand elle en parle: que toutes creatures ainsi que elles subsistent en luy, pareillement sont conduictes de luy, sont subiectes à sa providence, et servent à sa volonté, chacune selon son ordre: mais que tout ce qui se faict au monde, doit estre réputé directement son oeuvre).

⁴⁰² TAL, p. 238 (CO VII.183: En ce faisant ilz n'attribuent à l'homme nulle volonté, non plus que s'il estoit une pierre; et ostent toute discretion du bien et du mal; pource que rien ne peut estre mal faict, à leur intention, entant que Dieu en est autheur).

determinism at work with an example of Quintin's haughty remark attributing a wicked deed to God: "Yes, it's you, it's I, it's God! For whatever you or I do is God's doing! And whatever God does, we do; for God is in us!"⁴⁰³ Calvin sees this attribution of all deeds to God leading to ethical determinism which tolerates and indeed freely allows sinful, antinomian behaviour: "For example, if someone has committed lechery we must not reprimand him. For that would be to blaspheme God. If a man covets his neighbor's wife, let him enjoy it if he can. For he is certainly doing nothing other than the will of God. Indeed, what he does is a divine act".⁴⁰⁴ What the Libertines find divine, Calvin finds disgusting and blasphemous. He exclaims in his 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, "Now away with those persons who dare write God's name upon their faults, because we declare that men are vicious by nature! They perversely search out God's handiwork in their own pollution, when they ought rather to have sought it in that unimpaired and uncorrupted nature of Adam".⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ TAL, p. 239 (CO VII.184: Ouy, chet ty, chet my, chet Dieu. Car che que ty ou my foison, chet Dieu qui le fait: et che que Dieu fait, nous le faisons, pourche qu'il est en nous).

⁴⁰⁴ TAL, p. 239 (CO VII.184: Exemple: Quelqu'un a il paillardé? on ne l'en doit vituperer. Car ce seroit blasphemer Dieu. Un homme convoite-il la femme de son voisin? Que il en iouisse s'il peut. Car il est seur de ne faire que la volonté de Dieu: et mesme que ce qu'il fera sera un acte divin). Here Calvin recapitulates this idea which was already presented in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes* (Inst. I.17.3.; I.17.5, pp. 214-217 (CO II.156-157)).

⁴⁰⁵ Inst II.1.10, p. 253 (CO II.184: Eant nunc qui Deum suis vitiis inscribere audent, quia dicimus naturaliter vitiosos esse homines. Opus Dei perperam in sua pollutione scrutantur, quod in illa integra adhuc et incorrupta Adae natura requirere debuerant).

The Libertine doctrine of one spirit effectively eliminates any distinction between Creator and creature, asserting that all is good and conceives of evil as products of cuider, and attributes everything to God. The implications and consequences of this doctrinal belief are clear to Calvin: first, God and the devil are not distinguished from one another; second, men no longer are bound to a conscience; and third, men are no longer able to make judgements between good and evil since all is deemed good.⁴⁰⁶

5.4.1 THE FIRST CONSEQUENCE: GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Having extracted three consequences of the Libertine doctrine of one spirit, Calvin explains that he intends to deal with these three consequences in succession to discredit the Libertine doctrine. What follows in the next three chapters (14 to 16) of the *Treatise* is Calvin's exposition of the real nature of God and the created world. God's providence and man's will are discussed in detail by Calvin in order to make explicit the reason for the existence of evil in the world.

In illuminating the Libertine doctrine of one spirit, Calvin was emphatic in distinguishing between Creator and creature (chapters 11 to 13). Since the antinomian behaviour of the Libertines stems from their indis-

⁴⁰⁶ TAL, p. 241 (CO VII.186).

tion and disregard for the discrepancies between God and man, Calvin's refutation begins with an exposition of creation or the "order of nature". He does not just end the discussion with creation but concentrates upon delineating the way God works in all that occurs in the world. His aim is to destroy the Libertine basis of determinism and at the same time put forward his doctrinal belief of God's providence.

Calvin does not need to dispute the Libertine contention that God is the Creator of the world. It is the subject of God's governing of the world and our comprehension of it which occupy Calvin's attention in chapter 14. What Calvin tries to expound is the "true state"⁴⁰⁷ in which all things exist and operate. Calvin considers God's providence as working in three ways. The three modes consist of guidance through 1) a universal operation; 2) causing His creatures to serve His will; and 3) governing His faithful. The first of these can be regarded as general providence and the second as belonging to special providence or "a special ordinance by which He guides all things in accordance with what He deems to be expedient".⁴⁰⁸ The third mode can also be designated special or particular providence.

Before discussing the three modes in detail, it is perhaps necessary to clarify a point which is often raised when the doctrine of providence is brought into question. The doctrine of providence is often viewed as

⁴⁰⁷ TAL, p. 242 (CO VII.186).

⁴⁰⁸ TAL, p. 244 (CO VII.187: une ordonnance speciale, par laquelle il conduit les choses, selon qu'il voit estre expedient).

being related in one way or another to that of predestination. A discussion of one is deemed necessarily to involve the discussion of the other. This view has taken the shape of some regarding Calvin's doctrine of predestination as being a special application or particular doctrine having its source in the general doctrine of providence.⁴⁰⁹

In the *Treatise Against the Libertines*, Calvin only mentions providence, without any reference to predestination. His discussion of God's providence over the faithful does not bring predestination into discussion either. It seems clear from this that to Calvin, the doctrine of providence does not necessarily lead to the doctrine of predestination. In examining his other works, we see that Calvin does not follow a strict delineation between providence and predestination. Already in his *Institutes* of 1536, Calvin clearly touched upon the conjunctive relation of these two doctrines.⁴¹⁰ In describing the election of the chosen people which had been made before the creation of the world, Calvin replaces *providentia* with *predestinatione* and says that the Church is holy because its members have been chosen by the eternal providence of God.⁴¹¹ In his 1539 edition

⁴⁰⁹ This often-endorsed position is expressed by Emile Doumergue, Vol. IV, p. 354: "la doctrine de la prédestination est une doctrine particulière, inséparable d'une doctrine générale, celle de la Providence". Others like Andries D. R. Polman, Karl Barth, T. F. Torrance, and Johannes Dantine argue against the classic view of providence over predestination. Wiley (1971, p. 193) concurs with Polman's view that the doctrine of predestination is not a deduction from general providence.

⁴¹⁰ Concerning providence in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, see Bohatec, 1909, pp. 342, 89; Jacobs, 1937, p. 22; Bray, 1975, p. 46.

⁴¹¹ OS I.86: Sancta etiam est, quia quotquot aeterna Dei providentia electi sunt, ut in ecclesiae membra cooptarentur. Cf. OS I.87; d'Assonville, 1968, p. 44.

of the *Institutes*, the terms providence and predestination are used more fully and conjunctively. In explaining the matter of God's judgment on the reprobate, Calvin wrote that "By his eternal providence they were given up to perpetual calamity before they were born".⁴¹² This conjunctive use appears afterwards in his *Commentary on the Romans* (1540)⁴¹³, in his *Concerning Free Will* (1543)⁴¹⁴, and in his *A Defense of the Secret Providence of God* (1558)⁴¹⁵. In his other writings, however, Calvin tends to separate the two doctrines more distinctly. In his *Catechism* (1537), Calvin presents the matter of election and reprobation in connection with God's **predestined** council.⁴¹⁶ The terms *providentia* and *predestinatione* are not used conjunctively as they were in the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*. In *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* (1552), Calvin deals with providence in a section apart from that on

⁴¹² *Inst.* (1539), VIII.251: *eterni illius providentia, antefuam generatione, perpetuae calamitati addicti fuerint.* Cf. *Inst.*, (1539), VIII.251; 252; 253. The term *providentia* in conjunction with *predestinatione* occurs six times.

⁴¹³ CO XLIX.184. Calvin contends here that the reprobate are determined by the providence of God.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. Schulze, 1971, p. 35.

⁴¹⁵ CO IX.287. Here Calvin uses the word predestination in place of providence: *Praedestinationem, ut sacrae scripturae docent, definitio liberum esse Dei consilium, quo et humanum genus et singulas mundi partes pro immensa sua sapientia et iustitia incomprehensibili moderatur.*

⁴¹⁶ OS I.390-391.

predestination. Calvin further divides God's providence into four modes, without, however, adding anything substantially new or different from the three given in his *Libertine treatise*. The treatment here, moreover, actually only recapitulates what Calvin has already expounded in the *Treatise Against the Libertines*. In his final edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin more distinctly separates his discussion of the two doctrines. The doctrine of providence is placed in his discussion of the doctrine of God as Creator,⁴¹⁷ and the doctrine of predestination is placed in his discussion of God as redeemer.⁴¹⁸

The shift in placement of the two doctrines throughout several of his works appears contradictory except when it is viewed in the context of Calvin's intentions. The conjunctive treatment of the two doctrines in his works can be explained in terms of their being viewed by Calvin as both belonging to the eternal decree of God. For Calvin, both doctrines belong to the secret council of God, whose ultimate agent is *Dei voluntas*. As Wiley observes, "Both were related to that divine causation which determined not only the eternal destinies of individual men but also all that happened in the world".⁴¹⁹ Calvin's use of the two terms in a conjunctive sense can thus be explained on the basis that both belong in an indispensable relationship with the one divine, eternal decision which proceeds from *Dei voluntas*.

⁴¹⁷ *Inst.* I.16-17 (CO II.144-167).

⁴¹⁸ *Inst.* III.21-24 (CO II.678-728).

⁴¹⁹ Wiley, p. 181. Cf. Dantine, 1965, p. 17.

The conjunctive usage of the two terms, however, does not mean that they can be identified together. As early as in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin treats them distinctively. Both terms appear in Chapter 8, the first part of which deals separately with predestination and the second with providence. The separate role or function of the two doctrines is clearly set. Predestination is connected with God's predetermination of the ultimate destinies of the whole human race. Calvin defines predestination in explaining God's election of Israel:

we call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man...eternal life is forordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or to death.⁴²⁰

Thus, Calvin's doctrine of predestination pertains to the matter of election and reprobation in man's salvation, which has been predetermined by the will of God since the beginning of time.

Calvin's doctrine of providence is concerned with God's active relation to his creation.⁴²¹ God does not simply predestine the fate of man but as the Creator of all things he governs and preserves them according to his pleasing will:

⁴²⁰ *Inst.* III.21.5, p. 926 (CO II.683: Praedestinationem vocamus aeternum Dei decretum, quo apud se constitutum habuit, quid de unoquoque homine fieri vellet...sed aliis vita aeterna, aliis damnatio aeterna praeordinatur. Itaque, prout in alterutrum finem quisque conditus est, ita vel ad vitam vel ad mortem praedestinatum dicimus). Cf. Hunter, 1950, p. 93. On the influence of Augustine and Bucer on Calvin's concept of predestination, see Wendel, 1963, p. 264f.

⁴²¹ Cf. Melles, 1973, p. 81.

he is also everlasting Governor and Preserver--not only in that he drives the celestial frame as well as its several parts by a universal motion, but also in that he sustains, nourishes, and cares for, everything he has made, even to the least sparrow (Cf. Matt. 10:29).⁴²²

Providence is defined as a continuous action of God in contrast with predestination which is a single deterministic act of God in his creation.

The two doctrines as propounded in the 1539 edition of the *Institutes* basically do not change through Calvin's other writings. His later editions of the *Institutes* do not further develop the basic idea of the separate functions of providence and predestination. In the 1559 edition, Calvin only extends this principle by amplifying the biblical texts employed in his arguments. There is no significant change made in these works with respect to the two doctrines. The 1559 edition discusses providence and predestination in two separate locations, but this only confirms the difference between the two doctrines. While the doctrine of predestination is related to the Christological and soteriological aspects of God's eternal decree, that of providence implies God's permanent and universal activity in the world. In this regard, it is not difficult to see why Calvin placed providence under the doctrine of God the Creator while placing predestination within the discussion of soteriology. Calvin's interchangeable use of the two doctrines in several of his works can thus

⁴²² *Inst.* I.16.1, pp. 197-198 (CO II.144: statim quoque perpetuum moderatorem et conservatorem esse colligat; neque id universali quadam motione tam orbis machinam quam singulas eius partes agitando; sed singulari quadam providentia unumquodque eorum quae condidit, ad minimum usque passerem, sustinendo, fovendo, curando). Calvin's concept of providence is similar to those of Luther and Zwingli. See Wendel, p. 177.

be seen as exceptional overlaps in view of their interrelationship in carrying out Dei voluntas.

In the *Treatise Against the Libertines*, Calvin limits his discussion to the doctrine of providence because he is working to counter the Libertine doctrine of God as Creator and author of all, both good and bad. His attention, therefore, is directed towards God as Creator and governor of the world. The question of election and rejection need not specifically be raised in this context. If we accept Calvin's more distinct and later separation of providence and predestination in the 1559 *Institutes*, we can understand Calvin's discussing only of providence in the Libertine treatise in terms of the fact that God as author and source of all being and occurrence is what is in question here. God's act of creation and his governing of that created world against the Libertine determinism is the subject of Calvin's exposition. Viewed in this context, dealing with providence without involving predestination causes no problems. The following sections will thus treat Calvin's doctrine of providence as a distinct doctrine which does not necessarily lead to that of predestination.

5.4.1.1 The Three Modes of God's Providence

5.4.1.1.1 The First Mode: Universal Providence

In explaining his position on God's providence, Calvin first states:

For our part we do not deny that whatever comes to pass does so by the will of God. In fact when we explain why He is called 'all powerful,' we attribute to Him a power active in all creatures, teaching that, having created the world, He also governs it, always keeping His hand in the work in order to maintain everything in its true state and to dispose of things as it seems best to Him.⁴²³

Calvin's statement seems very near to the Libertine contention that God's hand can be evinced in all events. Calvin's explanation of God's universal operation, moreover, states that all things are to be attributed to God.⁴²⁴ In his discussion of universal providence, however, Calvin makes very important and clear distinctions. The spirit of God Himself is not in his creatures as the Libertines contend; it is rather His power which is "active in all creatures". His creatures exist and all events

⁴²³ TAL, p. 242 (CO VII.186: Nous ne nions pas de nostre costé que toutes choses ne se facent par la volonté de Dieu. Et mesme quand nous exposons pourquoy il est dict tout puissant, nous luy attribuons une puissance active en toutes creatures: enseignans que comme une fois il a créé le monde, qu'aussi il le gouverne, ayant tousiours la main à l'oeuvre pour maintenir toutes choses en leur estat, et en disposer comme bon luy semble).

⁴²⁴ Inst. I.16.2; I.16.3; I.16.5, pp. 199; 201; 204 (CO II.144-146); Sermon on Job 37.1-6 (CO XXXV.315-326); EP X.6, p. 168 (CO VIII.352). These works are directly concerned with God's providence over all universal events. God's governing of all thoughts of man both of the godly and the ungodly are treated in EP X.9; X.10, pp. 171-176 (CO VII.355-359) and in Inst. I.18.2, p. 231 (CO II.90). For a helpful summary of this see Dowey, 1952, pp. 129-130.

occur "by virtue of His power"; his creatures are "instruments in His hand for Him to use in His work as it pleases Him".⁴²⁵ Calvin makes the distinction between Creator and creature clear here. God's power is active in all things, but Calvin's concept of God stops far short of the pantheistic concept of the Libertines. Calvin reminds us that "the Lord enjoins us to recognize His power in us".⁴²⁶ Calvin also makes clear that His creatures can never be placed on an equal plane with God. As he so forcefully pointed out in chapters 11 to 13, man's fallen nature cannot pretend to be divine as God's. Calvin's exposition always has in its background his concept of the "order of nature" or "the condition and propriety which He had given each when He made them".⁴²⁷ God has created all things according to a certain order in which we are only instruments of His will.⁴²⁸ Calvin's view, however, is not the atheistic or scientific view of nature which sees all things as operating by a predetermined law or mechanistic order. As Calvin observes, the "unbelievers only recognize in the arrangement of the world what their eyes see and thus view nature as a design or essence that rules over all, [but] we are compelled to give this praise to the will of God, as it alone governs

⁴²⁵ TAL, p. 243 (CO VII.187: les creatures comme instrumens estans en sa main, pour les appliquer à l'oeuvre comme il luy plaist); EP X.6, p. 168 (CO VII.352).

⁴²⁶ TAL, p. 243 (CO VII.187: Et singulierement le Seigneur nous recommande de reconnoistre ceste sienne vertu en nous).

⁴²⁷ TAL, pp. 242-243 (CO VII.186: condition et propriété qu'il leur a donnée à chacune en les formant).

⁴²⁸ EP X.12, p. 177: ...there can be no doubt that the will of God is the chief and principal cause of all things (CO VIII.360: ...minime dubium erit, summam et praecipuam rerum omnium causam esse Dei voluntatem). Cf. Inst. I.17.6, pp. 218-219. (CO II.158-159); Comm. II Pet. 3:5 (CO LV.473-474).

and moderates all things".⁴²⁹ The unbelievers, including the Libertines, see God's providence as finished in the act of creation; having created the rules by which nature functions, God's care is to have ended there. Aristotle thus deems occurrences as due to laws of causality, the Stoics fate, and the Epicurians fortune.⁴³⁰ The Libertines attribute all things to the existence of one spirit which began all creation. Against this atheistic determinism, Calvin sets forth his doctrine of "providential care".⁴³¹ God is not an idle watcher over His creatures according to Calvin.⁴³² Rather, His care extends beyond creation into the present. "To make God a momentary Creator," writes Calvin in the Institutes, "who once for all finished his work, would be cold and barren, and we must differ from profane men especially in that we see the presence of divine power shining as much in the continuing state of the universe as in its

⁴²⁹ TAL, p. 243 (CO VII.186: infideles ne reconnoissent en la disposition du monde que ce qu'ilz voyent à l'oeil: et pourtant constituent la nature, comme une deesse qui domine sur tout; il nous faut donner ceste louange à la volonté de Dieu, que c'est elle seule qui regit et modere toutes choses).

⁴³⁰ Inst. I.16.2; I.16.8, pp. 198-199; 207-208 (CO II.145, 151-152). Calvin views "fortune" and "chance" as pagan terms which the pious should avoid. Comm. Ps. 107:43 (CO XXXII. 145). Here Calvin attacks Aristotle and the Epicurians on account of their counteracting the providence of God; On the Stoics see EP X.7, pp. 169-170 (CO VIII.353-354) and Inst. I.16.8, pp. 207-208 (CO II.158-159).

⁴³¹ Inst. I.16.1, pp. 197-198 (CO II.144).

⁴³² Inst. I.16.3, pp. 200-201 (CO II.146-147); EP X.1, p. 162 (CO VIII.347: Providentiam vocamus, non qua Deus e coelo otiosus speculetur quae in mundo fiunt, sed qua mundum a se conditum gubernat: ut non unius tantum momenti sit opifex, sed perpetuus moderator. Sic providentia, quam Deo tribuimus, non minus ad manus quam ad oculos pertinet. Iam dicitur providentia sua mundum regere, non modo quia positum a se naturae ordinem tuetur, sed quia peculiarem uniuscuiusque ex suis creaturis curam habet ac gerit). Cf. SP, p. 224.

inception".⁴³³ God has set up a certain condition and order by which all creatures and events function, but these continue to operate only in accordance with God's will which is the first cause of all things in heaven and earth.⁴³⁴ In everyday course of events, God's will is still to be evinced. Calvin bases his contention on Paul's Scriptural confirmation: "It is in Him that we live and move and have our being"(Acts 17:28). Our very existence is maintained by God's providential care so that "we could not last a single minute if He were not upholding us by His hand; for indeed it is in Him that we subsist".⁴³⁵

If all events are to be attributed to the will of God, is Calvin leaning towards determinism? Calvin's doctrine of universal providence, however, clearly steers away from determinism. The deterministic view contends that once God has created all things and has given them sufficient propriety to carry on thereafter according to their own energy, He no longer necessarily sustains them. But Calvin contends that in faith, one can see that God still governs and preserves all that he has created. All things on earth including all human affairs as well as the

⁴³³ *Inst.* I.16.1, p. 197 (CO II.144: Porro Deum facere momentaneum Creatorem, qui semel duntaxat opus suum absolverit, frigidum esset ac ieunum. Atque in hoc praecipue nos a profanis hominibus differre convenit, ut non minus in perpetuo mundi statu quam prima eius origine praesentia divinae virtutis nobis illuceat).

⁴³⁴ *SP* pp. 247-247.

⁴³⁵ *TAL*, p. 243 (CO VII.187: ne pouvons pas durer une minute de temps, sinon qu'il nous soustienne de sa main, entant mesme que c'est en luy que nous subsistons).

celestial frame or beings are sustained, nourished, and is cared for by Him.⁴³⁶

Calvin's doctrine of providence allows for a God who not only has created the world initially but who continues to provide guidance to all of his creatures. Crucial to Calvin's doctrine of universal providence is the contention that God is both Creator and constant Provider of the world. This doctrine, however, does not imply, as the Libertine doctrine of one spirit does, that God lives in His creatures to the extent that His creatures in effect become divine. Calvin's concept of universal operation accommodates for individual will in God's creatures: "this universal operation of God's does not prevent each creature, heavenly or earthly, from having and retaining its own quality and nature and from following its own inclination".⁴³⁷ As a following discussion will show, this allowance for self-operation of God's creatures becomes a key to Calvin's refutation of the Libertine characteristic of attributing evil to God.

⁴³⁶ Inst. I.16.1, pp. 197-198 (CO II.144-145).

⁴³⁷ TAL, p. 243 (CO VII.187: operation universelle de Dieu n'empesche point, que chacune creature, tant au ciel comme en la terre, n'ait et ne retienne sa qualité et nature, et suyve sa propre inclination).

5.4.1.1.2 The Second Mode: Special Ordinance

Calvin's idea of God's universal operation designated a general concept of God's providence. With the second mode of God's providence,⁴³⁸ the doctrine of providence moves towards the more particular application of God's will. Calvin explains,

The second way or manner in which God operates in His creatures is that He causes them to serve His goodness, righteousness, and judgment according to His present will to help His servants, to punish the wicked, and to test the patience of His faithful, or to chastise them in His fatherly kindness.⁴³⁹

Two important and correlated aspects of God's particular providence are apparent in the above statement. First, God is shown to be a continual Provider;⁴⁴⁰ it is His "present" will which oversees all activities. Second, God's will is shown to be directly involved in the life of His creatures. In this aspect, Calvin's doctrine of providence can be seen as moving from an ontological plane towards a teleological one from the first to the second mode. God's purpose and design are to be seen in all things: in the changing of the seasons, in the skies, in peace and war, in prosperity and adversity alike. These the pagans attribute to fortune,

⁴³⁸ In works other than the *Treatise*, Calvin separates man from all other created things in the second mode of providence and has four modes of providence rather than three. SP 227; EP X.3, p. 164 (CO VIII.349).

⁴³⁹ TAL, p. 243-244 (CO VII.187: La seconde espece ou façon par laquelle Dieu opere en ses creatures, est qu'il les faict servir à sa bonté, iustice et iugement, selon qu'il veut maintenant aider ses serviteurs, maintenant punir les meschants, maintenant esprouver la patience de ses fideles ou les chastier paternellement).

⁴⁴⁰ Inst. I.16.1, pp. 197-198 (CO II.144-145). God as both Creator and Provider is indicated as an inseparable relationship.

but they are all due to God's providence, both his universal providence and "a special ordinance by which He guides all things in accordance with what He deems to be expedient".⁴⁴¹ All things occur due to this special ordinance of God, and it touches upon all things, both good and evil. This ordinance is such that even the devil who torments Saul, deceives Ahab, and tests Job has been obeying God's will. Calvin fully explains this teleological aspect of God's providence:

This is what is meant when He says through his prophets (Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6; Prov. 16:1-4, 9, 33) that He creates darkness and light, that He sends death and life, that good and evil come only by His hand, even going so far as to say that He directs all those other things that seem to be fortuitous... And He is sorely angry whenever we think that these things occur by other means or whenever we fail to look up to Him, recognizing Him not only as the principal cause of everything, but also as the author, who by His counsel disposes as He wills.⁴⁴²

God is the author of all things, and all His creatures, both primary and secondary, both men and devils, "are only means by which He fulfills His will".⁴⁴³ Nothing comes to pass without God's willing it and all things are done by God's good pleasure.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴¹ TAL, p. 244 (CO VII.187: ordonnance speciale, par laquelle il conduit les choses, selon qu'il voit estre expedient).

