

CALVIN AND THE DUCHESS OF FERRARA
(an inquiry into Calvin's pastoral ministry)

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Few men whose leadership in Christ's church remains unquestioned have been so highly praised or vehemently maligned as John Calvin, the reformer of Geneva.

Much of this is occasioned by a misunderstanding of the man. With such breadth of scholarship, such commitment to calling, such inflexibility in seeking above all God's glory his many-sidedness appears to be so elusive.

He was a theologian who has shaped much of western thought and practice to our own day. He was a reformer whose organizational talents enabled congregations to thrive in the face of relentless persecution. He was a teacher able to unfold the riches of the gospel not only from the pulpit but even more in commentaries rendered accessible through repeated publications and translations. Time and again he defended sound doctrine against its many adversaries and that on occasion in language too sharp and stabbing for our delicate ears. He inspired a host of men, old as well as young, to preach and teach and comfort people in lands where sword and stake awaited all who embraced the evangelical faith.¹ Calvin also interested himself in those ill-fated efforts which aimed at bringing the message of salvation across the seas to the Americas.² And behind these activities, so diligently pursued despite increasing weakness and ill health, the man and his deepest motivations are not easily discerned and evaluated.

Would we learn to know Calvin better than often we do, we do well to turn to his many letters. In them more than anywhere else we feel the beat of his tender heart and the strength of his firm but loving hand stretched out to people in life's crises.

John T. McNeill in his *A History of the Cure of Souls* introduces

us to this aspect of his labors.

The office of a true and faithful minister is not only publicly to teach the people over whom he is ordained, but as far as may be, to admonish, exhort, rebuke and console each one in particular.' So wrote John Calvin in a section on the Visitation of the Sick in his Liturgy. This is traditional and scriptural language, but Calvin gave to it rare emphasis in many utterances, and in the organization of the Church in Geneva.³

In greater detail Jean-Daniel Benoit argues convincingly that Calvin's growing influence together with the success of the Reformed faith in many lands should be attributed to his pastoral concern and care. After acknowledging the reformer's services as theologian and organizer, he maintains

The success of calvinism should be ascribed, quite paradoxically, to Calvin's solicitude for souls. More than the dogmatic thought of the reformer, however firmly constructed, more than his eminent gifts for organization which made of Geneva a church set on a hill to shine everywhere, more than his mighty will which retreating from no obstacle moved inflexibly to its goal, it was the care which he exerted to instruct and edify souls, directing them along the road to a vital Christianity, that assured the final victory.

The paradox is only apparent. Calvin was pastor more than theologian; more precisely, he was a theologian only to serve better as pastor and to give his ministry greater efficacy. For him theology was the servant of piety and never an end in itself. If essential to man's life is the knowledge of God, as children were taught in the Genevan catechism, then we are to live our lives to God's glory. Whether from the pulpit of Saint Pierre or in the lecture hall where the future ministers of persecuted congregations were taught, or in conversations with believers committed to his care, or at the bedsides of the sick and the dying, Calvin always engaged himself with the care of souls and their salvation.⁴

All this can be demonstrated in what Calvin wrote and rewrote over a period of many years. We need only turn to the many practical and person-directed observations found in his sermons. We see his solicitude for spiritual understanding and growth in those catechisms and creeds which he helped to formulate. We cannot escape the pastoral concern which animated his numerous commentaries. And in the preface to the first edition of his *Institutes of*

the Christian Religion, addressed to Francis I, this aim again stands out clearly.

When I first put hand to this work, nothing was less in my thoughts, most illustrious king, than to write a book which should be presented to your Majesty. My intention was only to inculcate some elementary truths by which those interested in religion might be trained to true piety—and at this task I toiled chiefly for our French, multitudes of whom I saw hungering and thirsting after Christ, but very few to be possessed of even a slight knowledge of Him.⁵

That need of Christ on the part of old and young, of royalty and commoners, of saints and sinners constrained him also to pen the letters which now fill several volumes. Too much has this legacy of Calvin been neglected even by those who claim to be his fervent followers.

Our interest, however, is not simply to learn to know Calvin somewhat better, pleasant and profitable as this may be.

Ours is an age when pastoral care and counseling seem so demanding of time and energy that listening to his voice may help us get our bearings better. In the flood of articles, manuals and books dealing with this aspect of the gospel ministry we threaten to become overwhelmed. Many of these may offer a measure of helpfulness because of newer psychological and sociological insights. But the theological foundations on which this ministry should rest are often obscured and at times even obliterated.⁶ Here Calvin, who was preeminently "a minister of the Word of God," provides perspectives for its proper understanding and practice. To catch more than a glimpse of this we dare not neglect his letters.

In this article we will deal only with the correspondence which he addressed to Renee d'Este, the duchess of Ferrara.

The selection is deliberate.