⁴⁴² TAL, p. 244 (CO VII.187-188: C'est ce qu'il entend quand il dit par ses prophetes (Es. 45.7; Amos 3.6; Prov. 16.1.2.3.4.9.33), qu'il cree les tenebres et la clarté, qu'il envoie la mort et la vie, qu'il ne advient ne bien ne mal, que par sa main: voire iusque a dire qu'il modere les sortz et les autres choses qui semblent bien advis estre fortuites... Et se courrouce amerement quand on pense que les choses viennent d'ailleurs on qu'on ne regarde point à luy, pour le recongnoistre non seulement la causes principale de tout: mais aussi autheur, qui par son conseil dispose ainsi ou ainsi).

⁴⁴³ TAL, p. 245 (CO VII.188); Cf. EP X.2, p.163 (CO VII.348); EP X.5, pp. 166-167 (CO VIII.350-351).

⁴⁴⁴ SP p. 249.

Calvin's explanation of God's special ordinance sounds dangerously close to pantheism, but as Calvin goes on to explain, God and creature must still be definitely separated and distinguished. Identifying God with man or with the devil as the Libertines do is due to the failure to recognize two essential exceptions. First, "we must not suppose that God works in an iniquitous man as if he were a stone or a piece of wood, but He uses him as a thinking creature, according to the quality of his nature which He has given him. Thus when we say that God works in evildoers, that does not prevent them from working also in their own behalf".⁴⁴⁵ Calvin here is reiterating his point that God's creation allows for self-operation of His creatures. God's creatures are His instruments but are also thinking creatures with the ability to act on their own. All things occur according to God's purpose, but also independently as well. Calvin claims that creatures operate themselves within God's created order. This seemingly conflicting proposition can not be comprehended on the basis of logical speculation but only on the basis of the teaching of Scripture and experience of the faithful in the work of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴⁶ As Wilhelm Niesel observes, Calvin's arguments cannot be understood according to a logical sequence of human speculation:

Calvin's theology does not proceed by successive thoughts, as though the recognition of a saviour God were inferred from the recognition of a Creator God. It is rather that...the power and the

⁴⁴⁵ TAL, p. 245 (CO VII.188: ne faut pas imaginer que Dieu besongne par un homme inique, comme par une pierre ou par un tronc de bois: mais il en use comme d'une creature raisonnable, selon la qualité de sa nature qu'il luy a donnée. Quand donc nous disons que Dieu opere par les meschans, cela n'empesche pas que les meschans n'operent aussi en leur endroict).

⁴⁴⁶ Partee, 1973, pp. 168-181.

goodness of the true God who has drawn near to us in Jesus Christ.⁴⁴⁷

The juxtaposition of God's will and His creature's individual nature may then be understood in the light that Calvin utilizes his faith and experience to support this seemingly paradoxical contention.

The problem of the Libertines consists in their failure to recognize the autonomous nature of God's creatures, which Calvin sees as evident in the activities of God's creatures. In allowing God's creatures this autonomy, Calvin opposes the fatalistic and mechanistic concept of the world as espoused by pagan philosophers and the Libertines. Calvin's doctrine of God's providential care thus takes into account both the ultimate design and purpose of God's will in all things and His creatures' "own judgment and will".⁴⁴⁸

The second exception to understanding God's authorship in all things delves further into the different natures of God and of his creations. The exception to be taken into account is "the enormous diversity between God's work and that of an evil man's".⁴⁴⁹ The diversity is in the different intentions of God and the wicked man. God's intention is always good:

For His aim is to exercise His justice for the salvation and preservation of good, to pour out His goodness and grace on His faithful, and to chastise those who need it. Hence that is how we ought

⁴⁴⁷ Niesel, 1980, p. 71.

⁴⁴⁸ TAL, p. 245 (CO VII.188).

⁴⁴⁹ TAL, p. 246 (CO VII.189).

to distinguish between God and men; by separating in the same work His justice, His goodness, and His judgment from the evil of both the devil and the ungodly.⁴⁵⁰

Calvin asks that we look closer into our natures and discern the differences in the heart. For it is "according to the root which motivates his heart and the end toward which he strives, [that] his work is qualified and with good reason is judged bad".⁴⁵¹ The distinction Calvin makes here is between good and evil. The root of calamities and adversities is evil; the root of God is good. All things operate according to God's will, but evil nature cannot be attributed to God Himself. For God works "according to His nature, that is in (accordance with) justice and equity. And He avails Himself of the devil in such a way as not to mix with him or have anything in common with him".⁴⁵² God's nature is such that both good and evil are under his command, but His nature is only good and cannot be corrupted by any evil. Calvin's analogy aptly illustrates this point:

For in the same way that the sun shines on carrion and causes it to rot, neither being corrupted nor tainted by it, and by its purity is not the cause of the carrion's stench and infection, God also so truly performs His works through evildoers that His sanctity does

⁴⁵⁰ TAL, p. 246 (CO VII.189: C'est d'exercer sa iustice pour le salut et conservation des bons, d'user de sa bonté et grace envers ses fideles, de chastier ceux qui l'ont merit . Voila donc comme il faut discerner entre Dieu et les hommes, pour contempler en une mesme oeuvre sa iustice, sa bont , son iugement: et de l'autre cost  la malice tant du diable que des infideles).

⁴⁵¹ TAL, p. 246 (CO VII.189: Pourtant selon la racine qui est l'affection du cueur, et le but o  il pretend, l'oeuvre est qualifi e, et   bon droict est iug e mauvaise).

⁴⁵² TAL, p. 247 (CO VII.190: sa nature: c'est   dire, en iustice et quit : et s'aidant tellement du diable, qu'il ne se mesle point avec luy pour avoir rien de commun ensemble).

not justify them nor does their infection contaminate anything in
Him.^{4 5 3}

This quality of God's providence is also explained in terms of Scriptural examples. Using examples of Job's and David's calamities, Calvin explains that God allowed the evil but the actual evil was motivated in the devil. These examples refer back to Calvin's first point that God wills all things but that His creatures maintain their own independent judgment and will. In all of these examples, Calvin clearly distinguishes between the two entities of good and evil and assigns them to their proper places. This, as Calvin accuses, is what the Libertines fail to do, thereby equating God with the devil.

This second exception which Calvin explains reflects back to the first exception that man works independently within God's order of creation. Not only are there different qualities within God's creatures, but God Himself maintains a completely distinct nature from His creations. God's nature is always good and His intentions motivated by His goodness and justice. His creatures, on the other hand, are capable of evil motivations. This distinction clearly explains the existence and source of evil in the world.

^{4 5 3} TAL, p. 247 (CO VII.190: Car tout ainsi que le soleil, donnant de ses rayons sur une charongne, et causant en icelle quelque putrefaction, n'en tire point de corruption ne macule aucune, et ne faict point par sa pureté que la charongne ne soit puante et infecte: aussi Dieu faict tellement ses oeuvres par les meschans, que la sainteté qui est en luy ne les iustifie point, et l'infection qui est en eux ne le contamine en rien).

5.4.1.1.3 The Third Mode of Providence

The third mode of providence, like that of the second, focuses upon God's particular care over His creatures. The third mode specifically deals with God's care over the faithful. It is in this third manner of providence where Calvin observes God's overwhelming love and guidance: Since our nature has been so corrupted by original sin, "our judgment is perverse; our will is rebellious against God, inclined and given to evil; in sum, our entire nature is vicious".⁴⁵⁴ Given this fallen state of man, however, Calvin strongly confirms God's grace in the care he bestows upon the faithful:

Consequently, it is He who works in us 'both to will and to work'(Phil. 2:13); it is He who illumines us that we might come to His knowledge; it is He who draws us up; it is He who creates new hearts in us, softening our hardness; it is He who inspires us to pray; it is He who gives us the grace and strength to resist all of Satan's temptations; it is He who causes us to walk in His commandments(Ezek. 36:27).⁴⁵⁵

According to Calvin, it is God who allows and nurtures the faith of His believers. In fact, God's providence as directed to the faithful is central to Calvin's concern over God's providential care in general. God's care over the faithful thus signifies "the truly paternal protection with which

⁴⁵⁴ TAL, p. 247 (CO II.190: Car nostre iugement est pervers, nostres volonté est rebelle contre Dieu, encline et adonnée à mal).

⁴⁵⁵ TAL, p. 248 (CO VII.191: Et pourtant c'est luy qui faict en nous le vouloir et le parfaire(phil. 2,13), ce est luy qui nous illumine, pour venir à sa congnoissance: c'est luy qui nous tire: ce est luy qui forme nouveaux cueurs en nous, amollissant nostre dureté: c'est luy qui nous inspire à prier: c'est luy qui nous donne la grace et la force de resister à toutes les tentations de Sathan: c'est luy qui nous faict cheminer en ses commandemens).

He guards His Church, to which the most present help of God is attached".⁴⁵⁶

Calvin views God's particular providence as more comprehensible and significant in his doctrine of providence as a whole. In fact, God's providence "strives to the end that God may reveal his concern for the whole human race, but especially his vigilance in ruling the Church, which he deigns to watch more closely".⁴⁵⁷ Calvin's views on God's particular providence on the protection of the faithful are more fully treated in the *Institutes* and in his treatise, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*. In this treatise, Calvin describes the Church where the faithful abide as the "chief theatre" of providence.⁴⁵⁸ Later in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin expresses the same idea, attributing the history of the Bible to this particular providence: "Indeed, the principal purpose of the Biblical history is to teach that the Lord watches over the ways of the saints with such great diligence that

⁴⁵⁶ EP X.3, p. 165 (CO VIII.349: Ultimo praesidium vere paternum, quo ecclesiam suam tuetur, cui praesentissima Dei ipsius virtus annexa est). Cf. *Inst* I.17.6, pp. 218-219 (CO II.158- 159).

⁴⁵⁷ *Inst.* I.17.1, p.210 (CO II.154: Postremo huc tendere, ut totum humanum genus sibi esse curae Deus ostendat; praecipue vero in regenda ecclesia (quam propiore intuitu dignatur) se exubias agere).

⁴⁵⁸ EP X.3, p. 164 (CO VIII.349).

they do not even stumble over a stone (Cf. Ps. 91:12)".⁴⁵⁹ Calvin thus considers this third mode of providence as "paternam curam".⁴⁶⁰

Calvin yields the salvation of the believers absolutely to God's providential and fatherly care or protection through the Holy Spirit. Indicating the incapability of man of attaining a single merit, Calvin contends that "what we will to do well and have the power to effect comes from the supernatural grace of the Spirit, which regenerates us in a divine life".⁴⁶¹ In this third mode of God's providence, Calvin strongly emphasizes God's sovereignty in the life of the faithful. God is seen to directly and personally care for every aspect of Christian life, including salvation.

Although the three modes of providence are equally significant and are part of the divine providence of God, it is true that Calvin specially tends to orient the end of divine providence to this third mode in which he explains God's special operation through the Holy Spirit to regenerate and to preserve the believer and the Church. Francois Wendel, however, contends that "this special solicitude of God for his Church must not, however, give us to think that the Church is the purpose of

⁴⁵⁹ Inst. I.17.6, p. 218 (CO II.159: Quin etiam hic pottissimus est scopus in historiis biblicis, ut doceant tanta sedulitate vias sanctorum custodiri a Domino, ut ne ad lapidem quidem impingant).

⁴⁶⁰ Inst. I.17.6, p. 219 (CO II. 159). Cf. EP X.3, p. 165 (CO VIII.349).

⁴⁶¹ TAL, p. 248 (CO VII. 191: Ce que nous desirons de bien faire, et avons le pouvoir de l'executer, c'est de la grace supernaturelle de l'esprit, lequel nous regenere en une vie divine).

Providence".⁴⁶² One may not say conclusively that the Church is the only purpose of providence, but in Calvin's thought, the Church is centrally considered as occupying a special place where God's specific purpose of providence is clearly revealed. Explaining providence directed to the Church, Calvin points out that "the Church is the sanctuary in which He resides, He there displays His presence with clearer evidence".⁴⁶³

In his treatise, *Eternal Predestination of God*, Calvin especially deals with the relation between God's providence and the faithful. Calvin starts by defining the term providence against Pighius' distortion of it, feeling the obligation to defend the doctrine of providence "lest pious minds should be hindered or disturbed".⁴⁶⁴ Calvin then contributes one whole section to explain the end of providence in relation to the believers. Calvin discusses

how and for what end the providence of God is to be understood. The first end is to divest us of rash confidence, so as to hold us in the fear of God and then to arouse us to invoke Him. The second is to teach us to rest in God with quiet and tranquil minds and to despise with confidence and courage the perils that surround us and the hundred deaths that threaten us.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² Wendel, p. 181.

⁴⁶³ EP X.3, p. 164 (CO VIII.349). Cf. *Inst.* I.17.6, p. 219 (CO II.159: I speak not only concerning mankind; but, because God has chosen the Church to be his dwelling place, there is no doubt that he shows by singular proofs his fatherly care in ruling it; Non de genere humano tutum loquor; sed quia Deus ecclesiam sibi in domicilium elegit, non dubium est quin paternam in ea regenda curam singularibus documentis ostendat). Cf. SP, p. 226.

⁴⁶⁴ EP X.1, p. 162 (CO VIII.347: ne quid pias mentes impediat vel conturbet).

⁴⁶⁵ EP X.5, p. 166 (CO VIII.350: quomodo, et in quem finem consideranda

Doubtless Calvin expounds the purpose of providence in relation to the believers in both cases. Thus, the doctrine of providence is, according to Calvin, specially oriented toward the end of Heilsgeschichte. And although Calvin does not state in the *Treatise Against the Libertines* this particular end of providence as he specifically as he does in his treatise *On The Eternal Predestination of God* and in the *Institutes*, his treatment in the *Libertine Treatise* of God's providential care over the faithful in the third mode possibly contributed to his view of the end of providence in the two later works. Calvin's observation of God's governing over the faithful and His overwhelming care over them is later extended in connection with the end of providence.

Contending that God's providence is directed to the faithful in this third mode and that the whole process of the believers' salvation relies totally upon God's special providential care, Calvin notes the nature of human choice and free will: "Nevertheless, we must note the nature of our choice and will. For although they are both depraved by sin, our Lord reforms them and changes them from evil into good. Thus whatever we are able to discern, to will, and to do belongs to a natural gift".^{4 6 6} Nowhere else does Calvin deal with this matter in his explanation of the third mode of providence. This illumines the fact that Calvin is obligated

sit Dei providentia, tenere. Prior finis est, ut nos temeraria confidentia exutos tum in Dei timore contineat, tum ad invocationem expergeficiat. Alter vero, ut sedatis tranquillisque animis in Deum recumbere, et quae nos circumstant pericula nobisque assidue centum mortes minantur, secure fortiterque contemnere doceat).

^{4 6 6} TAL, p. 248 (CO VII.191: Mais ce pendant il nous faut noter que de nature nous avons en nous election et volonté. Au reste d'autant que par le pechl'une et l'autre est depravée: nostre Seigneuteur les reforme et les change de mal en bien. Ce donc que nous sommes propres à discerner, à vouloir, à faire cecy ou cela, c'est de don naturel).

to defend man's separate natural gift of free will against Libertine pantheistic determinism. It is important to observe, however, that Calvin has definite ideas on the limited "nature of our choice and will".⁴⁶⁷ The nature of man's will is tainted by sin and thus inclines towards wrong and evil. But when man chooses to do good, it is only by the grace of God's providential care through the Holy Spirit that this is possible. God thus initiates all good works in man, and all merit belongs only to Him.

It is a characteristic of Calvin's doctrine of providence (and also of predestination) that Calvin argues for God's complete guidance in all things and yet never allows for God's participation in any evil doings. In this regard, man's complete autonomous act is allowed. This can perhaps be explained by referring back to Calvin's view of the different natures of man and God. God's motivation is always good while man's motivation inclines towards evil unless guided by the Holy Spirit. God is paradoxically the author of all things but not of evil doings. The Libertines attribute evil to God and call it good. To Calvin, this is nothing other than blaspheming God.⁴⁶⁸

In the third mode as well, Calvin reveals the two points of argument against Libertine pantheistic determinism. One is God's absolute care and guidance over the faithful. God initiates the salvation of the believers

⁴⁶⁷ TAL, p. 248 (CO VII.191).

⁴⁶⁸ TAL, p. 249 (CO VII.192).

and preserves them according to His providential purpose. The achievement of the believers' salvation thus relies totally upon God's providential operation. At the same time, human choice is still granted and has the power to discern and to do good through the Holy Spirit. This is Calvin's argument against Libertine determinism. According to Libertine determinism, once everything is determined, there is no need for God's providential care for the believers and no human free choice exists. Against this obvious perversion of God's providence, Calvin orients the *Treatise* to explaining God's absolute ruling over the faithful through the Holy Spirit and at the same time he emphasizes the nature of man's choice and will.

5.4.1.2 Providence versus Determinism

In Calvin's doctrine of providence, a constant tension can be witnessed. The tension is between Calvin's emphasis on God's complete knowledge and sovereignty and on his emphasis also on the nature of man's free will. While asserting God's universal and particular care over all details of life, Calvin also asserts man's freedom of choice. In other words, Calvin sounds deterministic and yet argues against the determinism of the Libertines and for his view of providence.

In explaining his doctrine of providence, Calvin repeatedly propounded the theme of both God's creation and authorship of the world and God's

constant and continuous intervention in the events and lives of His creatures. Calvin does not allow any room for attributing events to chance or fortune. The forcefulness with which Calvin asserts God's overall care in all things comes very near to the Libertine contention that God is the author of everything.

In attempting to clarify Calvin's position, it is important to pay careful attention to the distinctions Calvin makes between his doctrine and the Libertine doctrine of God and creation. The Libertine doctrine of God is pantheistic and does not distinguish between God and man, asserting the existence of one spirit residing in all creatures simultaneously with God. Calvin, on the other hand, denies the validity of such a heretical contention and instead maintains a definite separateness between God and His creatures. Man, angel, and even the devil are only instruments of God's will and exist according to the particular order in which God created the world. Nevertheless, they still possess a separate will and freedom to act within the conditions set upon them.

The question of the extent of man's freedom within Calvin's almost deterministic frame of providence inevitably arises at this point. While insisting upon the absolute power and sovereignty of God, Calvin also maintains the freedom and responsibility of man for his actions. Verhey's fine treatment of this subject is helpful in resolving the antinomy.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁹ Verhey, pp. 198-205.

Verhey makes an important contrast between the "arbitrary omnipotence of the divine Spirit of the Libertines" and the providence set forth by Calvin.⁴⁷⁰ The Libertines believe in a neutral spirit to whom all things can be directly attributed, whether good or bad. This completely deterministic doctrine makes it easy for the Libertines to brush aside evil as nonexistent.

Calvin's God, on the other hand, does not act arbitrarily or neutrally but consistently according to the goodness and justness of His nature. In the universal operation of His providence, God oversees the act of His creation, preserving the "order of nature" upon which His creation is based. God directs all things but His universal operation does not hinder any of His creatures from following their own inclinations. God is committed to preserving this order and according to Verhey, "such a providence does not subvert creation, it sustains it".⁴⁷¹

The second providence or "special ordinance" makes all creatures serve God's goodness, justice, and judgment. Calvin again attributes the source of all things to God, but he argues against Libertine determinism by making two distinctions. Evil deeds are possible in the world because God's creatures are not stones but thinking creatures. "God does not violate the nature he has given them. And Calvin does not deny, but rather affirms, the freedom of Satan and the wicked and the fact that

⁴⁷⁰ Verhey, p. 200.

⁴⁷¹ Verhey, p. 200.

they act in this freedom".⁴⁷² The second and related distinction lies in the fact that God and His creatures act upon their respective freedoms of intention: "Just as God's freedom is the capacity to establish himself on certain ends and purposes, so the freedom of Satan and man is the capacity to establish themselves on certain ends and purposes".⁴⁷³ God's purpose is to fulfill His goodness and justice through constant care, even through the wickedness of man.⁴⁷⁴

The third aspect of providence in which God governs His faithful also reveals the different natures which determine the events and deeds of God's creatures. The care and regeneration of the faithful are wholly credited to the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, but Calvin prevents this care of God from being construed as deterministic. Calvin again points out man's capacity to will, to do this or that.⁴⁷⁵ As earlier mentioned, when man wills to do good, Calvin ascribes this to the grace of God; when man wills to do evil, it is the result of corruption through original sin. This dichotomy can exist side by side because God always

⁴⁷² Verhey, p. 201.

⁴⁷³ Verhey, p. 201.

⁴⁷⁴ Cf. Melles, pp. 83-84. God rules in the heart of man; their plans and wills including those of the wicked work in accordance with God's will.

⁴⁷⁵ Schulze, p. 32: Man's natural power is able to decide external things. Seen from God's point of view, the will of man is always subject to God's providence. Cf. Inst. II.4.2.6-8 (CO II.227-229).

works according to His goodness while man acts according to the freedom given to him by God. As Verhey observes, "the believer knows his freedom to be wholly the effect of God's freedom and no less his own freedom. God's freedom is the constant source of human freedom, never its contradiction".⁴⁷⁶

The freedom and responsibility which man possesses and the freedom and sovereignty of God are both based on Calvin's "different conception of freedom, a freedom to establish one's self on certain ends and purposes".⁴⁷⁷ Although God's power is all-encompassing and sovereign, man still retains the freedom to act upon his own inclinations as allowed by God in His creative act. Calvin clearly rejects the determinism of the Libertines which indiscriminately ascribes all things to the act of God. The tension, however, still exists in Calvin's doctrine of providence. His position, as Verhey discerns, "rejects determinism but refuses the indeterminist option. It is a subtle alternative that hinges...on a certain view of the freedom of both God and man".⁴⁷⁸

To understand Calvin's theological tension against the Libertines, i.e., regarding providence and determinism, one needs to consider Calvin's frame of thought. As we have already discussed, Calvin's doctrine of

⁴⁷⁶ Verhey, p. 203.

⁴⁷⁷ Verhey, p. 205.

⁴⁷⁸ Verhey, p. 205.

providence involves a peculiar concept of the dichotomous and seemingly contradictory freedoms of both God and man. While God possesses the final word on all things, man nevertheless has the freedom to choose between good and evil. Of God's providential sovereignty, Calvin states, "One might ask if we can ever do anything against God's will, I think not".⁴⁷⁹ Man, nevertheless, the nature and ability to follow his own inclination.

Calvin's paradoxical proposition has been the subject of various scholarly discussions. Hermann Bauke has called it a *complexio oppositorum*.⁴⁸⁰ Calvin's thought has been labeled as standing in a contradictory relation (Lüttge), in a complementary relation (Doumergue), and as standing in a kind of dialectical tension (Bauke). As Partee points out, however, these comments only explain the character of Calvin's doctrinal antinomies.⁴⁸¹

Francois Wendel has stated that Calvin's theology can not be solved on the basis of speculative logic.⁴⁸² Calvin's thought, however, can not be regarded as irrational either. Calvin himself regarded rational logic as

⁴⁷⁹ TAL, p. 253 (CO VII.194: On demandera s'il se peut rien faire malgré Dieu. Je confesse que non).

⁴⁸⁰ Bauke, 1922, p. 27, 16-19.

⁴⁸¹ Partee, p. 174.

⁴⁸² Wendel, pp. 358-359.

a gift of God,⁴⁸³ and contended that man is to be distinguished from the beast on the basis of his reason.⁴⁸⁴ One can also see in Calvin's writings that he knows and utilizes the thoughts of the rational philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, and Cicero. One can say that they contribute to Calvin's thought, but one must also discern that Calvin's ideas are not determined by theirs. For example, Calvin often followed the example of Augustine, an enthusiastic platonist, and viewed Plato as a sound philosopher,⁴⁸⁵ using him as a source of his theology.⁴⁸⁶ The final answer to Calvin's theological thought, however, is not to be found in Plato or in Augustine. Calvin used them only as supplementary or secondary sources.

For example, one can see that Calvin's three manners of providence are similar to the formular (pattern) of the threefold distinction in Plato's providential theory: *providentia prima*, *providentia secunda*, and

⁴⁸³ *Comm. Isa.*, 28:29 (CO XXXVI.483).

⁴⁸⁴ *Inst.* II.2.12, pp. 270-271 (CO II.195-196); *Inst.* II.2.17, pp. 276-277 (CO II.199-200); *Comm. Ps.* 119:73 (CO XXXII.246).

⁴⁸⁵ *Comm. Gen.* 2:18 (CO XXIII.46).

⁴⁸⁶ McClelland, 1965, p. 47. In *Saint Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Jean Calvin*, 1957, Smits argues that Calvin admired and was greatly influenced by Augustine. Snell (1970, pp. 1-8), on the other hand, more correctly observes that Augustine had an impact on Calvin but was not a direct source of his thought.

providentia tertia.⁴⁸⁷ The first two patterns are especially similar to Calvin's general providence. The third deals specifically with care over mankind, again similar to Calvin's idea of special providence over man. In spite of these similarities, Calvin claims that he is not at all platonic and criticizes Augustine as an excessive platonist.⁴⁸⁸

It is true that Calvin was influenced by contemporary philosophical trends, but his knowledge of God stems from another source. What can be the main element that shaped Calvin's thought of God's providence? Partee's observation is helpful in answering this question:

Calvin thought that his doctrines of providence and predestination were 'reasonable', but it is inaccurate to maintain that Calvin's theology was based on a rational deduction from a deterministic conception of God's sovereignty. Calvin also thought that our reason is blind and urged that reason be renounced. The foundation of Calvin's philosophy therefore is not reason but his understanding of the teaching of Scripture which is confirmed by the work of the Holy Spirit in the experience of the faithful.⁴⁸⁹

Thus, one must conclude that Calvin's argument concerning providence does not stem from a rational contention based on man's limited knowledge but refers in the last analysis to the authority of Scripture:

Whatever things done wrongly and unjustly by man, these very things are the right and just works of God. This may seem paradoxical at first to some; but at least they should not be so offended that they will not suffer me to search the word of God for a little to find out what should be thought true. But lest we should look with pride and stubbornness, as if it were proper for God to fit Himself to

⁴⁸⁷ Zanchius, 1977, p. 154.

⁴⁸⁸ Comm. John. 1:3 (CO XLVII.4).

⁴⁸⁹ Partee, p. 179.

our standards, we must first listen to Scripture, where the whole definition of the works of God is to be found.⁴⁹⁰

Moreover, Calvin's doctrine of providence finally concludes that the paradox of God's will and man's will resides in the hiddenness or the secret council of God: "The whole of the matter is that we ought not inquire into His providence, which is a secret to us".⁴⁹¹ Calvin emphasizes this aspect of God's providence in the *Institutes*:

Let him, therefore, who would beware of this infidelity even remember that there is no erratic power, or action, or motion in creatures, but that they are governed by God's secret plan in such a way that nothing happens except what is knowingly and willingly decreed by him.⁴⁹²

Calvin also denies the Stoic notion of fortune and replies, "for perhaps what is commonly called 'fortune' is also ruled by a secret order, and we call a 'chance occurrence' only that of which the reason and cause are secret".⁴⁹³ Calvin had already voiced the same view in the 1539 edition of his *Institutes*: "The order, reason, end, and necessity of

⁴⁹⁰ EP, X.7, p. 169 (CO VIII.353: Quae perperam et iniuste ab hominibus fiunt, eadem recta et iusta esse Dei opera. Hoc si prima specie quibusdam esse paradoxum videtur, saltem ne sint ita fastidiosi, quin paulisper mecum sustineant ex verbo Dei inquirere, quid sentiendum sit. Caeterum, ne quidquam stulta pertinacia tueamur, quasi Dei proprium, quod illi temere ex sensu nostro afflictum fuerit: primum audienda est scriptura, imo tota inde operum Dei petenda est definitio).

⁴⁹¹ TAL, p. 253 (CO VII.194: le tout est que nous n'aillions point enquerir sur sa providence, qui nous est secrette).

⁴⁹² Inst. I.16.3, p. 201 (CO II.147: Ab hac igitur infidelitate qui cavere volet, memoria semper teneat, non erraticam vel potentiam, vel actionem, vel motionem esse in creaturis; sed arcano Dei consilio sic regi, ut nihil contingat nisi ab ipso sciente et volente decretum).

⁴⁹³ Inst. I.16.8., p. 207-208 (CO II.151: etenim fortasse quae vulgo fortuna nuncupatur, occulto quoque ordine regitur: nihilque aliud in rebus casum vocamus, nisi cuius ratio et causa secreta est).

those things which happen for the most part lie hidden in God's purpose, and are not apprehended by human opinion".⁴⁹⁴ The same idea is repeated in the 1559 edition: "Now this, also, ought to be added, that although either fatherly favor and beneficence or severity of judgment often shine forth in the whole course of providence, nevertheless sometimes the causes of the events are hidden".⁴⁹⁵ and "Yet his wonderful method of governing the universe is rightly called an abyss, because while it is hidden from us, we ought reverently to adore it".⁴⁹⁶

In the final instance, God's providence remains a secret except as it is revealed in Scripture. As already quoted, Calvin contends that "we must first listen to Scripture, where the whole definition of the works of God is to be found".⁴⁹⁷ Calvin thus ultimately bases his paradoxical argument on a certainty of Scripture. The reason God's providence is "hidden" or "secret" is due to the limited apprehension of human reason. But from the Scriptures, everything is clear and evident to Calvin: "What the Scripture shows us is as clear as it is wonderful".⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁴ *Inst.* I.16.9, p. 208 (CO II.152: sed quoniam eorum quae eveniunt, ordo, ratio, finis, necessitas, ut plurimum in Dei consilio latet, et humano opinione non apprehenditur).

⁴⁹⁵ *Inst.* I.17.1, pp. 210-211 (CO II.154: Iam et hoc addendum est, quamvis aut paternus Dei favor et beneficentia, aut iudicii severitas saepe in toto providentiae cursu reluceat, interdum tamen eorum quae accidunt occultas esse causas).

⁴⁹⁶ *Inst.* I.17.2, p. 213 (CO II.155: At mundi gubernandi admirabilis ratio merito abyssus vocatur; quia, dum nos latet, reverenter adoranda est).

⁴⁹⁷ *EP* X.7, p. 169 (CO VIII.353: primum audienda est scriptura, imo tota inde operum Dei petenda est definitio).

⁴⁹⁸ *TAL*, p. 245 (CO VII.189: Ce que l'écriture nous monstre tant évidemment que merveilles).

Calvin's solution to the complexity of providence is twofold: the paradoxical element in God's providence is secret or hidden from the point of human reason, but it is plain and evident as revealed in the Scripture. And since man is not capable of apprehending it with his limited reason although it is the very nature and attribute of God the Father, he ought to be humble in reverence to God.⁴⁹⁹

5.4.2 THE SECOND CONSEQUENCE

The second consequence of Libertine pantheistic determinism which Calvin attacks concerns an ethical problem. Extending their deterministic understanding of one spirit, the Libertines exterminate the principles of conduct. As Calvin explains, "if one attributes everything to God, as the Libertines do, and says that man does nothing, then conscience ceases to be a matter of importance".⁵⁰⁰ In fact, Calvin accuses, putting conscience to sleep is the principal aim of the Libertines so that they may act freely according to their whims. This detestable conclusion has absolutely no biblical basis for Calvin, and he counters by putting forward the divine law which Moses confirms has been given "in order to teach us how to serve God, how to cling to Him, and how to obey His

⁴⁹⁹ Inst. I.17.1.2, pp. 211-212 (CO II.154-155).

⁵⁰⁰ TAL, p. 250 (CO VII.192: qu'en attribuant ainsi tout à Dieu, comme font les Libertins, et disant que l'homme ne faict rien, il ne sera plus question de faire conscience de rien).

will, and how not to provoke His wrath by trespassing against Him".⁵⁰¹ Calvin then presents numerous scriptural passages which reveal God's intolerance and anger in the face of sin. Here, Calvin portrays a God who demands that man obey His commandments. God has given ample evidence in the form of the law and in his scriptural messages for man to be aware of God's expectations. For God "is a just judge who cannot tolerate iniquity".⁵⁰²

Not only has God provided the law and scriptural passages to guide man, He has implanted in man a conscience which teaches what is good and evil. This conscience is found in all men, even pagans; it is "a law printed upon their hearts".⁵⁰³ The possession of conscience makes man inexcusable since by natural law, conscience teaches "the rule for the right conduct of life".⁵⁰⁴ Calvin further elaborates in the *Institutes* that while those who have the law to abide by will be judged on the basis of the law, those who do not have the law will be judged by their conscience. The purpose of this natural law is thus "to render man inexcusable....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 guilty by their own

⁵⁰¹ TAL, p. 251 (CO VII.192: à fin que nous apprenions de servir à Dieu, d'adhérer à lui, d'obéir à sa volonté, de ne point provoquer son ire en l'offensant).

⁵⁰² TAL, p. 251 (CO VII.193: est iuste iuge, qui ne peut porter l'iniquité).

⁵⁰³ TAL, p. 251 (CO VII.193: une loi imprimée en leurs cœurs).

⁵⁰⁴ Inst. II.2.22, p. 281 (CO II.203: vitae probe instituendae regula).

testimony".⁵⁰⁵ Thus, man is accountable for his actions on two accounts. God provided man with the law to guide him in his actions; God also engraved in the hearts of all men a conscience which renders them responsible for all deeds.

In spite of such ample evidence, the Libertines have no fear of sin and instead "say that God would first of all have to accuse Himself if He wants to accuse us, seeing that He does everything in us".⁵⁰⁶ The Libertines deduce everything according to their pantheistic determinism and attempt to escape condemnation by attributing all acts to God. As we have earlier discussed, this is unacceptable to Calvin's theology. Keeping man's freedom in mind, Calvin replies, "concerning our own works, we need to ponder the will of God in accordance with His revelation of it to us".⁵⁰⁷ And in Calvin's mind, God's will is clearly revealed in the law, in Scripture, and in the fact that all men possess a conscience.

Calvin strongly opposes the Libertines' denying the role of conscience in man's deeds for the reason that doing so leads to sin. Another important reason is that this "would curtail the work of God".⁵⁰⁸ To mini-

⁵⁰⁵ *Inst.* II.2.22, p. 282 (CO II.204: quod sit conscientiae agnitio, inter iustum et iniustum sufficienter discernentis, ad tollendum hominibus ignorantiae praetextum, dum suo ipsorum testimonio redarguantur).

⁵⁰⁶ *TAL*, p. 252 (CO VII.193: Dieu s'accuse le premier, s'il nous veut accuser: veu qu'il faict tout en nous).

⁵⁰⁷ *TAL*, p. 252 (CO VII.194: que touchant les oeuvres que nous faisons, nous avons à considerer la volonté de Dieu, selon qu'il la nous declare).

⁵⁰⁸ *TAL*, p. 250 (CO VII.192).

mize the moral function of conscience as the Libertines do is to disregard God's will as it is revealed to us. To assign all things to God indiscriminately is to presume to know God's will. In Calvin's opinion, "we ought not inquire into His providence, which is a secret to us, since we know what He wants of us and what He approves and condemns".⁵⁰⁹ God has decreed in Holy Scripture what we ought to know of His will, and this is all we can presume to know about God's providence.

In dealing with the matter of conscience in chapter 15 of the *Treatise*, Calvin makes it clear that man is to be held responsible for his deeds. For one, God has revealed His will in the law, in numerous scriptural passages, and by implanting conscience in man. Calvin also observes that to do away with conscience and to accuse God of all evil acts result not only in sinning without any guilt feelings but also reveal an arrogance in presuming to know God's will. To Calvin, we know of God's will only as it is revealed to us. Beyond this, God's providence remains a secret.

5.4.3 THE THIRD CONSEQUENCE

The third consequence which Calvin deals with in chapter 16 of the *Treatise* is closely related to the second consequence: "under the pretext of being led by God, they deduce from this same principle that it is wrong

⁵⁰⁹ TAL, p. 253 (CO VII.194: nous n'aillions point enquerir sur sa providence, qui nous est secrette: puis que nous savons ce qu'il demande de nous, et ce qu'il approuve ou condamne).

to pass judgment".⁵¹⁰ Having eradicated the need for conscience, the Libertines naturally conclude that judgment is not necessary. Calvin states that the Libertines offer the statement that "A Christian ought to profit from everything" to justify their position on judgment.⁵¹¹ Calvin concedes to the validity of this statement, but his interpretation differs markedly from theirs. According to Calvin, the way in which a Christian profits in all things is that in cases of adversity, he conforms closer to the image of Christ. When others are afflicted, the Christian turns inwards to contemplate the weakness of human nature, becomes more humble, and attaches himself closer to God. The Christian does not, Calvin points out emphatically, close his eyes to evil or rejoice in evil but rather learns to "recognize evil and shun it".⁵¹²

The Libertines also cite Scriptural passages to defend their disclaimer for judgment. They cite the words "Judge not"(Matt. 7:1) and according to Calvin misinterpret or fail to contemplate the true meaning of these words. In his Commentaries, Calvin explains that these words were spoken by Christ to restrain man from his "depraved eagerness for biting, censuring, and slandering".⁵¹³ The words "Judge not" set the

⁵¹⁰ TAL, p. 254 (CO VII.194: soubz ombre de se laisser conduire par Dieu: ilz deduisent de se mesme principe, que c'est mal fait de iuger).

⁵¹¹ TAL, p. 254 (CO VII.195).

⁵¹² TAL, p. 255 (CO VII.195).

⁵¹³ Comm. Matt. 7:1 (CO XLV.214).

"proper bounds of rigour"⁵¹⁴ which the Christian must adhere to but do not forbid him from judging at all. In the context of the discussion on God's providence in the *Treatise*, Calvin explains that these words were used "to reprove the temerity of those who usurp the authority of God by judging things which are not known to them".⁵¹⁵ Man can judge only those things which God has already judged, and when we do judge, "we are not making a judgment of our own, but are only ratifying what God has rendered".⁵¹⁶ Calvin here repeats a theme from his discussion of the second consequence of Libertine determinism. God has revealed His will in the form of the law, Scriptures and conscience, and thus we know what pleases and angers God. Thus closing our eyes to what obviously contradicts God's commandments is tantamount to making ourselves "judges superior to God".⁵¹⁷

Calvin also presents as evidence of Libertine misinterpretation of Scripture the passage, "Hypocrite, first take the dust out of your own eye and then you can take the straw out of your brother's" (Matt. 7:5). As with the first passage which Calvin refuted, he again explains that these words of Scripture are meant to warn us to judge only after we

⁵¹⁴ Comm. Matt. 7:1 (CO XLV.214).

⁵¹⁵ TAL, p. 256 (CO VII.196: C'est pour reprendre la temérité de ceux qui usurpent l'auctorité de Dieu, en iugeant des choses qui leur sont incongneues).

⁵¹⁶ TAL, p. 256 (CO VII.196: nous ne faisons pas iugement de nous: mais seulement ratifions celui que Dieu en a donné).

⁵¹⁷ TAL, p. 256 (CO VII.196).

have first judged ourselves. In discussing Matthew 7:1 in the *Commentaries*, Calvin states that the true Christian "always begins with subjecting himself to examination" and seems to be referring to the likes of the Libertines when he reports that "this passage is altogether misapplied by those persons who would desire to make that moderation, which Christ recommends, a pretence for setting aside all distinction between good and evil".⁵¹⁸ In the *Treatise*, Calvin observes that "there is a vast difference between not judging out of hypocrisy and not judging at all. Our Lord commands us to judge in truth, not being more severe on our neighbors than we are on ourselves".⁵¹⁹ It is also true for Calvin, however, that it is the Christian's duty to know the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures and to follow that will when called for:

We see how it is not lawful for us to attempt to make judgments on our own, but we should hold as good what God has judged and should ratify it by being in accord with it. Hence in order to testify in His behalf that He is a good and equitable judge, let us condemn with Him all wicked workings, and equally, following His admonition, let us judge a tree's goodness or evil according to its fruits.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ *Comm. Matt. 7:1* (CO XLV.214).

⁵¹⁹ TAL, p. 257 (CO VII.197: Or il y a bien grande difference entre ces deux choses: de ne point iuger par hypocrisie: ou ne point iuger du tout. Nostre Seigneur nous commande de iuger en verité, n'estans point plus severes envers noz prochains, que contre nous memes).

⁵²⁰ TAL, p. 256 (CO VII.196: Nous voyons donc, comment il ne nous est pas loisible d'attenter à faire iugemens de nostre teste: qu'aussi il nous faut tenir pour bon, ce que Dieu a iugé: et quasi le ratifier en nous y accordant. Ainsi pour luy donner tesmoignage qu'il est bon iuge et equitable: condamnons avec luy toutes meschantes oeuvres: et pareillement, suyvens son admonition, iugeons de la bonté ou mauvaistié de l'arbre selon les fruictz).

In Calvin's discussion of the second and third consequences of Libertine atheistic determinism, he repeatedly returns to the theme of God's providence. Calvin sees the second and third consequences as dangerous in themselves but also indicates that these unethical conclusions actually result in disregarding and blaspheming God's providential sovereignty. By closing their eyes to the ethical consequences of no conscience and no judgment, the Libertines "revoke all the decisions that God has made and published and say that all the condemnations that He has ever passed are without effect".⁵²¹ As Calvin pointed out in chapter 15, attributing everything to God and eliminating conscience and judgment does not "keep one from sinning, but rather would curtail the work of God".⁵²² The kind of life which the Libertines lead opposes God's providential care of the world, for God's will requires that we follow his commandments as they are revealed to us. Not doing so leads to the Epicurian style of life which the Libertines follow: "their only pleasure is to have a good time and to be without care".⁵²³ Calvin's opposition to the Libertine belief of eradicating conscience and judgment thus involves both an ethical problem and a doctrinal one.

⁵²¹ TAL, p. 256 (CO VII.196).

⁵²² TAL, p. 250 (CO VII.192).

⁵²³ TAL, p. 258 (CO VII.198: Car tout leur plaisir est de se donner du bon temps et estre sans soucy).

5.5 CONCLUSION

In concluding the present chapter, one should give attention to the fact that Calvin's arguments against the Libertines are twofold: one theological and the other practical. Theologically, Calvin attacks the pantheistic determinism of the Libertines as detrimental to his doctrine of God's providence. Practically, Calvin warns of the consequences of Libertine pantheistic determinism of abolishing conscience and moral judgment. The importance of the ethical consequences of Libertine determinism becomes clear as Calvin continues to deal separately with "the vast personal religious, social, and economic repercussion of Libertines" in chapters 19 through 21. Verhey also contends that "in Calvin's mind its ethical consequences are as damaging to Christian life as its deterministic and philosophical consequences are to the doctrine of providence".⁵²⁴

⁵²⁴ Verhey, p. 181.

6. CHRISTOLOGY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapters 17, 18, and 22 of the *Treatise*, Calvin further examines the Libertine concept of pantheism as it is extended to their view of Christ, regeneration and resurrection. In the first of these chapters, Calvin debates the Libertine view of Christ which denies his humanity. The humanity of Christ is a central theme of Calvin's theology. In the *Institutes*, he states:

Now it (that dogma) was of the greatest importance for us that he who was to be our Mediator be both true God and true man. If someone asks why this is necessary, there has been no simple (to use the common expression) or absolute necessity. Rather, it has stemmed from a heavenly decree, on which our salvation depended.⁵²⁵

The humanity of Christ to Calvin is an undebatable decree from God. This image of Christ as both God and man is distorted by the Libertines; their Christ, Calvin accuses, is created out of their pantheistic mold, "out of the Spirit of God which is in us all and from what they call 'suppositions (cuidex),' or the 'world'".⁵²⁶ Thus Calvin contends, the Libertine Christ is really only a phantom.

⁵²⁵ *Inst.* II.12.1, p.464 (CO II.340: Iam magnopere nostra interfuit verum esse et Deum et hominem qui mediator noster futurus esset. De necessitate si quaeritur, non simplex quidem (ut vulgo loquuntur) vel absoluta fuit; sed manavit ex coelesti decreto, unde pendebat hominum salus).

⁵²⁶ TAL, p. 259 (CO VII.198: appellent cuidex ou le monde). In his Latin version of the Libertine *Treatise*, Calvin employs the term *opinate*

Calvin's argument in chapter 18 is pitted against a totally different concept of Christ's redemptive work and regeneration. According to Calvin, the Libertines view Christ's saving act as one which restored man to the perfect state of innocence which existed before Adam's sin. Christ came and destroyed the distinction between good and evil, that is, *cuides*.⁵²⁷ The regenerate state for the Libertines thus means that *cuides*, the result of Adam's sin, no longer applies. It follows that for the Libertines, regeneration means being awakened to the existence of a perfect state which has always existed. Calvin's main argument against this view consists in his belief that a perfect state is not achievable by anyone since man is and will always be sinful. Thus, the regenerate state for Calvin can only be a partially perfect state.

Although the Christian can only hope to achieve an imperfect state in this life, he can enjoy complete happiness and perfection in the promise of resurrection. In chapter 22, Calvin refutes the Libertine Christology which denies the possibility of man's future resurrection. For the Libertines, there is no need for a future resurrection since it has already occurred. This is in line with their pantheistic doctrine which states that man is already "united with the essence of God, so much so that only a single spirit lives on".⁵²⁸ Calvin dismisses this view by repeatedly stating

for *cuides* (*Tractatus Omnes* (1597); *Adversus Libertines* col. 514). *Opinatione* used by Calvin includes those terms such as imagination, supposition, conjecture, fancy, belief, and idea. Cf. Lewis and Short, 1896, p. 1269.

⁵²⁷ Refer to the discussion in 5.3 View of Creation, on pp. 131-132.

⁵²⁸ TAL, p. 293 (CO VII.221: *reioinct à l'essence de Dieu: tellement qu'il n'y demeure qu'un esprit seul*).

that man's hope consists in the event of resurrection which has yet to occur.

The present chapter follows Calvin's line of argument against the Libertine Christology and examines the implications as outlined by Calvin in chapters 17, 18, and 22.

6.2 THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

6.2.1 CHRIST'S HUMANITY IN THE INSTITUTES

In his discussion of the origins of the Libertine sect, Calvin traced the beginnings of the sect to Cerdon and Marcion. An important aspect of their theology was their docetic Christology. Christ was denied of having a human body. Being divine, Christ could not possess human substance and could therefore only suffer a quasi passion. Calvin contends that Cerdon's understanding of Christ was as a phantom only and that this view was accepted by Marcion. As discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis, this docetic Christology is in fact extended to most later heresies and constitutes an important aspect of heresies in general.

When Calvin discusses Christ's humanity in his *Institutes*, he brings Marcionism and Manichaeism into discussion. There, he attacks their Christology as he does in the *Treatise against the Libertines*. Although he does not directly mention the Libertines in connection with heretical views of Christ in the *Institutes*, the doctrines of Christ's humanity which Calvin attacks and that which he upholds coincide remarkably in the two works. By referring to Calvin's doctrine as found in the *Institutes*, Calvin's position against the Libertines can be better appreciated.

What we find in the various editions of the *Institutes* is Calvin's strong assertion of the full humanity of Christ. The belief that Christ came as a man not only affirms the real person of Christ but the validity of his redemptive work as well. Calvin thus maintains:

Christ, as he took our flesh when he was born of the virgin, suffered in our true flesh; when he made satisfaction for us, so also both in rising again received that same true flesh and bore it up to heaven. For we have this hope of our resurrection and of our ascension into heaven: that Christ rose again and ascended. But how weak and fragile that hope would be, if this very flesh of ours had not entered into the Kingdom of Heaven! But this is unchangingly true nature of a body to be contained in a place, to possess its own dimensions and to have its own shape.⁵²⁹

The reality of Christ's humanity is certain in Calvin's mind, a reality which the Marcionites and the Manichaeans deny. In the 1539 edition of

⁵²⁹ *Inst.* (1536), Ch. 4, p. 142 (OS. I.140: *Chrustus, ut veram nostram carnem induit, cum e virgine natus est in vera carne nostra passus est, cum pro nobis satisfecit; ita eandem veram carnem et resurgendo recepit et in coelum sustulit. Haec enim nobis nostrae resurrectionis et in coelum ascensionis spes est, quod Christus resurrexit et ascendit. Porro, quam infirma et fragilis spes foret ista, nisi haec ipsa nostra caro in Christo vere suscitata et in regnum coelorum ingressa esset? Atqui haec est perpetua corporis veritas, ut loco contineatur, ut suis dimensionibus constet, ut suam faciem habeat*).

the *Institutes*, Calvin denounces their rejection of Christ's humanity.⁵³⁰ He begins: "Indeed, the genuineness of his human nature was impugned long ago by both the Manichees and the Marcionites. The Marcionites fancied Christ's body as a mere appearance, while the Manichees dreamed that he was endowed with heavenly flesh".⁵³¹ Calvin then sets out to prove them erroneous in their interpretation of Scripture. Marcion, Calvin asserts, "imagines that Christ puts on a phantasm instead of a body because Paul elsewhere says that Christ was 'made in the likeness of man...being found in fashion as a man' (Phil. 2:7-8)".⁵³² Calvin further explains that Marcion misunderstood Paul's intention; "Paul does not mean to teach what sort of body Christ assumes....Here Paul is really teaching not what Christ was, but how he conducted himself".⁵³³

Calvin likewise examines and corrects the Manichaeian perversion of Scripture: "Mani forged him a body of air, because Christ is called the Second Adam of heaven, 'heavenly' (I Cor. 15:47)".⁵³⁴ The Manichaeian

⁵³⁰ *Inst.* II.13.1-2, p. 474-478 (CO II.347-350).