Although comparatively few in number, Calvin's letters to this noble lady spanned in time the largest part of his public ministry. Also because of her high position and her many pains and perplexities the issues addressed range widely. At times Calvin patiently instructs her in the faith; on other occasions he exhorts or rebukes or comforts. All of his messages are very specific and pointed, demonstrating that as pastor Calvin did not content himself with enunciating a few broad and general principles for the cultivation of a truly God-glorifying life as the goal toward which every

believer should constantly aspire and strive. Hopefully this introduction to the spiritual guidance proffered by the reformer will stir readers to delve more deeply into what is, without doubt, an almost inexhaustible treasury of pastoral concern and care.

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At this point some comments on the story of Calvin's correspondence are appropriate.

Only a few days before his death, so Jules Bonnet informs us,⁷ the reformer engaged in serious conversation with several of his colleagues. These included Beza soon to become his successor as leader of the Reformed churches.

After years of arduous labor Calvin could point to few earthly possessions. But among them he prized most highly his documents and letters sent over a period of many years. He requested that these be carefully preserved and, according to a letter from Beza to the Elector Palatine on February 1, 1575, that a selection from his personal letters "should be presented to the Reformed churches as a token of the interest and affection of their founder."⁸

This proved to be a very difficult assignment.

While letters received were in Calvin's hands, he had not kept copies of those which he sent. These had gone to a large number of individuals and groups scattered across the face of Europe. Hence the men charged with the task of uncovering them were to travel far and wide. Danger and even death dogged their steps. Pestilence had time and again ravaged Geneva and many other cities. Civil wars continued with unbridled violence throughout the kingdom of France. Italy, the Netherlands and even Germany were seldom safe for those who espoused the Reformed faith. In many places persecution was the order of the day. Not a few to whom Calvin had written were no longer alive, while others had defected from their evangelical convictions.

Yet the men chosen by Beza for this task engaged in it cheerfully and faithfully.

Especially three deserve to be mentioned: Jean de Bude, Laurent de Normandie and Charles de Joinvilliers. Of the last we know that he had served Calvin diligently as personal secretary for several years, having replaced Francois Baudouin, a lawyer, and Nicholas

de Gallars, a minister of the Word. De Joinvilliers had followed Calvin almost daily to the Auditoire and the Academy. Here he scrupulously took down the lectures as they were being delivered, in order that this material might then be gathered together in the form of commentaries under Calvin's supervision. By those efforts the pleas of many who thirsted eagerly for his instruction in the Christian faith were answered.

The first collection of letters contained the reformer's Latin correspondence. It was published at Geneva in 1575 and a year later again at Lausanne. Additional letters were included in the *Calvini Opera* published in 1671 at Amsterdam.

For almost three centuries thereafter little more was done. Many letters together with other documents gathered dust in the archives of Geneva, while others remained untouched and unread in the libraries of Zurich, Paris and Gotha.

Early in the nineteenth century, however, a new wave of interest in Calvin's life and labors was aroused. Paul Henry of Berlin added several letters discovered in Switzerland and France to his lengthy account. Bretschneider as editor of the Gotha letters published the fruits of his researches in 1835 to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of the Genevan reformation. Soon other letters began to see the light of day in writings by Ruchat, de Muller, Vulliemin and Crottet. These were incorporated in their histories of Reformation times.

All such and similar materials served as sources for the four volume *Letters of John Calvin* which Bonnet compiled from original manuscripts and edited with historical notes. Of that work he wrote,

This collection is the result of five years of study and research among the archives of Switzerland, France, Germany, and England. Charged by the French government . . . with a scientific mission that enabled us to gather the first materials of a correspondence, the richest depositories of which were in foreign countries, and sustained in our labours by the cordial sympathy of those most distinguished in the world of science and literature, we have spared nothing that might ensure the completeness of a collection which throws so much light on the history of the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century.⁹

Legitimately he could claim for himself "the privilege of offering to the public, for the first time, a general and authentic collection of

Calvin's correspondence, the greater part of which has, up to the present time, been buried in the dust of libraries, and altogether unpublished."¹⁰

The historical value of this material can scarcely be overrated. Not only do we learn to know Calvin as man, theologian, reformer, pastor and friend better; we are repeatedly introduced at the same time to the trials and triumphs of the Reformation itself. These letters often reflect a deep loyalty to and sympathy for people in danger and distress. With equal sincerity he encouraged and rebuked, instructed and complimented. The claims of God's saving gospel were pressed with the same authority on the kings of England, Sweden and Poland as on the humblest members of the Reformed churches. Defectors from sound doctrine were sternly admonished to mend their ways, while in his voluminous correspondence with such co-workers as Farel, Viret and Beza the fires of ever richer friendship burned brightly only to be exceeded by his devotion to the glory of God and rule of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Diligently Calvin pursued these many contacts. Often he would spend hours every week in a schedule which drained his frail strength and aggravated his bodily pains. No one followed the drama of the Reformation so patiently and persistently as he. His was, as Bonnet urges us to remember, "an almost universal apostolate." Even today we cannot peruse these letters without realizing that any judgment of Calvin as cold, impersonal and heartless is a caricature which should long ago have been laid to rest.