⁵³¹ *Inst.* II.13.1, p. 475 (CO II.347: *Ac humanae quidem naturae veritas olim tam a Manichaeis quam a Marcionitis impugnata est; quorum hi quidem spectrum pro Christi corpore sibi fingeant, illi autem coelesti carne praeditum somniabant*).

⁵³² *Inst.* II.13.2, p. 476 (CO II.348: *Marcion phantasma pro corpore Christum induisse imaginatur, quia dicatur alicubi in similitudinem hominis factus, et figura compertus ut homo*). Cf. *Comm. Phil.* 2:7 (CO LII.26-27): "The Marcionites perverted this declaration for the purpose of establishing the phantasm of which they dreamed".

⁵³³ *Inst.* II.13.2, p. 476 (CO II.348-349: *Non enim quale sibi corpus sumpserit Christus vult docere...Hic certe non docet quid fuerit Christus, sed qualiter se gesserit*). Cf. *Comm. Phil.* 2:7-8.

⁵³⁴ *Inst.* II.13.2, p. 476 (CO II.349: *Manichaeus aereum fabricatur corpus, quia vocetur Christus secundus Adam de coelo coelestis*). Cf.

view of Christ is in Calvin's view a result of their misunderstanding or blasphemous interpretation of Scripture.

While the Marcionites and the Manichaeans differ in their picture of Christ's person, they both deny that Christ could have assumed a human body. Their denial of Christ's humanity implies that Christ never physically died on the cross or was resurrected in the body. This view can only be nonsensical to Calvin who strongly believes that Christ shared the same bodily nature with man and that our faith would be worthless if it were not for Christ's true manhood: "For unless Christ had one bodily nature with us, the reasoning that Paul pursues with such vehemence would be meaningless: 'if Christ arose, we also shall arise from the dead; if we do not arise, neither did Christ arise' (I Cor. 15:12-20)".⁵³⁵

In the final edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin also provides Scriptural evidence for Christ's human descent. Repudiating the ancient heretics' allegorical interpretation of Scripture, Calvin points out that the

Comm. I Cor. 15:47 (CO XLIX.559-560): "The Manichees perverted this passage, with the view of proving that Christ brought a body from heaven into the womb of the virgin".

⁵³⁵ Inst. II.13.2, p. 477 (CO II.349: Nisi enim unam haberet nobiscum corporis naturam Christus, inanis esset ratiocinatio quam tanta vehementia Paulus prosequitur: si Christus resurrexit, nos quoque resurrecturos; si non resurgimus neque Christum resurrexisse). Calvin describes the reciprocal relationship of bodily resurrection between Christ and the believers in Comm. I Cor. 15:12: "He [Paul] now begins to prove the resurrection of all of us from that of Christ. For a mutual and reciprocal inference holds good on the one side and on the other, both affirmatively and negatively--from Christ to us in this way: If Christ is risen, then we will rise--If Christ is not risen, then we will not rise--from us to Christ on the other hand. If we rise, then Christ is risen--If we do not rise, then neither is Christ risen" (CO XLIX.542).

Scriptural verses regarding Christ's physical birth should be taken plainly and unfiguratively.⁵³⁶ That Christ could be both the son of God and a man poses no problems for Calvin's understanding of Christ. Thus, Calvin maintains:

They thrust upon us as something absurd the fact that if the Word of God became flesh, then he was confined within the narrow prison of an earthly body. This is mere impudence! For even if the Word in his immeasurable essence united with the nature of man into one person, we do not imagine that he was confined therein. Here is something marvelous: the Son of God descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, he willed to be borne in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet he continuously filled the world even as he had done from the beginning!⁵³⁷

6.2.2 THE LIBERTINES AND CHRIST'S HUMANITY

The Christ of the Libertines is also deprived of humanity. Like the ancient heretics discussed by Calvin, the Libertines make Christ into a mere phantom. Furthermore, the vicarious suffering of Christ, Calvin concludes, is reduced to "a farce or a morality play, acted out upon a

⁵³⁶ Inst. II.13.3-4, pp. 478-480 (CO II.350-354).

⁵³⁷ Inst. II.13.4, p. 481 (CO II.352: Quod etiam pro absurdo nobis obtrudunt, si sermo Dei carnem induit, fuisse igitur angusto terreni corporis ergastulo inclusum, mera est procacitas, quia, etsi in unam personam coaluit immensa verbi essentia cum natura hominis, nullam tamen inclusionem fingimus. Mirabiliter enim e coelo descendit filius Dei, ut coelum tamen non relinqueret; mirabiliter in utero virginis gestari, in terris versari, et in cruce pendere voluit, ut semper mundum impleret, sicut ab initio).

stage, which represents the mystery of our salvation for us".⁵³⁸ To the Libertines, Christ's death on the cross does not represent salvation for the believer. Rather, as Farley explains, Christ's work is "regarded as redemptive because it awakens in all human beings (who are no less divine than He) the awareness of their reconciliation as something which has already ontologically occurred. Christ simply displays for others what is ontologically true".⁵³⁹ Christ's redemptive work thus lies in the confirmation of the belief that "we are all Christs, and what was done in Him He has performed in us".⁵⁴⁰

The person and work of Christ are thus manipulated by the Libertines to suit their pantheistic position. Since Libertine pantheism supposes that all creatures share in the one spirit, they also think that "it is not necessary for what has already been accomplished in us to be repeated".⁵⁴¹ Calvin tells us that the Libertines arrive at this conclusion by misinterpreting John 19:30 which says, "All is finished". Calvin's understanding of this passage can be found in his *Commentary on John*. Calvin explains that this passage refers firstly to the death of Christ in whom "everything which contributes to the salvation of men is to be

⁵³⁸ TAL, p. 260 (CO VII.199: Mais le tout revient là, que ce qu'il a faict et souffert n'est qu'une farce ou une moralité iouée sur un eschafaut, pour nous figurer le mystere de nostre salut).

⁵³⁹ In TAL, p. 181.

⁵⁴⁰ TAL, p. 260 (CO VII.199: Au reste selon leur phantasie nous sommes tous Christz: et ce qui a esté faict en luy, il a esté faict en tous).

⁵⁴¹ TAL, p. 260 (CO VII.199: Car puis que nous sommes Iesuschristz, il n'est plus question que ce qui a esté desia parfaict en nous, soit reiteré).

found". In other words, Christ's death constitutes the final perfection of man's salvation. Secondly, the passage is seen as contrasting Christ's death with the ancient sacrifices made under the Law. Such sacrifices were abolished with Christ's death, by which were fulfilled the ceremonies of the Law. Calvin furthermore observes that these words were uttered by Christ "chiefly for the purpose of giving peace and tranquility to our consciences".⁵⁴² While the Libertine interpretation seems to be literal and completely out-of-context, Calvin's understanding of the passage is a careful deduction from the context in which it is spoken.

To Calvin, the Libertine view of Christ's person and work is erroneous and blasphemous on its pantheistic base and signals dangerous doctrinal consequences. In dealing with their view of Christ, Calvin is concerned with defending not only the humanity of Christ on its own but with the implication that the Libertine Christology has on the salvation of the believer. Thus in chapter 18, Calvin turns to an important aspect of Christology: regeneration.

6.3 REGENERATION

The Libertines' pantheistic tendencies are clearly apparent in their view of regeneration. Calvin claims that to the Libertines regeneration means

⁵⁴² Comm. John 19:30 (CO XLVII.419).

"to return to that innocent state which Adam enjoyed before he sinned. And in their view this innocent state sees neither white nor black, because Adam's sin was to eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil".⁵⁴³ In the eyes of the Libertines then, man lost sight of the true state of reality--that of total innocence which has no need of conscience or judgment. Christ's role in this state of sin was to deliver man from the yoke of cuider, thereby effectively eliminating the distinction between good and evil. As Calvin explains, "that is what constitutes for them the entire benefit of the redemption accomplished in Jesus Christ: that He has destroyed this need to make distinctions which entered the world through Adam's guilt".⁵⁴⁴ This is, as Farley terms it, a kind of "second-Adam Christology".⁵⁴⁵ As the 1539 edition of the *Institutes* explains, the Libertine Christ freed the believers from the curse of old Adam--that is, from the curse of recognizing sin. As a result, the Libertines assert that believers, "restored to the state of innocence, now need not take care to bridle the lust of the flesh, but should rather follow the Spirit as their guide, under whose impulsion they can never go astray".⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ TAL, p. 263 (CO VII.200: c'est que la regeneration est de revenir en l'estat d'innocence, auquel estoit Adam devant qu'avoir peché. Or c'est estat de innocence, ilz le prennent à ne voir goutte entre le blanc et le noir: pource que le peché d'Adam a esté de manger du fruict de science de bien et de mal).

⁵⁴⁴ TAL, p. 264 (CO VII.201).

⁵⁴⁵ In TAL, p. 181.

⁵⁴⁶ Inst. III.3.14, p. 606 (CO II.443-444: nempe in statum innocentiae repositos Dei filios, iam non oportere sollicitos esse de libidine

For the Libertines then, the regenerate state is none other than a state in which the illusion of sin is destroyed. With this illusion or *cuius* destroyed, a perfect state of innocence or sinlessness is achieved in life. Not only does sin cease to exist, but man no longer sins in this perfected state.⁵⁴⁷ According to Calvin, one of the Scriptural verses which the Libertines use to support their claim comes from 1 John 3:9 ("Let him who is born of God sin no more"). Taken literally, the passage fits in with the Libertine belief in a perfect state of regeneration. Calvin too concedes that the words of the passage must be true for the regenerated Christian. But he is also careful to point out that the passage does not give support to the contention that man can no longer sin.⁵⁴⁸ Rather, Calvin understands the passage as declaring that "the hearts of the godly are so effectually governed by the Spirit of God, that through an inflexible disposition they follow his guidance".⁵⁴⁹ The Spirit of God works in such a way as to guide man towards persevering against sin. This

carnis refrænanda; spiritum ducem sequendum esse, sub cuius actione numquam aberratur).

⁵⁴⁷ In attacking the belief in perfectionism of heretical sects and their contention that Christ came to eradicate the distinction between good and evil in his *Institutes*, Calvin speaks of "certain Anabaptists". This term most probably includes the Libertines who in fact more strongly believed in perfectionism in this life. Indeed, the content of Calvin's attack more closely describes the Libertines than the Anabaptists. As Balke (pp. 119-120) explains however, Calvin "knew how to distinguish between the perfectionism of the Libertines and of the Anabaptists, but he reduced them to a common denominator. Both believed that perfection is possible in this present life".

⁵⁴⁸ In his *Commentary*, Calvin attests that the Libertines hold this belief in a wrong sense: "They then maintain that we may follow indiscriminately whatever our inclinations may lead us to. Thus they take the liberty to commit adultery, to steal, and to murder because there can be no sin where God's spirit reigns". *Comm. 1 John 3:9* (CO LV.336-337).

⁵⁴⁹ *Comm. 1 John 3:9* (CO LV. 336: *efficaciter piorum cordia gubernari a Dei spiritu, ut inflexibili affectu sequantur eius ductum*).

does not mean, however, that man lives without his own will or natural inclinations. As Calvin further adds in his **Commentary**, "the will is a natural power, but, as nature is corrupted, it has only depraved inclinations". As such, the role of the Spirit is to transform this inclination or to "renew it, in order that it may begin to be good".⁵⁵⁰ This constant renewal or guidance is needed even in the regenerated man, because, as Calvin observes, there has yet to be seen a totally regenerated Christian who is completely free from sin; the passage, Calvin asserts, means "nothing other than that insofar as man is regenerated by God, he no longer sins".⁵⁵¹

In Calvin's theology, Christian regeneration does not exclude the possibility of sin nor does it consider a state of complete sinlessness achievable. The belief that man is corrupted in nature is fundamental to Calvin's position. For Calvin, sin is ever present, so much so that "all believers are sinners".⁵⁵² Thus regeneration "means forcing our heart away from its natural inclination and redirecting it toward the obedience

⁵⁵⁰ **Comm. I John 3:9** (CO LV.335: *Voluntas enim a natura est: sed quia naturae corruptio pravos tantum affectus generat, ideo necesse est ut eam spiritus Dei reformet, quo bona esse incipiat*). Owen translates the term reform as "renew", but the term reform used by Calvin means not simple renewal, but complete change of sinful life in regeneration for the restoration of *Imago Dei* in us as in Adam. Cf. Dowey, pp. 235f.

⁵⁵¹ TAL, p. 269 (CO VII.205).

⁵⁵² TAL, p. 267 (CO VII.204: *tous fideles sont pecheurs*).

of God, blaming ourselves for all our evil affections".⁵⁵³ The regenerated man thus recognizes and confesses his sinful nature and repents of it.

When the believer is regenerated, he learns to mortify his earthly inclinations and to walk soberly and humbly. Furthermore, his acknowledgement of sin and seeking for forgiveness is a continual process which lasts "until the end".⁵⁵⁴ Unlike the Libertines who understand regeneration as a final and finished act, Calvin strongly believes in the continual struggle to maintain the state of regeneration. This theme points back to Calvin's concept of the sinful man. An excerpt from the 1543 Institutes will clarify this point:

Thus, then, are the children of God freed through regeneration from bondage to sin, yet they do not obtain full possession of freedom so as to feel no more annoyance from their flesh, but there still remains in them a continuing occasion for struggle whereby they may be exercised; and not only be exercised, but also better learn their weakness. In this matter all writers of sounder judgement agree that there remains in a regenerate man a smoldering cinder of evil, from which desires continually leap forth to allure and spur him to commit sin.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ TAL, p. 266 (CO VII.203: pour le retirer de son inclination naturelle, et le reduire en l'obeissance de Dieu, et nous redarquer en toutes mauvaises affections).

⁵⁵⁴ TAL, p. 266 (CO VII.203).

⁵⁵⁵ Inst. III.3.10, p. 602 (CO II.441: Sic ergo a peccati servitute liberantur filii Dei per regenerationem, non ut quasi plenam libertatis possessionem iam adepti nihil amplius molestiae a carne sua sentiant, sed ut illis maneat perpetua certaminis materia, unde exercentur; neque exercentur modo, sed infirmitatem quoque suam melius discant. Atque in ea re omnes sanioris iudicii scriptores inter se consentiunt, manere in homine regenerato mali fomitem, unde perpetuo scateant cupiditates, quae ipsum ad peccandum illiciant et exstimulent).

The cinder of evil which smolders in the heart of even the believer proves that man is inclined towards sin. Furthermore, Calvin deems even the act of desiring to be sin. As Calvin himself explains, Augustine considered this concupiscence to be a "weakness" which became sin only if it was acted upon. Calvin, on the other hand, designates even the conceiving or thinking of a sinful act as sin. Thus, "there is always sin"; in man's flesh, "there resides that depravity of inordinate desiring which contends against righteousness".⁵⁵⁶

By recognizing sin, the Christian actually progresses towards perfection. Thus in the *Treatise*, Calvin concurs with Augustine who states that "the greatest perfection is to acknowledge and confess how imperfect one is and to confess without end one's weaknesses to God".⁵⁵⁷ Regeneration for Calvin thus "consists in repentance".⁵⁵⁸ The importance of repentance is such that together with forgiveness or remission of sin, it constitutes the sum of the gospel.⁵⁵⁹ Repentance, Calvin asserts, "not only constantly follows faith, but is also born of faith".⁵⁶⁰ For Calvin, a recog-

⁵⁵⁶ Inst. III.3.10, p. 603 (CO II.441).

⁵⁵⁷ TAL, p. 269 (CO VII.205: leur plus grande perfection est, de reconnoistre et confesser combien ilz son imparfaictz, et de confesser tousiours leurs infirmittez devant Dieu).

⁵⁵⁸ TAL, p. 265-266 (CO VII.202).

⁵⁵⁹ TAL, p. 266 (CO VII.203); Inst. III.3.1, p. 592 (CO II.434).

⁵⁶⁰ Inst. III.3.1, p. 593 (CO II.434: Poenitentiam vero non fidem continuo subsequi, sed ex ea nasci).

nition of God's grace or the possession of faith **must** result in repentance. Calvin adds that the call to repentance is made in the gospel of Matthew (3:2) in which John the Baptist warns men to repent as the kingdom of God is near. Calvin explains, repentance is not a choice to be made; rather, "men are commanded to repent, that they may receive the reconciliation which is offered to them".⁵⁶¹

In the 1539 *Institutes*, Calvin explains further that "repentance consists of two parts: namely, mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit".⁵⁶² Likewise in the *Treatise*, Calvin insists on the need for mortification of the body and humble repentance by referring to the Apostle Paul's admonishments. To be mortified means to be contrite and sorrowful of the sinful nature of man, but a Christian does not remain discouraged or in despair. In repenting, the Christian takes courage and in the goodness of God is raised or vivified to a new life. By repenting or being mortified, the believer is freed from the bondage of sin, rising above it and being renewed.

Calvin's doctrine of regeneration answers the Libertine charge that sin no longer reigns as a result of Christ's death. While the Libertines conclude from their pantheistic standpoint that sin itself no longer exists, Calvin approaches the matter on the basis that sin always exists. It follows that "sin indwells the children of God as long as they live in this

⁵⁶¹ Comm. Matt. 3:2 (CO XLV.107,111).

⁵⁶² Inst. III.3.8, p. 600 (CO II.439: quod dicimus poenitentiam duabus partibus constare: mortificatione scilicet carnis et spiritus vivificatione).

world, but it does not reign in them".⁵⁶³ This seemingly contradictory standpoint is actually the basis of Calvin's doctrine of regeneration. It is a doctrine based on the concept of the imperfect believer or the forgiven sinner.⁵⁶⁴ While the believer's regenerate state is always an imperfect one tainted with his natural inclination towards sin, he nevertheless is a forgiven sinner. This contradiction is the sum total of the Christian's regenerate state in this life. Calvin's doctrine totally differs from that of the Libertines, because it takes into account the nature of man: "we must always come back to this point, that a man is free of the bondage of sin according to the measure of grace which he has received, which is more in some and less in others. But this measure is never full in anyone, whoever he might be".⁵⁶⁵

6.4 CHRIST AND RESURRECTION

In chapter 22, Calvin continues to refute the Libertines' Christology. Here, he sets out to explain the Libertine view of resurrection and in doing so expounds his own doctrine of eschatology. The Libertines un-

⁵⁶³ TAL, p. 268 (CO VII.204: Or il est bien certain, que le peché habite aux enfans de Dieu, pendant qu'ilz sont en ce monde, mais il ny regne pas).

⁵⁶⁴ Inst. III.3.10-14 (CO II.441-445).

⁵⁶⁵ TAL, p. 270 (CO VII.206: Mais cependant si nous faut il tousiours retenir ce poinct, qu'un homme est exempt de la servitude de peché, selon la mesure de grace qu'il a receue, qui est plus en l'un et moins en l'autre. Mais elle n'est pleine en nul qui soit).

derstand resurrection in the light of their pantheism. In their view, man need not wait to be raised as this has already occurred.⁵⁶⁶

Calvin's response to the Libertines is important not only in that it refutes a dangerous doctrine but also in that it constitutes a core of his doctrine of eschatology. It is intriguing to see that Calvin only briefly discussed the doctrine of resurrection in the editions of the *Institutes* written before the 1545 *Treatise Against the Libertines*. It is only in the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* that the theme of resurrection is fully expounded. Furthermore, the significance of Calvin's understanding of resurrection seems to be founded on his experience with the Libertine sect. His encounter with the Libertines may have convinced Calvin of the importance of this doctrine. Thus in the 1559 *Institutes*, Calvin states, "Let us, then, be so attentive to this most serious matter of all that no length of time may weary us".⁵⁶⁷ The same idea is expressed in the *Treatise* in which Calvin contends that resurrection is "the principal foundation of our faith, without which the gospel...would consist of nothing".⁵⁶⁸

In explaining the Libertine position, Calvin names Philetus and Hymenaeus of the book of Timothy (2 Tim.2:17) as predecessors to the Libertine

⁵⁶⁶ TAL, p. 292 (CO VII.221).

⁵⁶⁷ Inst. III.25.3, p. 990 (CO II.730: Atque ita in rem maxime omnium seriam simus attenti ut nulla diuturnitas lassitudinem afferat).

⁵⁶⁸ TAL, p. 292 (CO VII.221: le principal fondement de nostre foy: sans lequel, l'Evangile...ne peut nullement consister).

denunciation of Christ's resurrection. These two representative teachers of a Gnostic doctrine of resurrection denied the resurrection of the body, believing that resurrection had already happened in the lives of the believers when "they arose from ignorance and sin to a knowledge of God".^{5 69} Not much is known about the beliefs of the two false teachers except as recorded in the Bible. They probably held that resurrection occurred at the time of baptism^{5 70} through which the Christian achieved a spiritual victory over death. Since death is overcome by baptism, so the need for bodily resurrection is eliminated. Baptism is viewed allegorically and bodily resurrection denied.

In his *Commentary on the Second Epistle of Timothy*, Calvin connects the heretical views of Philetus and Hymenaeus to those of the Libertines: "they undoubtedly contrived a sort of allegorical resurrection, which has also been attempted in this age by some filthy dogs".^{5 71} Like the two false believers, the Libertines also maintain that resurrection has occurred once and for all. This contention, of course, derives from their pantheistic concept. As Calvin explains, it is because the redeemed man is already in union with the one immortal spirit that resurrection is deemed as unnecessary:

If we ask them how, it is (owing to the fact) that man knows that his soul is nothing other than immortal spirit which is always

^{5 69} Tenney, 1977, p. 756.

^{5 70} Buttrick, Vol. XII, p. 667; Lock, 1936, p. 99.

^{5 71} Comm. II Tim. 2:18 (CO LII.369). Cf. Comm. I Cor 15:19 (CO XLIX.554- 555).

living in heaven, and that Jesus Christ in His death has abolished the need to make judgments between good and evil, and has thereby restored us to life, which means to know that we shall not die.^{5 72}

The Libertines seem to have based their conclusion on several Scriptural verses which Calvin feels the obligation to repudiate. The first cited by Calvin is from John 11:26 which reads, "whoever believes never dies, but has passed from death to life". The Libertines seem to have taken this passage almost literally whereas Calvin is careful to point out that while this is so, there are also important distinctions which need to be made. The Libertines, as Calvin explains, understand death as spiritual reunification with the essence of God, basing this contention on Ecclesiastes 12:7: "the spirit of man will return to God who made it, while the body will return to the earth from whence it came". Calvin calls attention to the boldness of their interpretation which contends that the human soul becomes as God's. Citing Luke 23:46 in which Jesus says, "Father, I commend My spirit into Your hands", and Acts 7:59, Calvin indicates that these passages defy the Libertine position and rather "point out that God receives our souls into His keeping and preserves them until the time that they shall be reunited with their bodies".^{5 73} God's "keeping" of our souls does not mean that our souls become as His but indicates that "He gives them joy and consolation, causes them to rest from all their

^{5 72} TAL, p. 292 (CO VII.221: Si on leur demande comment: c'est que l'homme sache que son ame n'est que l'esprit immortel, qui est tousiours vivant au ciel: et que Iesus Christ par sa mort a aboly le cuidier, et par ce moyen nous a restitué la vie, qui est de congnoistre que nous ne mourons pas).

^{5 73} TAL, p. 293 (CO VII.221: Car ilz demonstrent expressement que Dieu reçoit noz ames en sa garde, et les conserve iusque au temps qu'elles soyent reioinctes à leurs corps).

miseries, and satisfies them with His blessings".⁵⁷⁴ Calvin then proceeds to prove that resurrection refers also to a bodily resurrection. The Libertines must have used Ephesians 2:19 ("we are members of the household of God, citizens of His kingdom with the saints, seated in heavenly places") and Colossians 3:1 ("we are raised with Him") to support their belief that they are already resurrected as believers. Calvin interprets these passages not as denoting a real resurrected state but as pointing to a future hope of a believer.

Calvin's kingdom theory thus incorporates a dichotomous viewpoint: kingdom has come, but it is not yet completed. This idea is iterated again and again throughout Calvin's exposition. A believer's life on earth must not rest on complacency but on a constant aspiration for the heavenly life to come, "meditating on the kingdom of God and seeking only to conform ourselves to His will".⁵⁷⁵ If one believes as the Libertines do that a future resurrection is not necessary, it is likely that one will fall into the kind of blasphemous and antinomian life which the Libertines lead. Calvin's view of life on earth is totally different in this respect and he always has in mind the future of the believer.

In Calvin's exposition of the future reality of our resurrection, four points of emphasis can be deduced: 1) resurrection as God's eternal decree, 2) the true fact of Christ's resurrection in connection with our

⁵⁷⁴ TAL, p.293 (CO VII.222: que c'est en leur donnant ioye et consolation, les faisant reposer de toutes miseres, les rassasiant de ses biens).

⁵⁷⁵ TAL, p. 294 (CO VII.222: meditant le Royaume la Dieu et ne cherchant que de nous conformer a sa volunté).

future bodily resurrection, 3) the true fact of Christ's return, and 4) the future consummation of our salvation.

As for God's eternal decree, it is as if God has chosen his children even before the creation of the world.⁵⁷⁶ In the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin considers this a providence of God's and directs it to God's omnipotence.⁵⁷⁷ Resurrection is thus seen as part of God's eternal plan and stemming from "His boundless might": "Let us remember that no one is truly persuaded of the coming resurrection unless he is seized with wonder, and ascribes to the power of God its due glory".⁵⁷⁸ For Calvin who sees resurrection as part of God's eternal ordinance, the Libertines' denial of a future resurrection can only be a distortion of truth.

Another point which is emphasized in Calvin's eschatology is that our resurrection is made possible by the true fact of Christ's resurrection. To deny our future resurrection is to deny that Christ's resurrection ever took place. Calvin outlines the implications of such an argument by appealing to Paul's confirmation: "If there were no resurrection for us, says Saint Paul (I Cor. 15:14, 17), it would follow that Jesus Christ is not raised, that the gospel is only a lie, and that our faith is

⁵⁷⁶ TAL, p. 294 (CO VII.223).

⁵⁷⁷ Inst. III.25.3-4, pp. 992-994 (CO II.732-734).

⁵⁷⁸ Inst. III.25.4, p. 993 (CO II.733: Caeterum meminimus, neminem de futura resurrectione vere esse persuasum nisi qui in admirationem raptus, Dei virtuti suam dat gloriam).

empty".⁵⁷⁹ Christ's physical resurrection is an absolute basis for our faith and as such, is strongly asserted by Calvin. The reason for this is clearly revealed in Calvin's *Treatise* and in his *Institutes*. Our future resurrection rests on the premise that Christ also arose bodily.

Calvin is aware of the difficulty with which the idea of bodily resurrection will be accepted:

It is difficult to believe that bodies, when consumed with rottenness, will at length be raised up in their season. Therefore, although many of the philosophers declared souls immortal, few approved the resurrection of the flesh. Even though there was no excuse for this point of view, we are nevertheless reminded by it that it is something too hard for men's minds to apprehend. Scripture provides two helps by which faith may overcome this great obstacle: one in the parallel of Christ's resurrection; the other in the omnipotence of God.⁵⁸⁰

With numerous Scriptural passages, Calvin establishes the truth and historicity of Christ's resurrection, being sure that any doubt as to its reality is removed.⁵⁸¹ In resolving the difficulty with which man is able to comprehend the fact of resurrection, God's omnipotence is brought into discussion. To Calvin the resurrection of the body is founded only in

⁵⁷⁹ TAL, p. 296 (CO VII.224: S'il n'y avoit point de resurrection pour nous, dict saint Paul(I Cor. 15, 14.17), il s'ensuit que Iesus Christ n'est point ressuscité, que l'Evangile n'est que mensonge, que la foy est aneantie).

⁵⁸⁰ Inst. III.25.3., p. 990 (CO II. 730-731: Res est creditu difficilis, ubi putredine consumpta fuerint corpora, tandem suo tempore resurrectura esse. Itaque quum multi ex philosophis asseruerint immortales esse animas, carnis resurrectio a paucis probata fuit. In quo etsi nulla fuit excusatio, inde tamen monemur rem esse magis arduam quam ut hominum sensus ad se trahat. Quo tantum obstaculum superet fides, duo adminicula scriptura suppeditat: alterum est in Christi similitudine, alterum vero in Dei omnipotentia).

⁵⁸¹ Inst. III.25.3, p. 992 (CO II.732).

God's omnipotence: "In proving the resurrection our thoughts ought to be directed to God's boundless might".⁵⁸² He also refers to a passage in Isaiah 26:19 which reads, "Thy dead men shall live; my body shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and praise".⁵⁸³ God's power fully compensates for the possibility of our future bodily resurrection. The event of Christ's resurrection and the believer's future resurrection are both made possible by God's all-encompassing omnipotence. And it is this power which binds the relationship between Christ's and the believers' resurrection, making both plausible within the bounds of this power.

In the Treatise, the connection between our resurrection and Christ's is clearly made. Our bodily resurrection can receive benefit only through Christ's resurrection: "Hence let us think of our resurrection to come as conforming to His. That is, that as He was raised in immortality, so also we should not doubt that when the time comes the same will be done in us as in His members".⁵⁸⁴ For Calvin, resurrection must include a

⁵⁸² Inst. III.25.4, p.993. (CO II.733: in probanda resurrectione sensus nostros oportere dirigi ad immensam Dei potentiam).

⁵⁸³ Inst. III.25.4, p. 993 (CO II.733: Caeterum meminerimus, neminem de futura resurrectione vere esse persuasum nisi qui in admirationem raptus, Dei virtuti suam dat gloriam). The same idea is elaborated in Job's case. Cf. CO II.733: Iob etiam, cadaveri similior quam homini, fretus Dei potentia, non dubitat quasi integer ad diem illum se attollere).

⁵⁸⁴ TAL, p. 297 (CO VII.225: Ainsi contemplons nostre resurrection a venir, en la sienne. C'est que comme il est ressuscité en immortalité, aussi nous ne doubtions pas que le semblable ne soit faict en nous comme en ses membres, quand le temps sera venu).

physical transfiguration in order for man to receive "the crown of glory which God has prepared".⁵⁸⁵

The third aspect of Calvin's eschatology is his emphasis on the second coming of Christ. It is an inevitable outcome of his exposition on the true fact of Christ's resurrection. Calvin's treatment of parousia in the *Institutes* is helpful in understanding his position more clearly.

While the parousia of Christ is treated very briefly in his first *Institutes* (1536), the second edition extends it remarkably and comments:

It is right...that faith be called to ponder that visible presence of Christ which he will manifest on the Last Day. For he will come down from heaven in the same visible form he has been seen to ascend (Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:30). And he will appear to all with the ineffable majesty of his kingdom....⁵⁸⁶

While the 1539 edition treats the doctrine of parousia only in the context of the last judgment, the 1559 edition of the *Institutes* places it in the context of both the final judgment and of hope in resurrection.⁵⁸⁷ It is noteworthy that before this last edition Calvin's doctrine of parousia in both contexts was illumined in his *Treatise* (1545). In his treatment of this theme, one can see the importance it has to Calvin's eschatology.

⁵⁸⁵ TAL, p. 297 (CO VII.225).

⁵⁸⁶ Inst. II.16.17, p. 525 (CO II.383-384: optimo iure vocatur fides ad cogitandam visibilem illam praesentiam quam supremo die manifestabit. Visibilli enim forma e coelo descendet qualis ascendere visus est (Acts 1:11; Matt. 24:30) ac omnibus apparebit cum ineffabili regni sui maiestate).

⁵⁸⁷ Inst. III.25.1, p. 988 (CO II.729); III.25.3, p. 991 (CO II.731-732).

Heinrich Quistorp comments that both the resurrection of Christ and the final resurrection of believers converge on the ultimate event of parousia.

He adds:

The parousia of Christ and the awakening of the dead through Him are for Calvin quite synonymous. Both ideas imply one and the same goal of our hope, which is orientated towards the One Jesus Christ who is also to come. Thus an exposition of the eschatology of Calvin in the narrower sense might be headed: The future coming of Jesus Christ.⁵⁸⁸

Calvin's constant mention of Christ's second coming attests to Quistorp's contention. The importance and certainty of parousia is found in the teaching of Scripture: "...insofar as the Scripture constantly directs us toward this last day, in which it promises that Jesus Christ will come to judge the world, our highest hope also lies in it".⁵⁸⁹ The promise that Christ will reappear is essential to the hope of the believer, for it is the second coming of Christ which must precede the raising of the dead. With the second coming, a "perfect happiness" will be reached, a happiness which all the ancient fathers have yet to receive.⁵⁹⁰

Hand in hand with Calvin's emphasis on Christ's second coming is the fact that it will occur in the future. Parousia and the "last day" are yet to come. Unlike the Libertine doctrine which states that all things have already occurred, Calvin's eschatology maintains a firm position

⁵⁸⁸ Quistorp, 1955, p. 108.

⁵⁸⁹ TAL, p. 295 (CO VII.223: Au reste, pour ce que l'Escriture nous renvoye tousiours à ce dernier iour, auquel elle promet que Iesus Christ viendra iuger le monde: nostre souveraine esperance gist aussi là).

⁵⁹⁰ TAL, p. 295 (CO VII.223).

on the futuristic aspect of salvation. Man's salvation is dependent upon the still-to-come second coming of Christ on the last day. It can be said that Calvin's argument against the Libertine eschatology is grounded on this principle of the future consummation of salvation.

An important and reiterated theme of Calvin's eschatology is that a Christian's happiness in this life derives from God's grace and lies in having hope for a future resurrection. Thus, "the present happiness of Christians we must regard as something which God assuredly gives them in their hearts, but we must not understand it as something which they already hold, or whose effects they see".⁵⁹¹ Indeed, Calvin's eschatology is based on the view expressed by Paul in Colossians 3:3 ("our salvation is still hidden, since our hope is based on things that are absent and yet to come"). Calvin agrees with the Apostle John that we are already the children of God, "but this has not yet appeared" (1 John 3:2). As Christians, Calvin asserts, "we are confident of everything that God promises us. But we still await it".⁵⁹²

The belief that man will be bodily resurrected with Christ's second coming and his salvation fulfilled is based on this hope on the still-to-come events of the last day. While the Libertines interpret Scripture as supporting their contention that Kingdom of God exists in the present fully, Calvin's theology distinguishes between what is true at present and what will be

⁵⁹¹ TAL, p. 293 (CO VII.222: Ainsi tout ce qui est dict de la felicité presente des Chrestiens, il le nous faut rapoorter à la certitude que Dieu leur en donne en leurs cueurs: et non pas entendre, que desia ilz la tiennent, ou en voyent l'effect).

⁵⁹² TAL, p. 294 (CO VII.222: Nous sommes donc bien certains de tout ce que Dieu nous promet. Mais c'est en l'attendant).

true in the future. The Libertines, Calvin accuses, "completely overturn what is said in the Scripture concerning the hope of our salvation, leaving us nothing but the present life, in order to pass on and then cease to be".⁵⁹³ The hope of future resurrection and salvation is what sustains the believer while he remains in this world. This expectation helps us to "aspire to a heavenly life" so that "we labor, hoping for rest after death. We battle, hoping later to receive the fruit of our victory. We suffer, while awaiting our joy and consolation".⁵⁹⁴ Thus, our hope is not confined to this present life, but is rather directed towards a future time, to the parousia of Christ with which the final salvation will come. Because of this, the believer battles and suffers while in this world. The ethical implications of this position is clearly in opposition to the Libertines' position which has no need to fear the future. According to Quistorp, this hope in the future is so crucial to Calvin's thought that it determines the whole of Christian life:

All his declarations are, so to speak, concerned with the future. This applies in particular to his ethics. Hope in the future determines the present life of the Christian and of the church. Hence it is advisable to begin a presentation of the eschatology of Calvin with his teaching about hope as the fundamental attitude determinative of the Christian life.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹³ TAL, p. 297 (CO VII.224: ilz renversent entierement ce qui en est dict en l'Escriture, avec l'esperance de nostre salut, ne nous laissant rien sinon la vie presente, pour y passer, et puis n'estre rien).

⁵⁹⁴ TAL, pp. 294-295 (CO VII.223: Ainsi nous travaillons, esperans repos apres la mort: nous bataillons, esperans de recevoir alors le fruict de nostre victoire: nous gémissons, attendans de recevoir ioye et consolation).

⁵⁹⁵ Quistorp, p. 15.

To conclude, one may summarize Calvin's position on eschatology as one which clearly asserts the absolute fact of our future resurrection. This contention is based on Calvin's firm belief in the reality of Christ's resurrection and second coming and in the hope of a future resurrection for the believer. Just as Christ died and was resurrected bodily, so shall man be resurrected bodily. This will include all believers who have died thus far. The believer directs his hope to the future event of his own resurrection and lives this life with the sure expectation of the promise God has made regarding the second coming of Christ and the raising of the dead.

Calvin's eschatology distinguishes between what has definitely occurred in the past (Christ's resurrection) and what will occur as promised by God (the second coming of Christ and our own resurrection). It is an eschatology of hope based on faith in God's promises and has the effect of guiding the believer toward an ethical Christian life. This is contrary to the life of the Libertines who "uproot this entire doctrine with their snouts, saying that nothing else remains once the need to make judgments between good and evil has been abolished".⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁶ TAL, p. 296 (CO VII.224: Ces pourceaux au contraire renversent avec le groing toute ceste doctrine: disant, qu'il ne reste plus rien apres que le cuider est aboly).

6.5 CONCLUSION

Calvin's orthodox view of the person and work of Christ is clearly manifest in his refutation of the Libertine position on the humanity of Christ, regeneration, and resurrection. The reality of the humanity of Christ is especially confirmed by Calvin not only because the Libertines undercut this essential doctrine but because a denial of the humanity of Christ directly destroys any redemptive work of Christ. If as the Libertines contend, Christ suffered only a quasi passion and appeared only as a phantom, Christ's vicarious work which is fundamental to man's salvation is destroyed. Although both the *Institutes* and the *Treatise* uphold the true humanity of Christ, it is in the *Treatise* that its relationship to Christ's redemptive work is vividly elaborated. In Calvin's discussion, the denial of Christ's humanity is seen as damaging to Christ's redemptive work as related to regeneration and as extended to resurrection.

The Libertine view of regeneration is a result of their view that Christ's coming was to eradicate the illusion of sin. Just as they understand Christ's person in a phantomic context, the existence of sin or evil is understood in the context of *cuides*. The phantomic Christ's role consists in restoring a state of absolute innocence which has always existed ontologically. As such, regeneration for the Libertines denotes perfection. Against this perfectionism of the Libertines, Calvin maintains the impossibility of perfection in this world and the existence of only forgiven sinners in this life. The ultra-perfectionism of the Libertines depreciates the reality of sin and degrades the validity of God's grace

in man's salvation. Contrary to the belief of the Libertines who see perfection as a "bestowed reality for believers" or the Anabaptists who maintain that perfection is an "obtainable goal",⁵⁹⁷ Calvin recognizes the limitations of the believer and the reality of imperfection in this present life. In doing so, Calvin renders man's salvation to be totally dependent upon God's saving grace and the process of regeneration as being activated only by God's grace. Sin, Calvin insists, always exists and as such, the regenerate state must consist in repentance.

A consequence of the Libertine view of Christ is that they disregard the need for a future resurrection. This follows from the belief that Christ only appeared as a phantom, and thus experienced no true resurrection. To the Libertines, "resurrection" has already happened once and for all in the past. This argument destroys the whole scheme of eschatology which includes the second coming of Christ and the future consummation of our salvation. Furthermore, the Libertines' view leads one to fall into a life of antinomianism. Without a belief in a future resurrection, the Christian's life while in this world becomes meaningless and reckless. To Calvin, a Christian's life consists in anticipation of the future consummation of God's promises and blessings. This is what makes the present life endurable and joyful. This doctrine of resurrection which determines the life of the Christian, is to Calvin the "most serious matter of all".⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁷ Balke, p. 119.

⁵⁹⁸ Inst. III.25.3, p. 990 (CO VII.730).

7. ETHICS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

A central concern which repeatedly appears throughout Calvin's refutation of the doctrines of the Libertines is their ethical libertinism or their antinomianism. Calvin specifically discusses the subject of ethics in Chapters 19 to 21 of the *Treatise*, dealing with the Libertines' abuse of Christian liberty, of vocations, and of common goods respectively. Throughout the whole of the *Treatise*, however, the ethical consequences are seen to be closely related to the doctrinal problems of the Libertines. In fact, Calvin always points out the unethical conduct of the Libertines as stemming from their doctrines. It may therefore be of interest to review some of the instances in which doctrine and ethics are juxtaposed.

As early as in Chapter 2 of the *Treatise*, Calvin indicated the disrespectful attitude of the Libertines. The Libertines' ethical principle is compared to that of the false teachers in II Peter and Jude. Calvin condemns the carnal indecency and disrespect for law and order of both the early heretics and the Libertines, describing the latter as being "subject neither to law nor reason".⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁹ TAL, p. 193 (CO VII.156).

In tracing the historical background of the Libertine heresy, Calvin again points out the unethical tendencies of the Libertines: "[They] purify themselves by doing nothing other than closing their eyes to the distinction between good and evil and by lulling their conscience to sleep in order to overcome any fear of hell".⁶⁰⁰ In discussing the leadership and the following of the sect in his time, Calvin is also sure to pinpoint the fact that they "give themselves up to a carnal license and lead a dissolute life".⁶⁰¹

When Calvin enters into the discussion on the Libertine view of Scripture in Chapters 7 through 10, the dishonesty and the falseness of the Libertines capture much of Calvin's attention. Their double talk and double dealing is seen as closely connected with the erroneous concept of the Word of God and of the Spirit. Their disregard for Scripture and mistaken idea of the role of the Spirit, Calvin tells us, have resulted in "a large number of fickle persons subjecting the Word of God to such a sensuous understanding, twisting Christian liberty into a dissolute license of the flesh, chatting casually about the gospel, living shamelessly, and blaspheming God in their deeds while praising Him with their lips".⁶⁰²

⁶⁰⁰ TAL, p. 199 (CO VII.158: ceux cy n'ont autre chose pour se discerner entre le bien et le mal, et endormir leurs consciences, à fin de n'avoir plus nulle crainte d'enfer).

⁶⁰¹ TAL, p. 208 (CO VII.165).

⁶⁰² TAL, p. 227 (CO VII.177: de voir un grand nombre de gens volages, qui tirent la parole de Dieu en leur sensualité, tournant la liberté chrestienne en licence dissolue de la chaire: our bien en devisant

In their Christology too, we have seen, the Libertines act freely on their bold views of Christ, regeneration, and resurrection. Since Christ is made into an abolisher of sin, the Libertines see man as being exempt or free from retribution. Furthermore, Christ's death was to have returned man to the original, innocent state in which Adam had not sinned. Christ's redemptive work is thus overthrown and rejected. In such a state, man actually lives in a state of perfection and can do no wrong. And since a future resurrection is not necessary in this context, the Libertines do not hold the future in hope or in fear. Without the need to live in anticipation of a heavenly future life, the Libertines "completely overturn what is said in the [sic] Scripture concerning the hope of our salvation, leaving us nothing but the present life, in order to pass on and then cease to be".⁶⁰³

It is in the chapters dealing with the pantheistic determinism of the Libertines in which the ethical problem is most clearly revealed. Chapter 11 introduces the foundation of Libertine pantheism and its consequent ethical principle: "There is only one divine spirit that exists and indwells every creature".⁶⁰⁴ Since all creatures partake of the substance of this one divine spirit, there can be no distinction between Creator and crea-

de l'Evangile, vivent deshonnestement, et blasphement Dieu par leurs oeuvres, en le glorifiant de bouche).

⁶⁰³ TAL, p. 297 (CO VII.224: ilz renversent entierement ce qui en est dict en l'Escriture, avec l'esperance de nostre salut, ne nous laissant rien sinon la vie presente, pour y passer, et puis n'estre rien).

⁶⁰⁴ TAL, p. 230 (CO VII.178-179).

ture: "what God has created is God Himself".⁶⁰⁵ The consequences of this pantheism are overwhelming: the distinction between good and evil is abolished together with any notion of sin, which is relegated to imagination or *cuides*. Under this umbrella term, *cuides*, the Libertines include all concepts of devil, evil, sin, or conscience.⁶⁰⁶

In Chapters 14 to 16 of the *Treatise*, Calvin further delves into the consequences of the pantheism of the Libertines. The first and perhaps most serious consequence lies in attributing everything to the will of God and therefore seeing nothing as evil. Against this notion, Calvin carefully separates the will of God as manifest in His providence and the will of man which determines his own actions. For Calvin, man is not impassive but determines his own actions, "according to the quality of his nature which [God] has given him".⁶⁰⁷ It follows that the second and third consequences of Libertine pantheism are also without foundation: conscience must work actively; and judgments need to be made in order to recognize and condemn evil.

We have thus far seen that the freedom with which the Libertines behave has its source in their doctrinal beliefs. As such, the ethical implications of their beliefs are scattered throughout the *Treatise*. In Chapters 19

⁶⁰⁵ TAL 231 (CO VII.179).

⁶⁰⁶ Refer to the earlier discussion on the term *cuides* in Chapter 5, pp.131-132.

⁶⁰⁷ TAL, p. 245 (CO VII.188).

to 21, however, Calvin pinpoints three major abuses of Christian liberty, the first chapter introducing the basis for the Libertines' unethical behaviour. We are told that the Libertines interpret Christian liberty in such a way as to allow themselves complete freedom from rules and norms. In Chapters 20 and 21, Calvin discusses the Libertines' practice of vocation and concept of common goods, two aspects of their abuse of liberty which must have been most obvious and serious to Calvin.

7.2 ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY: LAW AND FREEDOM

The issue with which Calvin struggles in the topic of Christian liberty is the Libertines' complete misreading of the Scriptures with regard to the law:

Now to begin with, since according to the [sic] Scripture we have been set free from the curse of the law in order that we might no longer be subject to that horrible sentence where it declares that God will punish all transgressors, these frantic people without any distinction abolish all the law, saying that it is no longer necessary to keep it, since we have been set free from it.⁶⁰⁸

With the law abolished, the Libertines have free reign to act according to their desires without any effective governing of their life. Calvin's argument against this resides in his totally different understanding of

⁶⁰⁸ TAL, p. 271 (CO VII.206: Pour le premier, comme ainsi soit, que selon l'Escriture nous soyons affranchis de la malediction de la loy, pour n'estre plus subiectz à ceste horrible sentence, où elle denonce que Dieu punira tous transgresseurs: ces phrenetiques sans aucune distinction, abolissent toute la loy, disans qu'il n'y faut plus avoir d'esgard, pource que nous en sommes affranchis).

the role of the law in the life of the believer. The rigorous aspect of the law which condemns and confines is also rejected by Calvin and he also rejoices in the fact that deliverance from this bondage "is given to us in the gospel when it is said to us that we are no longer under the law".⁶⁰⁹ Calvin, however, indicates that the doctrinal aspect of the law remains intact and continues to be "a rule for right living".⁶¹⁰ In this context, Christian liberty takes on a wholly different picture from that of the Libertines.

A correct understanding of Christian liberty is of utmost importance to Calvin. In his first edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin states that a discussion of gospel teaching would be incomplete without an explanation of this topic and that "unless this freedom be comprehended, neither Christ nor gospel truth, nor inner peace of soul, can be rightly known".⁶¹¹ Moreover, this freedom cannot be dissociated from the content of the gospel or from the redemptive work of Christ. It is grounded ultimately in the validity of Christ's justification:⁶¹² "Because Christ has fulfilled

⁶⁰⁹ TAL, p. 272 (CO VII.207).

⁶¹⁰ TAL, p. 273 (CO VII.207).

⁶¹¹ Inst. III.19.1, p. 834 (CO II.613: Atqui, ut dictum est, nisi ea tenetur, nec Christus, nec evangelii veritas, neque interior pax animae recte cognoscitur).

⁶¹² Inst. III.19.1, p. 833 (CO II.613).

the demands of the law we are free from their coercive power and from the course which every trespass entails".⁶¹³

In the *Institutes*, Calvin outlines three parts of Christian freedom.⁶¹⁴ In the *Treatise*, Calvin's exposition runs along the lines of compromising the two aspects of the law, its teaching and its rigor,⁶¹⁵ but Calvin's doctrine of the three parts of Christian freedom are also included in his argument. The *Treatise against the Libertines* does not specifically lay out the three parts as the *Institutes*, but the contents of the arguments in both works match. The first part of Christian freedom is the freedom from the curse of the rigorous old laws laid down in the Bible, because "as long as this rigor is in force, we are entirely bereft of the hope of life and are under the condemnation that the law announces".⁶¹⁶ The only remedy for this condemnation lies in the deliverance which only the gospel brings, where it states that "we are no longer under the law".⁶¹⁷ This first part of freedom, however, frees the believers so that "the con-

⁶¹³ Niesel, 1980, p. 98. Cf. *Inst.* II.7.15, p. 363 (CO II.263-264).

⁶¹⁴ *Inst.* III.19.2-7, pp. 834-835 (CO II.613-617).

⁶¹⁵ TAL, pp. 271-272 (CO VII.206-207).

⁶¹⁶ TAL, p. 272 (CO VII.207: Pendant que ceste rigueur a lieu, nous sommes tous forclos d'esperance de vie, et sommes enclos soubz ceste condamnation qu'elle denonce).

⁶¹⁷ TAL, p. 272 (CO VII. 207).

sciences of believers, in seeking assurance of their justification before God, should rise above and advance beyond the law, forgetting all law righteousness...embrace God's mercy alone, turn our attention from ourselves, and look only to Christ".⁶¹⁸ Hence a Christian is freed from concern about the wrath of God in terms of observances of the law. The law no longer possesses the authority that it did formerly, and "it may no longer condemn and destroy their conscience by frightening and confounding them".⁶¹⁹

With the curse removed, Christian liberty assumes a new meaning. This is arrived at when, as Calvin states in the *Treatise*, "we square these views, that the law no longer holds us bondage, yet its doctrine still remains in effect for governing our life".⁶²⁰ This second part of Christian freedom clarifies the status of the law and the believer's relation to it: "The second part, dependent upon the first, is that consciences observe the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law, but that freed

⁶¹⁸ *Inst.* III.19.2, p. 834 (CO II.613: fidelium conscientiae, dum fiducia suae coram Deo iustificationis quaerenda est, sese supra legem erigant atque efferant, totamque legis iustifiam obliviscantur...unam Dei misericordiam amplecti convenit, quum de iustificatione agitur, et averso a nobis aspectu, unum Christum intueri).

⁶¹⁹ *Inst.* II.7.14, p. 362 (CO II.263: hoc est, ne eorum conscientias perterrendo et confundendo damnet ac perdat).

⁶²⁰ *TAL*, pp. 272-273 (CO VII.207).

from the law's yoke they willingly obey God's will.⁶²¹ What has actually happened with the removal of the curse is that the believer is led to a willing acceptance of the law and in a sense reaches a higher type of freedom that is made possible only through "the forgiving grace of God manifested in Christ".⁶²² In other words,

the doctrine remains in effect in order to guide in the right direction; only the curse is removed in such a way that in spite of our weakness we do not cease to be pleasing to God, who does not cease to accept the service which we render Him, although it is imperfect, inasmuch as He forgives us the shortcoming that is in us.⁶²³

With the rigor mitigated, the believer is able to joyfully obey the will of God and escape the servitude which the law had enforced on him. The freedom of the believer in this case resides in his ability to comprehend the mercy of God in His forgiveness and to aspire to a better obedience. This freedom, however, must not, as Calvin sternly warns, become a pretext for evil. How this can be done is that "we live at the same time in accordance with [the law]".⁶²⁴ For although the believers no longer

⁶²¹ Inst. III.19.4, p. 836 (CO II.615: Altera, quae ex superiore illa pendet, ut conscientiae, non quasi legis necessitate coactae, legi obsequantur, sed legis ipsius iugo liberae voluntati Dei ultro obediunt). Cf. Gentry, 1973, p. 92.

⁶²² Gentry, p. 93.

⁶²³ TAL, p. 272 (CO VII.207: la doctrine demeure en son estat, pour conduire au droict chemin: seulement que la malediction est ostée, en sorte que, deffaillans par infirmité, nous ne laissons pas d'estre agreables à Dieu, et ne laisse point d'accepter le service que nous luy rendons, combien qu'il soit imparfait: d'autant qu'il nous pardonne le deffaut qui est en nous).

⁶²⁴ TAL, p. 273 (CO VII.208).

need to fear the rigorous condemnation of the law, they must not forget the purpose of the law: "Let those who infer that we ought to sin because we are not under the law understand that this freedom has nothing to do with them. For its purpose is to encourage us to good".⁶²⁵

This brings us to the third part of Christian freedom which concerns those things which are deemed "indifferent" or "external".⁶²⁶ This topic, referred to as *adiaphora* in ethical arguments, is crucial in understanding the struggle for Christian freedom.⁶²⁷ This third part of freedom "subjects all outward things to our freedom, provided our minds are assured that the basis for such freedom stands before God" and allows us to use God's gifts "with no scruple of conscience, no trouble of mind".⁶²⁸ Calvin also states in the *Treatise* that "in general...our consciences are not restrained by external things, but rather they are entirely under our subjection; hence one cannot impose external things upon us as necessary".⁶²⁹ Calvin indicates, however, that this doctrine is abused

⁶²⁵ Inst. III.19.6, p. 838 (CO II.616).

⁶²⁶ Inst. III.19.7;8;16, pp. 838-840; 849 (CO II.616-618; 624); Serm. Gal. 2:6-8 (CO L.377-378); Comm. I Cor. 8:1 (CO XLIX.428).

⁶²⁷ Serm. Gal. 5:1-3 (CO L.658-659); Wallace, 1959, pp. 309f.; Cf. also Street, 1954.

⁶²⁸ Inst. III.19.8, pp. 839-840 (CO II.617-618).

⁶²⁹ TAL, p. 273 (CO VII.208: en general que noz consciences ne sont

by such people as the Libertines who apply it to even those things which the Lord strictly forbids. Thus, Calvin feels great distress at the fact that the Libertines "turn this into a general statement, holding this pretext that nothing is forbidden a Christian man".⁶³⁰ The Libertines turn to Paul's statement that "all things are lawful" and base their antinomian acts on this.⁶³¹

Calvin's discussion in the *Treatise* and in the *Institutes* as well answers such unconstrained use of liberty and admonishes the believer to act in moderation and in consideration of the weak. Although the observances of all ceremonies of the law have been made optional and the use of indifferent things left to the conscience of the believer, Calvin sets up a condition "in order that men may with a clean conscience cleanly use God's gifts".⁶³² This clean conscience consists in the use to which indifferent things are put. If coveted greedily or immoderately, indifferent things lose their indifference. Freedom with respect to indifferent things also has a limitation: the consequences of their use must be considered. Thus, "it is not a matter of what is lawful, but of what is expedient,

point astreinctes aux choses externes: mais plustost qu'elles sont toutes en nostre subjection: et ainsi, qu'on ne nous y peut imposer nécessité).

⁶³⁰ TAL, p. 274 (CO VII.208).

⁶³¹ TAL, p. 274 (CO VII.208).

⁶³² Inst. III.19.9, p. 841 (CO II.619).

indeed, for the edification of our brothers".⁶³³ It no longer matters whether one decides to eat meat or not but whether in doing so the weak is tempted to sin. Conscience, therefore, must "hold to this limitation, that we do not abandon the care of the weak, whom the Lord has so strongly commended to us".⁶³⁴

Thus, Christian freedom regarding indifferent things does not indicate the kind of indiscriminating exercise of freedom which the Libertines practice, but indicates a freedom which has definite boundaries within which it can be exercised. As Gentry puts it, "the employment of such indifferent things is 'sanctified' if they are received from God with thankfulness and if they are employed for the purpose (*finis*) for which God has given them, namely, for the upbuilding of the neighbor".⁶³⁵ Freedom of conscience regarding external things can be enjoyed only insofar as it does not conflict with the edification of the neighbor; if it does, it should be forgone.⁶³⁶

⁶³³ TAL, p. 274 (CO VII.209: il dict qu'il ne faut pas regarder à ce qui nous est licite, mais à ce qui est expedient, voire pour l'edification de noz freres).

⁶³⁴ Inst. III.19.10, p. 842 (CO II.619).

⁶³⁵ Gentry, p. 94.

⁶³⁶ Inst. III.19.12 (CO II.620-621).

While Calvin firmly repudiates the burden and responsibility which was implied in the law, Calvin is careful to discuss freedom of conscience regarding external things within the framework of helping the neighbour.⁶³⁷ With regard to the freedom of the Christian, it can thus be said that "there are occasions when we must refuse to express our liberty of conscience in actual behaviours, lest we offend others within the Church".⁶³⁸ Christian liberty cannot be used as an excuse for indiscriminate acts of freedom. It cannot be used as a "shield of liberty" as the Libertines do to cover up such practices as impiety and idolatry.⁶³⁹ Calvin, however, concludes by sounding a warning: "with regard to matters which God has commanded us or forbidden us to do, we are without liberty to change anything".⁶⁴⁰ To reiterate, Christian liberty to Calvin does not exclude the requirements of the law but indicates a "freedom from guilt before God even though these requirements have not been fulfilled".⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁷ Comm. I Cor. 10:23-24 (CO XLIX.468); Serm. Gal. 5:11-14 (CO LI.17).

⁶³⁸ Wallace, p. 31.

⁶³⁹ TAL, p. 275 (CO VII.209-210).

⁶⁴⁰ TAL, p. 275 (CO VII.210).

⁶⁴¹ Dowey, p. 235.

It may be worthwhile at this point to consider Calvin's doctrine of the law as discussed in the *Institutes*. Although the *Treatise against the Libertines* itself does not deal with Calvin's views on the function and uses of the law, a brief sketch will shed light on the balance which Calvin maintains between freedom and law. Since the ceremonial aspect of the law is no longer rendered mandatorily observable, it is the moral aspect or the "moral law" which occupies Calvin's attention in the *Institutes*. In his discussions, Calvin asserts that the condemnation of the law has been removed and its purpose thus changed. Its role in Christian life, however, is strongly attested to by Calvin.

Moral law, Calvin maintains, has three uses.

The first part is this: while it shows God's righteousness, that is, the righteous alone acceptable to God, it warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness.⁶⁴²

In its first use, the law acts as a mirror of our weakness.⁶⁴³ In this capacity, the law "exposes our sin, showing that it means for us corruption and death".⁶⁴⁴ The law is needed to reflect man's corruption in the light of God's perfect righteousness. The punitive function of the law does not detract from the crucial role it plays both in revealing man's

⁶⁴² *Inst.* II.7.6, p. 354 (CO II.257: *prima est, ut dum iustitiam Dei ostendit, id est, quae sola Deo accepta est, suae unumquemque iniustitiae admoneat, certiores faciat, convincat denique ac condemnet*).

⁶⁴³ *Inst.* II.7.7, p. 355 (CO II.258).

⁶⁴⁴ Niesel, 1980, p. 98.

iniquity and in rendering God's mercy greater and sweeter than if it were not measured by the yardstick of the law.⁶⁴⁵

The second use of the law resides in its civil enforcement of peace and order. In this capacity, the law restrains those who would otherwise wreak havoc on the community by forcefully keeping wickedness from being acted out. Calvin is aware that the result is involuntarily produced but asserts that "this constrained and forced righteousness is necessary for the public community of men, for whose tranquility the Lord herein provided when he took care that everything be not tumultuously confounded".⁶⁴⁶ The second use of the law concerns the unregenerate person whose outward activity needs to be monitored and checked.

While the second use concerns the unbeliever, the third use of moral law concerns the believer. Calvin considers it the principal and most proper use of the law. It functions as a guide for the believer to 1) better appreciate the Lord's will and conform to it and 2) be strengthened in his obedience to God and in his determination to stay on the path of

⁶⁴⁵ Inst. II.7.7, pp. 355-356 (CO II.258-259).

⁶⁴⁶ Inst. II.7.10, p. 359 (CO II.260: Sed tamen haec coacta expressaque iustitia necessaria est publicae hominum communitati, cuius hic tranquillitati consulitur, dum cavetur ne omnia permisceantur tumultu).

obedience.⁶⁴⁷ In this third capacity, the law makes it possible for the believer to be sanctified and to live in harmony with the law.⁶⁴⁸

This last function of the law confirms Calvin's belief in the impossibility of perfection in this life. This is a point on which Calvin markedly differs from the Libertines.⁶⁴⁹ While the pantheism of the Libertines allows them to formulate an achieved perfectionism in this life, Calvin repeatedly calls attention to the corrupted nature of man through the Fall. As such, the law fulfills a much needed role of exposing the true nature of man, of checking this nature in the unbelievers, and finally in helping the believers stay on the path of righteousness.

In view of the above, it is clear that Calvin's concept of Christian liberty is one which does not abandon the law. The law's rigor is seen as a curse which has been removed, and the emphasis is shifted to its role of being a rule of conduct. This moral aspect of the law checks the evil inclinations for both the believer and the unbeliever and helps maintain an orderly society. This last point becomes an issue in Calvin's discussion of the Libertines' abuse of liberty with respect to vocation.

⁶⁴⁷ Inst. II.7.12, pp. 360-361 (CO II.261-262).

⁶⁴⁸ Dowey, p. 237.

⁶⁴⁹ Refer to p. 193, n. 547.

7.3 CONCEPT OF VOCATION

The reckless free spirit of the Libertines is clearly manifest in their concept of vocation. God's purpose with respect to vocation is totally confounded by the Libertines. The principles which the Libertines uphold fail to constitute any norm but stem from their all-encompassing pantheism. It is not surprising therefore that the Libertine principle regarding vocation is as follows: "for each person to follow the inclination of his own nature and to work and live according to what advances his profit or pleases his heart".⁶⁵⁰ This principle, Calvin explains, branches out to three points. The first considers all manners of living as good, whether it be the priesthood or thievery, "in spite of the fact that God might condemn it in His Word".⁶⁵¹ The second ignores the corruption and abuse rampant in all the estates of the world, and the third allows every desire or inclination in man to be acted out without condemnation.⁶⁵²

Considering the above, it is natural that Calvin furiously repudiate the position which the Libertines take towards vocation. To begin with,

⁶⁵⁰ TAL, p. 277 (CO VII.210: pour faire trouver bon que chacun suyve l'inclination de sa nature: et qu'il face et vive selon qu'il luy viendra a point pour son profit, ou que son cueur le portera).

⁶⁵¹ TAL, p. 277 (CO VII.211).

⁶⁵² TAL, pp. 277-279 (CO VII.210-212).

Calvin asserts that Scripture itself and even the natural reason of pagans condemn certain manners of living.⁶⁵³ It seems that the Libertines praised the papal offices of priesthood and their practices. Calvin's distaste for the living of monks and priests is obvious and his condemnation of crime even more. To Calvin's disbelief, however, the Libertines maintain that "it is right for everyone to pursue his calling", whatever it may be.⁶⁵⁴

To Calvin, one's vocation in life must conform to the will of God and to the Word of God. As such, all manners of living practiced in the world cannot fulfill this requirement. Calvin's basic concept of vocation is stated clearly in his Commentaries: "A calling in Scripture means a lawful mode of life, for it has a relation to God as calling us--lest any one should abuse this statement to justify modes of life that are evidently wicked or vicious".⁶⁵⁵

With regard to the second point that there is no evil in the corruption of all the estates of life, Calvin applies his theological tenet of total corruption to the ethical principle of vocation. To Calvin, corruption

⁶⁵³ TAL, p. 277 (CO VII.210-211).

⁶⁵⁴ TAL, p. 277 (CO VII.210-211).

⁶⁵⁵ Comm. I Cor. 7:20 (CO XLIX.415: Vocatio in Scripturis est legitima vivendi ratio: habet enim relationem ad Deum vocantem: ne quis hac sententia abutatur ad stabilienda vivendi genera, quae impia aut vitiosa esse constat).

exists in every sphere of life: "We know today that the world is so depraved that in all estates, even in those that are legitimate, there are so many bad incidents that it is a pity".⁶⁵⁶ The nobility, public justice, and commerce, Calvin accuses, all are steeped with vices. It is necessary to point out here that while Calvin condemns merchandising and its abuses, civilian commercial activities themselves are not condemned as the medieval church and even Luther did.⁶⁵⁷ It is well known that Luther preferred agriculture to commerce: "it would be a far more godly thing to increase agriculture and decrease commerce. I also know that those who work on the land and seek their livelihood from it according to the Scriptures do far better".⁶⁵⁸ Although medieval society regarded commerce as necessary to the upkeep of society, they did not favor it as a solid business either.⁶⁵⁹ To Calvin, the corruption that exists "results from the human side"⁶⁶⁰, and not from any intrinsic evil in commerce itself. Thus, Calvin believes that commerce can be employed in an honorable manner:

⁶⁵⁶ TAL, p. 278 (CO VII.211: Nous voyons aujourdhuy le monde si depravé, qu'en tous estatz, mesme qui sont de soy legitimes, il y a tant de mauvais accidents que c'est pitié).

⁶⁵⁷ Graham, 1978, pp. 77-79.

⁶⁵⁸ Luther, in Jacobs, 1982, p. 108.

⁶⁵⁹ Graham, p. 78.

⁶⁶⁰ TAL, p. 278 (CO VII.211)

Those who employ usefully whatever God has committed to them are said to be engaged in trading. The life of the godly is justly compared to trading, for they ought naturally to exchange and barter with each other, in order to maintain intercourse; and the industry with which every man discharge the office assigned him, the calling itself, the power of acting properly, and other gifts, are reckoned to be so many kinds of merchandise; because the use or object which they have in view is, to promote mutual intercourse among men.⁶⁶¹

The third point of the Libertines' principle of vocation totally eliminates man's ethical responsibility for his moral conduct. If every inclination in man is considered a calling of God, nothing remains unlawful. This is the foundation of the free spirit and antinomianism of the Libertines' behaviour. From it results what Calvin calls "the most villainous debauchery which anyone has ever heard mentioned in the world".⁶⁶² This debauchery takes the form of what is termed "spiritual marriage" in which the Libertines allow a man and a woman to unite in any way pleasing to them and in the same way dissolve this union at will. Marriage as it exists is considered carnal "unless it contains a spirit of mutual compatibility".⁶⁶³

Calvin detests this pretense of spirituality as it is applied to the institution of marriage. For Calvin, marriage is a holy, consecrated union between man and wife. Its union is a spiritual union which is comparable

⁶⁶¹ Comm. Matt. 25:20 (COXLV.569).

⁶⁶² TAL, p. 279 (CO VII.212).

⁶⁶³ TAL, p. 280 (CO VII.212).

to that which we have with Jesus Christ.⁶⁶⁴ As such, it is to be revered as the solemn and permanent station in life that it is.

The importance of this debate between Calvin and the Libertines regarding marriage is underscored by the fact that the institution of marriage was under attack by other sectarians, namely the Anabaptists.⁶⁶⁵ Wenger's study on the Anabaptists titled "Concerning Divorce" sheds light on the problem:

The spiritual marriage and obligation to Christ, yea faith, love and obedience to God,...takes precedence over the earthly marriage, and one ought rather forsake such earthly companion than the spiritual companion (gemahel). And by not removing the designed one from the bond of marriage we care more for earthly than for spiritual obligations and debts, as it is...He who loveth father or mother, wife or child, more than me is not worthy of me".⁶⁶⁶

Menno Simons, the representative Dutch Anabaptist, also confirms this view:

Is there a man under heaven, no matter who, learned or unlearned, young or old, without us or within, man or woman, who can instruct us with the word of truth that the spiritual marriage bond, made with Christ through faith, may yield to the external marriage bond, made in the flesh with man?...ponder whether spiritual love can yield to carnal love.⁶⁶⁷

Spiritual marriage is contrasted to earthly marriage in the above. Calvin's idea of marriage, however, does not separate the two. Marriage

⁶⁶⁴ TAL, p. 280 (CO VII.213).

⁶⁶⁵ Williams, pp. 505-517.

⁶⁶⁶ In Williams, p. 515.

⁶⁶⁷ In Leonard, 1956, p. 1042.

performed in this life between man and woman becomes spiritual in that it is ordained holy by God. As such, it "transcends all natural unions, and should even be preferred to the union between a father and his son".⁶⁶⁸ Calvin too believed in the necessity for a spiritually mutual compatibility in marriage. For instance, Calvin once approved of re-marriage on the ground of religious unconformity.⁶⁶⁹ This does not mean, however, that Calvin allowed dissolution of marriage on the grounds that a man and a woman were not content with their marriage as the Libertines allowed. Calvin firmly believed that marriage is a permanent tie between two people because "it is the law that declares the connection between husband and wife to be indissoluble".⁶⁷⁰ Calvin sternly warns in the *Institutes*, "Let no man rashly despise marriage as something unprofitable or superfluous to him".⁶⁷¹

The intensity with which Calvin defends the institution of marriage can be explained in terms of the consequences to which the Libertine principle gives rise. Calvin reminds us that God forbade the coveting of another's

⁶⁶⁸ TAL, p. 280 (CO VII.213). Cf. *Serm. Eph. 5:28-30* (CO 51:761).

⁶⁶⁹ Harkness, 1958, p. 151.

⁶⁷⁰ *Comm. I Cor. 7:39* (CO XLIX.427: Lex enim est, quae mulieris et viri societatem individuum esse pronuntiat). Cf. CO VII.213: le mariage que Iesus Christ a prononcé estre indissoluble.

⁶⁷¹ *Inst. II.8.43*, p. 407 (CO II.296: Nemo temere matrimonium contemnat, veluti rem sibi aut inutilem aut supervacuum).

wife and condemned adulterers and lechers.⁶⁷² The Libertine principle of following any and all inclinations of the heart disregards the solemnity of marriage and thus naturally leads to all forms of sexual licentiousness. To Calvin, this is one of the most potent ways in which "terrible disorder can enter the life of society".⁶⁷³ Hence marriage as instituted and solemnized by God must be upheld in order to avoid such consequences. Marriage is "indissoluble" and "consecrated in the name of God and is hence founded on His authority".⁶⁷⁴ Marriage between a man and a woman is also likened to "the spiritual union which we have with our Lord Jesus".⁶⁷⁵ Parties in a marriage are to remember that not all things are permitted to them "but let each man have his own wife soberly, and each wife her own husband".⁶⁷⁶

It is without doubt that the Libertine principle of calling went against Calvin's own. Calvin's concept of vocation is based strictly on the Scriptures, namely on the admonishments of Paul in the gospel. The beginning of Chapter 20 of the Treatise summarizes Calvin's position.

⁶⁷² TAL, p. 281 (CO VII.214).

⁶⁷³ Wallace, p. 174.

⁶⁷⁴ TAL, p. 280 (CO VII.213).

⁶⁷⁵ TAL, p. 280 (CO VII.213).

⁶⁷⁶ Inst. II.8.44, pp. 407-408 (CO II.297).

Perhaps nowhere else is his position more concisely presented than here in the *Treatise*. As such, this chapter is valuable in our attempt to better appreciate Calvin's ethical view of Christian life.

Calvin first defines vocation as signifying "all kinds of living or estates which God has established and founded in His Word".⁶⁷⁷ Vocation is defined within the boundary of "what God approves" and being "within the limits of His Word".⁶⁷⁸ In defining vocation, Calvin seems concerned with remembering that God is the one who calls the Christian to his vocation.

The vocation which one occupies in life is thus determined by God's calling. Furthermore, God's calling has a specific purpose:

For he knows with what great restlessness human nature flames, with what fickleness it is borne hither and thither, how its ambition longs to embrace various things at once. Therefore, lest through our stupidity and rashness everything be turned topsy-turvy, he has appointed duties for every man in his particular way of life. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress his limits, he has named these various kinds of living 'callings.' Therefore each individual has his own kind of living assigned to him by the Lord as a sort of sentry post so that he may not heedlessly wander about throughout life.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁷ TAL, p. 276 (CO VII.210: toute maniere de vivre, ou estat estably de Dieu et fondé en sa parolle).

⁶⁷⁸ TAL, p. 276 (CO VII.210).

⁶⁷⁹ Inst. III.10.6, p. 724 (CO II.532: Novit enim quanta inquietudine ferveat humanum ingenium, quam desultoria levitate huc atque illuc feratur, quam cupida sit ad res diversas simul amplexandas eius ambitio. Ergo, ne stultitia et temeritate nostra omnia sursum deorsum miscerentur, distinctis vitae generibus sua cuique officia ordinavit. Ac ne quis temere suos fines transsiliret, eiusmodi vivendi genera vocationes appellavit. Suum ergo singulis vivendi genus est quasi

The purpose of God's calling is revealed as controlling restless human nature into a proper and orderly way of life. Obedience of God's calling is of utmost importance with respect to calling such that "no task will be sordid and base, provided you obey your calling in it, that it will not shine and be reckoned very precious in God's sight".⁶⁸⁰ Since all vocations are granted by God, they stand on an equal footing. And since they have their source in God, obedience to one's calling is a Christian duty towards God.

Recognizing vocation as a divine calling is a point of emphasis by Calvin. Once it is recognized, vocation ought to be chosen on the basis of what is pleasing to God and not "as seems good to us".⁶⁸¹ Here Calvin points out that not all vocations are pleasing to the will of God. Later, Calvin also states that "each person ought to continue in his state and rank, providing of course that it is a legitimate vocation".⁶⁸²

Calvin also indicates the use to which one's vocation should be applied. First and foremost, "each should serve God in the estate in which he is

statio a Domino attributa, ne temere toto vitae cursu circumagantur).

⁶⁸⁰ Inst. III.10.6, p. 725 (CO II.532).

⁶⁸¹ TAL, p. 276 (CO VII.210).

⁶⁸² TAL, p. 276 (CO VII.210).

called".^{68.3} In striving to live according to his calling, the Christian must also "labour for this, and use his endeavour, that he may do good to his neighbours".^{68.4} Here, Calvin establishes the fundamental principle of Christian life--that of loving God and the neighbour--and applies it to his view of vocation. It is noteworthy that Calvin's concept of vocation thus stems from an ethical basis and not on any economical basis.^{68.5}

After speaking of vocation in terms of our attitude towards God's ordination of it, Calvin mentions certain principles which should guide our attitude towards vocation itself. Taking the Apostle Paul's instructions as example, Calvin lists three major principles. Firstly, one should be content with his vocation and not be desirous of change.^{68.6} Calvin's admonishment that one should be content and not displeased with one's vocation stems from his belief that God's calling "should hold us, as it were, under God's yoke, even where an individual feels his situation

^{68.3} TAL, p. 276 (CO VII.210).

^{68.4} Comm. 1 Cor. 7:17 (CO XLIX.414).

^{68.5} Max Weber's contention is otherwise. His well-known work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, maintains that Calvinism has greatly influenced the capitalistic spirit. For Weber, the notion of *beruf* or calling "refers basically to the idea that the highest form of moral obligation of the individual is to fulfill his duty in worldly affairs" (Weber, 1976, intro., p. 5). For a listing of critics against Weber's thesis, see Inst. p. 724, n. 8. See also Graham's critique, pp. 189-201.

^{68.6} TAL, p. 276 (CO VII.210).

to be an unpleasant one".⁶⁸⁷ Although it is one's duty that he should be content with his chosen vocation, this does not mean that one must continue in one vocation without being able to change to another. Rather, Calvin's emphasis lies in the attitude which one should take towards one's vocation. Thus, Calvin explains:

Now it were a very hard thing if a tailor were not at liberty to learn another trade, or if a merchant were not at liberty to betake himself to farming. I answer, that this is not what the Apostle [Paul] intends, for he has it simply in view to correct that inconsiderate eagerness, which prompts some to change their condition without any proper reason, whether they do it from superstition, or from any other motive. Farther, he calls every one to this rule also--that they bear in mind what is suitable to their calling. He does not, therefore, impose upon any one the necessity of continuing in the kind of life which he has once taken up, but rather condemns that restlessness, which prevents an individual from remaining in his condition with a peaceable mind, and he exhorts, that every one stick by his trade, as the old proverb goes.⁶⁸⁸

Calvin's intention is not to limit one's freedom of choice regarding vocation. His point of emphasis is that one should be faithful to the station in life to which he is called in order to serve God's will.

⁶⁸⁷ Comm. I Cor. 7:17 (CO XLIX.414: *vocatio autem quasi sub Dei iugo nos tenere debet, etiamsi parum cuique adlubescat sua conditio*).

⁶⁸⁸ Comm. I Cor. 7:20 (CO XLIX.415: *atqui id nimis durum esset, sartori non licere aliud opificium discere, mercatori non licere transire ad agriculturam. Respondeo, hanc non esse intentionem apostoli: vult enim tantum corrigere inconsultam cupiditatem, quae nonnullos sollicitat ad mutandum statum sine iusta causa: sive id superstitione, sive alio impulsu faciant: deinde unumquemque revocat ad hanc quoque regulam, ut meminerint quid suae vocationi conveniat. Non ergo necessitatem cuiquam imponit manendi in vitae genere semel suscepto: sed inquietudinem potius damnat, quae non patitur singulos in sua conditione pacato animo stare: ac iubet, ut quam quisque Spartam nactus est, eam colat, ut habet vetus proverbium*).

The second principle which one should keep regarding vocation is that one "should not meddle in another person's calling".⁶⁸⁹ This notion reflects Calvin's reformation idea of keeping a decent order of society. Although Calvin rejected the hierarchy and ranking of the Romish liturgy, Calvin was opposed to the complete overthrow of existing order or of worship which the Anabaptists and the Libertines favored. Calvin respected the position of offices as part of divine calling. Calvin's objection to interference in another's calling may owe something to "the circuit-riding Anabaptist preachers".⁶⁹⁰ In the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin states his case against meddling and disorder:

But to keep peace in the Church, this order is necessary: that to each be assigned his task so that all may not raise a tumult at once, to keep all from being in confusion, at the same time dashing about aimlessly without an assignment, rashly gathering together in one place, and forsaking their churches at pleasure.⁶⁹¹

To Calvin, order within the Church as well as in the secular world is absolutely necessary. As each vocation is sanctified by God, everyone has the obligation to respect each other's vocation. Everyone is appointed to fulfill some significant function in different spheres of life "to prevent universal confusion being produced".⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁹ TAL, p. 276 (CO VII.210).

⁶⁹⁰ Balke, p. 58.

⁶⁹¹ Inst. (1536), p. 227.

⁶⁹² Inst. III.10.6, p. 725 (CO II.532).

Another attitude which must be taken towards vocation is that one "should not regret doing his own duty".⁶⁹³ This third point stresses the responsibility one has to his assigned living. The significance of one's duty towards his own vocation is revealed when it is recognized that one's calling is grounded in God's will: "It is enough if we know that the Lord's calling is in everything the beginning and foundation of well-doing. And if there is anyone who will not direct himself to it, he will never hold to the straight path in his duties".⁶⁹⁴

Considering Calvin's concept of vocation, it is not difficult to understand the vehemence with which Calvin attacks the Libertines' view of vocation. For Calvin, one's vocation in life must be regarded with due respect since vocation is a divine calling by God. One's manner of living in life, therefore, is subjected to God's will as revealed in His Word. One's calling therefore is not, as the Libertines contend, to follow any inclination of man. Rather, one's vocation in life is to be used not to advance the pleasure of man but to conform to God's purpose in His calling.

⁶⁹³ TAL, p. 276 (CO VII.210).

⁶⁹⁴ Inst. III.10.6, p. 724 (CO II.532: satis est si noverimus vocationem Domini esse in omni re bene agendi principium ac fundamentum; ad quam qui se non referet, nunquam rectam in officiis viam tenebit).

7.4 VIEWS CONCERNING OWNERSHIP OF GOODS

The third practical matter of ethics which Calvin discusses concerns ownership of goods. From Calvin's account it seems that the Libertines held a radical form of "communism" concerning goods, asserting that "the communion of saints exists where no one possesses anything of his own".⁶⁹⁵

Calvin provides background to the Libertines' radical idea by indicating that there were a few Anabaptists who at one time also held such a belief.⁶⁹⁶ It is a fact, however, that most of these Anabaptists retracted their opinions regarding common goods. Indeed, most Anabaptists "emphasized stewardship and brotherly sharing rather than actual community ownership of goods".⁶⁹⁷ While the Anabaptists later withdrew their positions, the Libertines seem to have held tightly on to this concept of common goods, for "these Libertines have held it as a kind of refuge, since their sect is a cesspool, or a sewer, for receiving all the world's dung".⁶⁹⁸ Not only do these Libertines create confusion by maintaining

⁶⁹⁵ TAL, p. 282 (CO VII.214).

⁶⁹⁶ TAL, pp. 282-283 (CO VII.214). See Farley's notes 4 and 5 in TAL, pp. 283-283.

⁶⁹⁷ Balke, 270. See also ensuing pages up to 278.

⁶⁹⁸ TAL, p. 283 (CO VII.214).

such a belief, Calvin tells us that while they defended their position fanatically, they did not apply it themselves: "when it comes to giving [in return], try to find the person who does! That isn't part of their understanding".⁶⁹⁹

The lengthy exposition by Calvin against the Libertines' view suggests the importance of this subject of ethics. If the socio-economic situation of the city of Geneva is brought into the picture here, it would not be too far from the mark to consider its impact on Calvin's thought on the ownership and sharing of goods. It is a fact that Geneva experienced a marked increase in the number of residents after 1540, most of them refugees fleeing Catholic persecution.⁷⁰⁰ As a result, the number of poor and needy people increased, and the city of Geneva took on the responsibility of caring for many of these people. In the light of the extreme socio-economic situation which existed during Calvin's lifetime in Geneva, it is not surprising that Calvin was greatly concerned about the use to which one's wealth was put.

Compounding the difficult situation of Geneva was the radical expressions of communism by the Anabaptists and particularly the Libertines. Their assertions without doubt were extreme to say the least, but Calvin was not unaware of the unequal and unfair distribution of wealth as well as

⁶⁹⁹ TAL, p. 291 (CO VII.220).

⁷⁰⁰ Graham, p. 65.

the failure of the wealthy to perform their Christian duty towards the poor. Calvin thus says in the *Treatise*,

We know how those who possess goods devour them all alone, or hold on to them tightly, without having pity on their poor brothers in order to provide for their indigence by sharing with them what they have in their hand...It is right, then, that the devil should stir the coals of hell in order to double the disorder which we do not correct, concerning which God admonishes us⁷⁰¹

Although conceding to the fact that Christians fail in their duty towards the needy, Calvin was far from applauding the practice of communal ownership.

Calvin's rejection of communal ownership is based on the Scriptures, in the same way that the Libertines based their contentions upon the Scriptures. Because the Libertines cite the passages Matthew 19:21 ("Go and sell all that you have, and give it to the poor, and follow Me") and Acts 4:32 ("none of the disciples said that what he had was his own, but all brought their substance to the feet of the apostles. Even those who had fields and possessions sold them in order to make money to provide for the indigence of the poor."), Calvin is compelled to defend his position by explicating these passages. Calvin's reply is simple and clear: These passages do not indicate a universal command whereby everyone is expected to give up all personal possessions. Rather,

⁷⁰¹ TAL, p. 284 (CO VII.215: On voit comment petis et grans sont aujourd'hui embrasez comme fournaies, d'une cupidité enragée d'amasser et attirer à eux. On voit de quelz moyens et traficques ilz taschent de s'enrichir. On voit comment ceux qui ont des biens les gourmandent tous seulz, ou les tiennent serrez, sans avoir pitié de leurs povres freres, pour subvenir à leur indigence, en leur communiquant de ce qu'ilz ont entre mains. Nous ne voulons point escourter les remonstrances que Dieu nous en faict. C'est donc bien raison que le Diable esmeuve ces tisons d'enfer, pour redoubler le desordre, que nous ne corrigeons point, selon que Dieu nous en admoneste).

Christians are behooved to use their possessions whenever the need arises in the fulfilment of the duty towards the poor. This is the principal theme in the many Scriptural examples which Calvin provides to support his argument. In the case of Barnabas, Tabitha, Simon the tanner, Mary, Lydia, and Philemon, Calvin insists, "they did not practice a confused 'community of goods' among themselves...but each retaining what was his in his own hands, they distributed them according as demand necessitated".⁷⁰² In all the cases, private property was not wholly disposed of but given in generosity. In fact, Calvin points out, Philemon enjoyed his possessions with a good conscience and approval by the Apostle Paul.

It becomes clear that Calvin steadfastly believed in individual ownership of goods as opposed to communal ownership of the Libertines. Calvin's position, however, is not one of selfish individualism. Rather, when Calvin maintains the principle of individual ownership, the ethic of sharing is included in it. In other words, Calvin "stressed the idea of personal as opposed to the popular idea of communal responsibility".⁷⁰³

At this point, it would be illuminating to consider the three points of attitude regarding goods which Calvin lays out in the *Treatise*. The first point states the following:

⁷⁰² TAL, p. 289 (CO VII.219: Et toutesfois il n'y avoit point une communion de biens confuse entre eux...mais retenant chacun le sien entre ses mains, le dispensoient selon l'exigence de la necessité).

⁷⁰³ Venter, 1986, p. 302.

we should not desire the world's goods through covetousness; that if we are in poverty we should bear it patiently; if we have riches, we should not put our heart or confidence in them; that we should be ready to give them up when that seems good to God; that, having them or not having them, we should mistrust them as fading things, esteeming more the blessing of God than the entire world and seeking the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, without enveloping ourselves in wicked lusts.⁷⁰⁴

It is clear from the above that to Calvin worldly goods can not compare to the wealth of the spiritual kingdom. Trust is not to be put into the riches of this world; rather, they must be regarded with care and suspicion lest they fan the evil desires of greed. This principle is to apply to both the poor and the rich. The poor must learn to be content with their situation in life, meditating upon heavenly immortality. As Calvin states elsewhere, they "should know how to bear poverty peaceably and patiently".⁷⁰⁵ The rich, on the other hand, must be grateful for the blessings received from God and be ready to share their blessings with the less fortunate. This is a crucial aspect of Calvin's views on ownership which we shall return to in the present discussion.

⁷⁰⁴ TAL, p. 284 (CO VII.215: nous n'appetions point les biens de ce monde par convoitise: que si nous sommes en povreté, que nous la portions patiemment: si nous avons des richesses, que nous n'y mettions point nostre cueur, ne nostre fiance: que nous soyons prestz de les quicter, quand bon semblera à Dieu: les ayant ou ne les ayant point, que nous les mesprions comme choses caduques: estimant plus la seulle benediction de Dieu, que tout le monde: et cherchant le regne spirituel de Iesus Christ, sans nous envelopper de convoitises mauvaises). Cf. Inst. III.10.4, p. 722 (CO II.530-531).

⁷⁰⁵ Inst. III.10.4, p. 722 (CO II.531).

The second point regarding our attitude towards goods is that "we should work with integrity in order to gain our life".⁷⁰⁶ Included in this principle is the ethical means with which we obtain goods. We are to use honest, legitimate means in profit-making, proceed in our work in good conscience, and be satisfied with the profit of our labor. Whatever means are employed in order to gain a living, it must also be done in consideration of the neighbor. No man may act fraudulently towards his brother or be oppressive: "this also is a department of holiness--that we conduct ourselves righteously and harmlessly towards our neighbours".⁷⁰⁷ Moreover, whatever gain comes our way we are to attribute to God's grace: "We must recognize this as a general principle, that riches come not at all to men through their own virtue, nor wisdom, nor toil, but only by the blessing of God".⁷⁰⁸ If this origin of ownership is kept in mind, selfish and sinful acts aimed at profit-making will be eliminated.

The third principle with respect to goods more directly answers the Libertines' communistic idea of sharing goods. This third point is concerned with the proper use to which possessions are put. Calvin emphasizes again the need to control pride over one's wealth and the need to use it moderately:

⁷⁰⁶ TAL, p. 284 (CO VII.215).

⁷⁰⁷ Comm. I Thess. 4:6 (CO LII.161).

⁷⁰⁸ Serm. Deut. 8:14-20 (CO XXVI.26.627) as cited in Harkness, p. 217.

[the owner] should employ the property that has been given to him in order to help and to provide for his neighbors, seeing himself as God's steward who possesses the goods he has on condition that he must one day render an account, continually keeping in mind the comparison which Saint Paul makes between the world's goods and manna (II Cor. 8:15), that is, that whoever has a great quantity of it should only take enough to eat so that whoever has hardly enough might not be in want.⁷⁰⁹

This third principle regarding goods is directed at the wealthy, whom Calvin considers to be stewards managing the goods which are graciously offered by God. Again, Calvin reminds the rich of the fact that all things come from God. Furthermore, Calvin exhorts the rich to use their possessions in such a way as not to hinder their progress towards eternal life. They are not to "misuse it by squandering it, or by being intemperate or sumptuous, or by [acquiring] superfluous things out of pride and vanity".⁷¹⁰ This is also explicitly stated in his *Commentaries*. In discussing the First Epistle to Timothy, Calvin refers to Paul's charge to those who are rich. The rich are expressly reminded to guard against pride and deceitful hope in the riches of this world which are meager compared to those of heaven. It thus follows that "although we have a full and overflowing abundance of all things, yet we have nothing but from the blessing of God alone; for it is that blessing alone which imparts

⁷⁰⁹ TAL, p. 285 (CO VII.216: employe la faculté qui luy est donnée à ayder ses prochains et les subvenir, se congnoissant comme recepveur de Dieu à posseder les biens qu'il a, à telle condition qu'il en rende une fois compte: pensant tousiours à la comparaison que faict saint Paul des biens de ce monde, avec la manne (2 Cor. 8, 15), c'est que celuy qui en a grande quantité n'en prenne que sa refection: et celuy qui n'en a gueres n'ait point de faute).

⁷¹⁰ TAL, p. 285 (CO VII.215-216).

to us all that is needful".⁷¹¹ For the "mind of a Christian ought not to be taken up with earthly things, or to repose in them; for we ought to live as if we were every moment about to depart from this life".⁷¹² While in this world, the rich are to employ their riches according to the "lawful use of riches; for the richer any man is, the more abundant are his means of doing good to others".⁷¹³

Whenever Calvin enters into a discussion on the possession of goods, the wealthy are exhorted to aid the poor. For Calvin, this constitutes a fundamental ethic of Christian life. Ownership of goods can not be separated from sharing the goods with the needy. The purpose of God's grace in abundantly filling us with possessions is not to end in possession but in order that man may give abundantly in turn.⁷¹⁴ The prime example of giving resides in the giving of Jesus Christ: "as Jesus Christ has given Himself to us, we too out of charity should share with our

⁷¹¹ Comm. I Tim. 6:17 (CO LII.334).

⁷¹² Comm. I Cor. 7:29 (CO XLIX.420: *Summa est, christiani hominis animum rebus terrenis non debere occupari, nec in illis conquiescere: sic enim vivere nos oportet, quasi singulis momentis migrandum sit e vita*).

⁷¹³ Comm. I Tim. 6:18 (CO LII.334).

⁷¹⁴ Venter, pp. 304-305.

neighbors the benefits which He has given us, contributing by this means to their indigence, inasmuch as in doing so we help them".⁷¹⁵

Graham observes that "if there is any central theme in Calvin's social and economic thought, it is that wealth comes from God in order to be used to aid our brethren".⁷¹⁶ Indeed, Calvin's concern for the relief of the poor cannot be stressed enough. Calvin's concern, however, does not arise from the socio-economic context alone. Rather, it is rooted in faith in God:

If truly convinced that God is the common Father of all and Christ the common Head, being united in brotherly love, they cannot but share their benefit with one another.⁷¹⁷

While Calvin strongly insists on the Christian's duty to aid his brethren, he does not call on the wealthy to dispossess themselves as the Libertines do. Concern for the brother in need does not rule out the right to private ownership. It does not mean that all possessions need to be relinquished nor does giving have to entail hardship for oneself (2 Cor. 8:13). As noted by Graham, there is no legalism involved in Calvin's command to give.⁷¹⁸ When God commands us to help our brethren, Calvin

⁷¹⁵ TAL, p. 285 (CO VII.216).

⁷¹⁶ Graham, p. 68.

⁷¹⁷ Inst. IV.1.3, p. 1015 (CO II.748: Si vere persuasi sint Deum communem sibi omnibus patrem esse, et Christum commune caput, quin fraterno inter se amore coniuncti ultro citroque sua communicent).

⁷¹⁸ Graham, p. 68.

maintains, He "nowhere specifies the sum, that, after making a calculation, we might divide between ourselves and the poor. He nowhere binds us to circumstances of times, or persons, but calls us to take the rule of love as our guide".⁷¹⁹ Calvin charges the rich to "consider that their abundance was not intended to be laid out in intemperance or excess, but in relieving the necessities of the brethren".⁷²⁰ Giving must not be forced but have its source in the heart, in compassion: "No act of kindness, except accompanied with sympathy, is pleasing to God".⁷²¹

In the *Treatise Against the Libertines*, this dual emphasis is clearly evident: private ownership must be maintained while aid to the poor must also be rendered. Calvin's general doctrine regarding goods thus "does not require the renunciation of property, but only that it be possessed as not being possessed"; that is, "each should give according to the devotion of his heart (II Cor. 9:7)".⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ *Comm. II Cor. 8:8* (CO L.98: nusquam summam praeficere, ut aestimatione facta inter nos et pauperes partiamur: nusquam nos alligare ad temporum aut personarum aut locorum circumstantias, sed nos revocare ad regulam caritatis).

⁷²⁰ *Comm. II Cor. 8:15* (CO L.101-102).

⁷²¹ *Comm. I John 3:17* (CO LV.340-341).

⁷²² TAL, p. 290 (CO VII.220).

The fellowship of believers as recorded in Acts 4 did not imply that possessions were placed in communistic disorder, but constituted acts of love and charity. Among the many who had gathered at Pentecost none of them were lacking, but Calvin is adamant that Luke "meaneth not that the faithful sold all that they had, but only so much as need required".⁷²³ Furthermore, possessions were not thrown together in one heap and equally divided, but rather, "there was a discreet distribution made, lest any should be out of measure oppressed with poverty".⁷²⁴ Attention was paid so that no one suffered from lack of goods, but as Balke observes, "the essential thrust of Calvin's argument was that the community of goods at Pentecost did not signify a permanent communistic order".⁷²⁵ When Luke spoke of no one calling his possessions his own, he was speaking of fellowship such that "none suffered indigence".⁷²⁶

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that Calvin's position with respect to ownership of goods maintains a balance between individualism

⁷²³ Comm. Acts 4:34 (CO XLVIII.96).

⁷²⁴ Comm. Acts 4:34 (CO XLVIII.96: *moderata dispensatio, ne quis egestate ultra modum premeretur*).

⁷²⁵ Balke, p. 274.

⁷²⁶ TAL, p. 287 (CO VII.218).

and communism.⁷²⁷ Calvin insisted on individual ownership, but made sharing and giving compulsory with ownership of goods. The concept of fellowship put forth by the Libertines disrupted civil order without furthering "active charity."⁷²⁸ To Calvin, economic response to the needy does not exclude the legitimacy of private property:

This does not, however, rule out diversity of graces, inasmuch as we know the gifts of the Spirit are variously distributed. Nor is civil order disturbed, which allows each individual to own his private possessions, since it is necessary to keep peace among men that the ownership of property should be distinct and personal among them.⁷²⁹

Considering the fact that Calvin's defense of private ownership is made against the heretical doctrines of the likes of the Anabaptists and the Libertines, it is only natural that Calvin stress the right of individual ownership against total communism. Calvin spoke harshly of "the Anabaptists and fantastical men [who] have made much ado, as if there ought to be no civil property of goods amongst Christians"⁷³⁰ and strenuously attacked their theory of communal ownership. Even while

⁷²⁷ Cf. Balke, pp. 271-275.

⁷²⁸ TAL, p. 291 (CO VII.220).

⁷²⁹ Inst. IV.1.3, p. 1014 (CO II.748: Quo tamen non tollitur gratiarum diversitas, sicuti scimus varie distribui spiritus dona; neque etiam convellitur ordo politicus, quo suas unicuique facultates privatim possidere licet, ut necesse est, pacis inter homines conservandae causa, rerum dominia inter ipsos propria et distincta esse).

⁷³⁰ Comm. Acts 4:34 (CO XLVIII.96).

upholding private ownership, however, Calvin's concept of goods always has the poor and needy in mind.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The three chapters dealing with the ethical problem of the Libertines reveal a fundamental tension between Calvin and the Libertines. The tension resides in the radically different interpretation made with regard to Christian freedom and also as to how it should be applied to vocation and ownership of goods.

While Calvin's concept of Christian freedom is derived from a careful consideration of the Scriptures, the Libertine concept of freedom is compatible with their pantheism which eliminates all distinctions between good and evil. The Libertines base their antinomian conduct on the belief that the law has been completely abolished. This belief allows the Libertines to conduct themselves according to the dictates of their heart without regard to right or wrong. It follows that they consider all forms of vocation to be permissible, "for each person to follow the inclination of his own nature and to work and live according to what advances his profit or pleases his heart".⁷³¹ In addition to this confusion, Calvin

⁷³¹ TAL, p. 277 (CO VII.210).

accuses the Libertines of destroying all order by asserting and practicing a communal ownership of goods.

In refuting the Libertines' concept of Christian liberty and their antinomian conduct stemming from it, Calvin argues that the law still remains as a guide or rule of right living. For Calvin, Christian freedom can be maintained only in relation to the law and not in disregard for it. This is contained in the first two of the three points of Christian freedom which Calvin outlines. The first point describes freedom as being liberated from the curse of the law and the second states that this new freedom actually guides the believer to a more wilful obedience of God's will. Thus, even while Calvin strongly maintains that the law has been changed in such a way that it no longer dictates one's life, it nevertheless remains as a guide to conduct in life. The law, moreover, continues to fulfill its function in three ways. Firstly, it reveals man's unrighteousness; secondly, it enforces peace and order in an otherwise unruly community; and thirdly, it keeps the believer on the path of righteousness. The law is, therefore, an absolutely necessary element in Calvin's concept of Christian freedom. For "with regard to matters which God has commanded us or forbidden us to do, we are without liberty to change anything".⁷³²

The third part of Christian freedom regards all indifferent things which the believer can approach with a clear conscience. Calvin, however, subjects indifferent things to the way they are used. They may not be

⁷³² TAL, p. 275 (CO VII.210).

used in such a way as to hinder the edification of the weaker brother. This ethical approach forms the boundary to Calvin's views on vocation and ownership of goods as well.

The free spirit of the Libertines is plainly demonstrated in their concept of vocation. As discussed above, the Libertines' understanding of vocation eliminates ethical responsibility to society since they consider all vocations acceptable. Calvin, on the other hand, strongly considers vocation or calling as a mode of life which is willed and sanctioned by God. All vocations are to be recognized as a divine calling and as such, serving God is to be the foremost principle behind each vocation. And each person must practice his vocation in consideration of the neighbour.

With regard to the ownership of goods, Calvin refutes the Libertines' communism by bringing into discussion the many examples from the Scriptures which support individual ownership. Calvin asserts that a fellowship of brothers can be practiced without having to give up all private possessions. Worldly possessions are meager compared to those in heaven and are not to be coveted. They are, nevertheless, gifts from God and to be treasured and used honestly.

The proper use of goods is emphasized by Calvin in his discussion of ownership. The wealthy man must use his goods to benefit the poor. For Calvin, it is a Christian duty to aid his brethren but not to give up all his possessions in any communistic disorder. Calvin stresses that to give means to share in love and to provide in need. Calvin's doctrine

of ownership of goods can be summarized as maintaining private ownership but stressing the proper use of goods, which is to aid the needy.

Calvin's arguments against the Libertine ethic are careful and methodical. He constantly refers to the Scriptures to refute the pantheistic conclusions of the Libertines. While the Libertines can conduct their antinomian lifestyle based on their pantheism, Calvin's ethic recalls the reverence with which we are to regard the will of God as it is revealed in the practice of Christian freedom, vocation, and ownership and use of private goods. A central theme which also runs through Calvin's arguments is that of the primacy of love in dictating our conduct in life. The neighbour is always to be considered in all practices; their edification forms the basis for reconsidering many of our actions in life. It can therefore be said that Calvin's is an ethic which "adds up to a social and economic ethic of concern".⁷³³

⁷³³ Graham, p. 70.

8. CONCLUSION

In spite of its having been generally neglected by Calvin scholars, the *Treatise* is a lucid and significant contribution to Calvin's theology. Calvin's views in this work do not differ fundamentally from his other works, but as our prior discussions show, the *Treatise Against the Libertines* contributes greatly to a better understanding of Calvin's theology.

Three aspects of Calvin's argument or doctrine stand out in our prior discussion. First, the *Treatise* is almost the only work in which Calvin deals with pantheism. In his refutation of the Libertines' pantheistic determinism, Calvin expounds and defends his own doctrine of providence. In this regard, the *Treatise* is important in that it elaborates upon Calvin's providence of God and man's responsibility in relation to it and distinguishes his doctrine from determinism, of which Calvin has often been accused. In his discussion of the three modes of providence, Calvin's concept of the nature of God and the created world is revealed. The tension between God's will and man's will which exists in Calvin's doctrine of providence is also clearly manifest. In the context of refuting the Libertine pantheism, Calvin also sets forth his views on Christ, regeneration, and resurrection.

Another important aspect of Calvin's *Treatise* is that it contains what can be called Calvin's normative ethical principles. In dealing with their

abuse of Christian liberty, vocation or calling, and communism, Calvin does more than attack the Libertines for their antinomian conception of freedom and their unethical behaviour. The result of his refutation is that Calvin's own view of Christian ethical behaviour is formulated. Calvin decries the attempt by the Libertines to destroy order in their misapplication of God's calling and gift of possessions. Against the Libertines' formulation of ethics, Calvin counters by constantly referring to the Scriptures and placing love and care of the neighbour as a prime concern of Christian behaviour. The *Treatise* is again invaluable especially for the present time when everything tends to be relative and individualistic as opposed to the normative principles of Christian conduct.

The third point of emphasis in Calvin's *Treatise* is in its rejection of the kind of spiritualism which forsakes the authority of Scripture. Throughout the whole of the *Treatise*, it can be seen that Calvin's arguments are always based on Scripture. For Calvin, Scripture is the final authority on faith and its conduct. Without disregarding the important work of the Holy Spirit, Calvin maintains that it is in Scripture that Christian doctrines and ethics must be firmly rooted. Calvin's view of spiritualism which was formed in the midst of his challenging time is relevant today also when the errors of spiritualism are excessively present in some of the churches.

In conclusion, one must again emphasize the importance of Calvin's *Treatise* in contributing to our understanding of Calvin's thought, both theological and ethical. The contents of the *Treatise* is also especially

relevant in today's religious context where freedom of thought and action and excessive spiritualism are distorting sound doctrines based on Scripture. The Libertine sect may have disappeared into historical obscurity, but the profound doctrinal and ethical implications of the heresy remain necessary bases of study and reflection.

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibliographies

ERICHSON, D. A., ed. 1960. *Bibliographia Calviniana*. Catalogues
Chronologicus operum Calvini. 1532-1900. Nieukoop: B. De Graaf.

NIESEL, WILHELM. 1961. *Calvin Biblio Graphie*. 1901-1959. München:
Chr. Kaiser Verlag.

KEMPF, D. 1975. *A Bibliography of Calviniana*. 1959-1974.
Potchefstroom: I. A. C.

DE KLERK, P. 1974-1986. *Calvin Bibliography*. *Calvin Theological
Journal*.

Primary Sources: Collections of Original Works

CALVIN, JOHN. 1951. *Calvini tractates theologici omnes*. Genevae:
apud Petrum Santandreanum.

CALVIN, JOHN. 1863-1897. *Joannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*.
Ed. by G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss. Brunsvigae:
Schwetschke et Filium.

CALVIN, JOHN. 1926-1962. *Joannis Calvini opera selecta*. Ed. by P.
Barth and G. Niesel. Monachii: Kaiser.

Corpus Christianorum series latinorum. 1954. Brepols: Turnholti
Typographi.

Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum. 1866. Vindobonae: apud
C. Geroldi Filium bibliopolam Academiae.

DENZINGER, HENRICUS. 1947. *Enchiridion symbolorum: definitionum et de rebus fidei et morum*. Ed. by Iohannes Bapt. Umberg. Friburgi Brisgoriae: Herder.

HERMINJARD, A. L. 1866-1897. *Correspondances des Reformateurs dans les pays de langue francaise*. Genève.

LUTHER, M. 1867. *D. Martin Luthers Werke*. Kristische Gesamtausgabe. Weimar: Böhlau.

Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca. 1857. Ed. by J. P. Migne. Lutetiae: Migne.

Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina. 1857. Ed. by J. P. Migne. Lutetiae: Migne.

Primary Sources: Translations

BATTLES, F. L., tr. 1975. *Institution of the Christian Religion* (1536). Atlanta: John Knox Press.

BONNET, J., ed. 1972. *Letters of John Calvin*. 3 Vols. New York: Burt Franklin.

CLARKSON, J. F. et al., tr. 1955. *The Church Teaches*. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co.

COLE, H., tr. 1950. *The Secret Providence of God* (in Calvin's Calvinism. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans).

CORCORAN, T. M., ed. 1971. *Seneca, Naturales Quaestiones*. Loeb Classical Library. Vols. VII and X. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

EVANS, ERNEST, ed. and tr. 1972. *Tertullian Adversus Marcionem*. 3 vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

- FARLEY, B. W., ed. and tr. 1982. John Calvin's Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- JACOBS, M., tr. 1982. Three Treatises by Martin Luther. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- LEONARD, V., tr. 1956. The Complete Writings of Menno Simon. Scottdale: Herald Press.
- KING, J. et al., tr. 1979. Calvin's Commentaries. 22 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- MCNEILL, J. T., ed. 1960. Institutes of the Christian Religion. The Library of Christian Classics. Vols. XX and XXI. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- OLIN, J. C., ed. 1979. John Calvin and Jacopo Sadolet: A Reformation Debate. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- REID, J. K. S., tr. 1960. Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God. London: James Clarke & Co.
- REID, J. K. S., tr. 1954. Calvin: Theological Treatises. The Library of Christian Classics. Vol. XXII. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- RICHARDSON, C. C., tr. and ed. 1970. Early Christian Fathers. New York: MacMillan.
- ROBERTS, A. and DONALDSON, J. 1950-. The Ante-Nicene Fathers. 9 vols. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.
- ROBINSON, J. M., ed. 1981. The Nag Hammadi Library. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

SCHAFF, P., ed. 1956-. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. 14 vols. First Series. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.

SCHAFF, P. and WACE, H., eds. 1956-. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. 14 vols. Second Series. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.

WAKEFIELD, W. L. and EVANS, A. P., eds. 1969. Heresies of the High Medieval Ages: Selected Sources. New York: Columbia University Press.

WILBUR, E. M., tr. 1932. On the Errors of the Trinity. Harvard Theological Studies 16.

Secondary Sources:

ALAND, KURT et al., eds. 1975. The Greek New Testament. New York: American Bible Society.

BALKE, WILLEM. 1981. Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals. Tr. by William Heynen. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.

BAUKE, HERMANN. 1922. Die probleme der Theologie Calvins. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'schen Buchandlung.

BIGG, CHARLES. 1946. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude. Edinburgh: Clark.

BLACKMAN, E. C. 1948. Marcion and his Influence. London: S.P.C.K.

BOHATEC, JOSEF. 1909. Calvins Vorsehungslehre. *Calvinstudien*. Ed. by Reformierte Gemeinde von Elberfeld. Leipzig: R. Haupt.

BONWETSCH, D. Nathanael. 1914. Texte zur Geschichte des Montanismus. Bonn: Marcus und Weber.

BRAY, JOHN S. 1975. Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination. Nieuwkoop: De Graaf.

- BROMILEY, G. W. 1982. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Vol. II. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.
- BUTTRICK, G. R., ed. 1957. The Interpreter's Bible. Vol. XII. New York: Abingdon Press.
- CHADWICK, HENRY. 1976. Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- COHN, NORMAN. 1970. The Pursuit of the Millennium. New York: Oxford University Press.
- COLLINS, R. W. 1968. Calvin and the Libertines of Geneva. Ed. by F. D. Blackley. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin.
- DANTINE, J. 1965. Die Prädestinationslehre bei Calvin und Beza. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Göttingen.
- D'ASSONVILLE, V. E. 1968. John Knox and the Institutes of Calvin. Durban: Drakensberg Press.
- DOUMERGUE, EMILE. 1969. Jean Calvin: Les Hommes et Les Choses de son Temps. Vols. IV and VI. Genève: Slatkine Reprints.
- DOWEY, E. A., Jr. 1952. The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology. New York: Columbia University Press.
- EDWARD, FELICITY. 1968. The Relation between Biblical Hermeneutics and the Formulation of Dogmatic Theology: An Investigation in the Methodology of John Calvin. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Oxford.
- FOERSTER, WERNER. 1972. Gnosis: A Selection of Gnostic Texts. Eng. trans. ed. by R. McL. Wilson. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- GENTRY, W. C. 1973. A Study of John Calvin's Understanding of Moral Obligation and Moral Norms in Christian Ethics. Ph.D. thesis. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.

- GRAHAM, W. Fred. 1978. *The Constructive Revolutionary: John Calvin and His Socio-Economic Impact*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.
- GRANT, R. M. 1959. *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- GRANT, R. M. 1961. *Gnosticism*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- HAARDT, ROBERT. 1971. *Gnosis: Character and Testimony*. Tr. by J. F. Hendry. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- HARKNESS, G. E. 1958. *John Calvin: The Man and his Ethics*. New York: Abingdon Press.
- HARVEY, VAN A. 1964. *A Handbook of Theological Terms*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.
- HUNTER, A. M. 1950. *The Teaching of Calvin*. London: James Clarke and Co.
- JACOBS, PAUL. 1937. *Prädestination und Verantwortlichkeit bei Calvin. Beiträge zur Geschichte und Lehre der Reformierten Kirche*. Vol. I. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins.
- JONAS, H. 1958. *The Gnostic Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- JUNDT, AUGUSTE. 1964. *Histoire du Pantheisme Populaire au Moyen Age et au Seizième Siècle*. Frankfurt Am Main: Minerva GMBH.
- KELLY, J. N. D. 1969. *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude*. London: Black.
- KELLY, J. N. D. 1978. *Early Christian Doctrines*. New York: Harper and Row.
- LAMBERT, M. D. 1977. *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movement from Bogomil to Hus*. London: Edward Arnold.

- LEWIS, C. T. and SHORT, CHARLES. Revised 1896. A Latin Dictionary founded on Andrews' Edition of Freud's Latin Dictionary. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- LOCK, WALTER. 1936. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles (I and II Timothy and Titus). Edinburg: Clark.
- McCLELLAND, J. C. 1965. Calvin and Philosophy. *Canadian Journal of Theology*. XI.N.1, Jan.
- MCDONALD, W. J., ed. 1967. New Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- MEAD, G. R. S. 1979. Simon Magus. Chicago: Ares Publishers.
- MELLES, G. 1973. Albertus Pighius en Zijn Strijd met Calvijn over het Liberum Arbitrium. Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J. H. Kok B.V.
- MÜLLER, Karl. 1922. Calvin und die Libertiner. *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 40, pp. 83-129.
- NICOLL, W., ed. 1910. The Expositor's Greek Testament. Vol. 5. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans.
- NIESEL, WILHELM. 1929. Calvin und die Libertiner. *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 48, pp. 58-74.
- NIESEL, WILHELM. 1980. The Theology of Calvin. Tr. by Harold Knight. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.
- NUOVO, V. L. 1964. Calvin's Theology: A Study of its Sources in Classical Antiquity. Ph.D. Thesis. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- OZMENT, S. E. 1973. Mysticism and Dissent: Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- PAGELS, ELAINE. 1981. The Gnostic Gospels. New York: Vintage Books.
- PARKER, T. H. L. 1975. John Calvin: A Biography. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.
- PARTEE, C. S. 1971. Calvin and Classical Philosophy: A Study in the Doctrine of Providence. Ph.D. Thesis. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- PELIKAN, JAROSLAV. 1971. The Christian Tradition Vol. I: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- QUASTEN, JOHANNES. 1962. Patrology. 2 vols. Utrecht: spectrum.
- Realencyklopadie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche. 1903. Vol. 13. Leipzig.
- RICHARD, L. J. 1974. The Spirituality of John Calvin. Atlanta: John Knox Press.
- ROWSTON, D. J. 1971. The Setting of the Letter of Jude. Ph.D. thesis. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- RUNCIMAN, STEVEN. 1947. The Medieval Manichee: A Study of the Christian Dualist Heresy. Cambridge: University Press.
- SCHNEIDER, GERHARD. 1970. Der Libertin zur Geistes- und Sozialgeschichte des Bürgertums im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche.
- SCHULZE, L. F. 1971. Calvin's Reply to Pighius. Potchefstroom: Pro Rege.
- SCOTT, ROBERT and LIDDEL, H. G. 1968. A Greek-English Lexicon. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.

- SMITS, LUCHESIUS. 1957. Saint Augustin dans l'oeuvre de Jean Calvin. Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp. N. V. G. A. Hak & Dr. H. J. Prakke.
- SNELL, F. W. 1971. The Place of Augustine in Calvin's Concept of Righteousness. Ph.D. Thesis. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- STREET, T. W. 1954. John Calvin on Adiaphora: An Exposition. Ph.D. thesis. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- TENNEY, M. C., ed. 1977. The Zandervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- THERON, LOUISE. 1968. A Structural Analysis of Seneca's 'De Providentia'. M.A. Thesis. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria.
- VANDER KOLK, JUSTIN. 1951. Re-examination of Calvin's Doctrine of Scripture Based on Reading in His Commentary. Ph.D. Thesis. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- VAN GRONINGEN, G. 1967. First Century Gnosticism: Its Origin and Motifs. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
- VAN UNNIK, W. C. 1960. Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings: A Preliminary Survey of the Nag-Hammadi Find. London: SCM.
- VENTER, W. 1986. Calvin and Economics According to the Institutes (in John Calvin's Institutes: His Opus Magnum. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education).
- VERHEY, ALLEN. 1980. Calvin's Treatise 'Against the Libertines'. Calvin Theological Journal 15, No. 2, pp. 190-219.
- VON HARNACK, A. 1924. Marcion: Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott. 2 Aufl., Leipzig.
- WALLACE, R. S. 1959. Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life. Edinburg: Oliver & Boyd.

- WEBER, MAX. 1976. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.
Tr. by Talcott Parsons. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- WENDEL, FRANCOIS. 1963. Calvin: The Origins and Development of
His Religious Thought. Tr. by Philip Mairet. London: Collins
Clear-Type Press.
- WILEY, D. N. 1971. Calvin's Doctrine of Predestination: His Principal
Soteriological and Polemical Doctrine. Ph.D. Thesis. Ann Arbor:
University Microfilms.
- WILSON, R. McL. 1964. The Gnostic Problem. London: A. R. Mowbray
& Co.
- ZANCHIUS, HIERONYMUS. 1930. The Doctrine of Absolute Predestina-
tion Stated and Asserted. London: Sovereign Grace Union.

Opsomming

In die loop van die sestiende eeu het verskeie radikale sektes Calvyn se pogings tot hervorming probeer kortwiek. Een hiervan, die Libertyne, is die onderwerp van Calvyn se traktaat *Teen die Libertyne* (1545). Hierdie traktaat is 'n snydende aanval op die leerstellinge en praktyke van hierdie sektariese groep wat hulleself die Libertynse Geestelikes genoem het. Volgens Calvyn was die Libertyne die gevaarlikste en die giftigste van die sektes en was dit nodig om hulle onteenseglik te repudieer.

In die lig van die belang van hierdie sekte in die raamwerk van Calvyn se denke is dit nogal verrassend dat min studies hieroor nog onderneem is, waar uitvoerige studies reeds gedoen is oor 'n ander sekte van dié tyd, naamlik die Anabaptiste. Die rede vir die gebrek aan enige omvattende studie kan moontlik toegeskryf word aan die feit dat dit wil voorkom of die sekte verdwyn het in die mis van die geskiedenis en in anonimiteit. Ten sypte hiervan bly die stryd tussen die Libertyne en Calvyn nog 'n belangrike studieveld. In dié verband werp die traktaat lig op Calvyn se eie leerstellinge wat hy uiteensit in sy argumente teen die Libertyne.

Calvyn se Traktaat bestaan uit drie dele, waarvan die eerste te doen het met die verhouding tussen die Libertyne en ander ketterye. Die oorsprong en die ontwikkeling van die sekte word ook deur Calvyn nagegaan. Die tweede en hoofdeel sluit die hoofleerstellinge van die

Libertyne in, sowel as hulle etiek. Die derde deel bevat uittreksels uit 'n boekie van die Libertyne en ook Calvyn se laaste waarskuwing.

Hierdie proefskrif gebruik Calvyn se Traktaat as die hoofbron van studie, en vul dit aan deur verwysings na Calvyn se **Institusie** en **Kommentare**. Na die inleidende hoofstukke oor die definisie en oorsprong van die Libertynse sekte, konsentreer die studie op die leerstelling van die Libertyne wat Calvyn noukeurig weerspreek.

In die hoofstukke wat te doen het met leerstelling van die Libertyne staan panteïstiese determinisme uit as die kernleerstelling. Die Libertyne glo dat alle geskape dinge van een enkele onsterflike siel uitgaan en daarin deel het. Vanuit hierdie basis kom hulle dan tot die slotsom dat, in die lig daarvan dat die geestelike natuur sy tuiste in die mens vind, geen kwaad of sonde die mens kan aanraak nie. Calvyn konfronteer hierdie leerstelling met sy leerstelling van God se universele voorsienigheid, wat 'n duidelike onderskeid maak tussen God se aktiwiteit en die mens se aktiwiteit. God regeer, modereer, en lei alle dinge, maar die mens behou 'n individuele wil en vryheid van keuse wat hom verantwoordelik maak vir sy handeling.

Hierdie panteïsme word ook uitgebrei na hulle sienings oor Christus, herlewing, en opstanding. Die Libertynse Christus is 'n Christus wie se reddende werk bestaan uit die herstel van die mens tot 'n perfekte, sondelose staat. Regenerasie beteken dus om to ontwaak tot die bestaan van 'n volmaakte staat wat eintlik altyd bestaan het. Dit volg dus hieruit dat daar geen noodsaak is vir 'n toekomstige opstanding nie. In Calvyn

se argument teen hierdie Christologie, word sy geloof in die korrupte aard van die mens en die absolute noodsaak om mens se hoop te vestig op die toekomstige opstanding duidelik uitgespel.

Die Libertyne het ook die Woord as die finale gesag verwerp. In die plek daarvan plaas hulle hulle vertroue in die Gees, wat hulle in teenstelling met die Woord plaas. In sy verwerping argumenteer Calvyn ten gunste van die prismaat van die Woord van God sonder om die belangrike rol wat die Gees speel in die oordrag van die Woord to ontken.

In die hoofstuk wat te doen het met die etiek van die Libertyne word Calvyn se eie etiek vertoon - 'n etiek wat opgesom kan word as 'n etiek van liefde vir die naaste. Die Libertyne, daarteenoor, baseer hulle etiek op hulle opvatting van Christelike vryheid wat hulle toelaat om hulle antinomiese gedrag vrye teuels te gee. Terwyl die Libertyne enige beheer oor hulle lewens verwerp wat deur die Wet vereis word, voer Calvyn aan dat waar die wet se eise aangepas is, die 'n "rule for right living" bly.

Ten spyte daarvan dat dit in die algemeen deur Calvynkenners verwaarloos is, bly die Traktaat 'n helder en belangrike bydrae tot 'n begrip van Calvyn se teologie. Behalwe dat dit 'n beskrywing is van die Libertynse sekte, bly Calvyn se teologiese en etiese argumente nodige basisse vir studie en nadenke.