That this correspondence also has intrinsic literary worth cannot be easily disputed.

Calvin had assiduously trained himself in the schools of classical antiquity and the church fathers. With unusual felicity he employed both Latin and French, setting his stamp—as many scholars readily admit—on the literary development of the latter. To quote Bonnet again,

Calvin's Latin is that of Cicero and Seneca whose graceful and concise style he reproduces without effort. He writes in French as one of the creators of that language, which is indebted to him for some of its finest characteristics. Writing before Montaigne, he may be regarded as the precursor and the model of that great school of the seventeenth century which could only fight him with weapons from his own armory, and which could not surpass him either in loftiness of thought or in stately majesty of style."

Nor should it be overlooked that this body of literature demonstrates the reformer's ability as a worthy defender of the true faith. To be sure, some of his phrases sound harsh and inelegant but far less so than those penned by many of his opponents. At stake for him was always the glory of the sovereign God who in Christ had enlisted him in service. Above all else the truth, so clearly and irrefutably set forth in Holy Scripture, was to be taught, defended and promoted by him, no matter how many might agitate against it in the interests of pride of learning or position.

Bonnet found this peculiarly relevant for his own time. The great debate between Rome and the Reformation once again came sharply into focus with the 1854 promulgation of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. After some centuries that church was seriously challenging a Protestantism now weakened by the inroads of sectarianism, modernism and indifference. In that new confrontation some of Rome's most admired champions did not hesitate to caricature, slander and even vilify the reformers, the chief foe against which such weapons were being hurled was again Calvin. Here Bonnet would have his readers appeal to "the impartial evidence of history," adding,

History, interrogated in original documents, is not a panegyric; it throws no veil over the short-comings of its heroes, but it remembers that they are men, and draws lessons alike from their infirmities and from their greatness.¹²

Today the demarcation between Rome and the Reformation seems not so sharply defined as a century ago. Men on both sides have learned to speak more modestly and moderately. Some even speak of a possible reunion of those two camps into which western Christendom was sundered nearly five centuries ago.

But most of the age-old questions remain. Rome has not swerved from its positions, not even during and after Vatican II. Her social and political fully as much as her ecclesiastical power differs markedly from the disarray of the evangelical world. And many if not most Protestants seem little aware of the rich heritage purchased at such high cost with tears and pain and death. They know the reformers, including Calvin, largely from hearsay but cannot respond adequately to the subtle innuendos and scurrilous attacks which are still being levelled against his character and convictions. Ammunition against such, also in the interests of truth and justice, is abundantly supplied by his letters.

The work of Bonnet was meticulously translated into English by

David Constable under the supervision of Cunningham, then Principal of New College, Edinburgh. Together with other works of Calvin it was published in 1855-1857 by Thomas Constable and Co. of that city. Bonnet's commendation of the work done by the translator deserves notice here.

Nothing could exceed the difficulty of rendering Calvin's letters in English and of harmonizing the antique style of the originals with the structure of a modern language. We believe that this difficulty has been happily overcome by the Translator, who has devoted himself with persevering ardour, and with a sort of filial piety, to a work requiring so great an amount of patience and learning.¹³

More than six hundred letters appeared in the collection. It remains the standard work to be consulted for Calvin's correspondence both in the original French and in the English editions. The last one hundred pages of the fourth volume include the reformer's last will and testament, his farewell to the Seigneurs of Geneva, his parting words to the Genevan pastors, some eighteen letters "thought unnecessary to include in this edition but available in complete form in the Paris publication," and a helpful index of persons and subjects.

In Bonnet's collection we find eleven letters addressed to Renee, the duchess of Ferrara. With these we will concern ourselves. They appear with the following numbering and dating:

- LXXIX - October 1541
- CCCLIV - August 6, 1554
- CCCLXXXIV - February 2, 1555
- CCCCIII - June 10, 1555
- DV - July 28, 1558
- DLXVIII - July 5, 1560
- DCXXIV - February 1562
- DCXLVII - May 10, 1563
- DCLXIII - January 8, 1564
- DCLXIV - January 24, 1564
- DCLXVI - April 4, 1564

Each deserves to be read and evaluated, even if somewhat briefly, in the light of the situations in which Calvin and the duchess found themselves during this more than twenty year period of his ministry in Geneva. Frequently the setting sheds much clearer light on the words which he addressed to her in the severe crises through which she passed than do the sentences and paragraphs alone. Her requests and responses were not included in the Bonnet collection;

hence quotations from them derive from secondary sources which deal with the life of this worthy woman whose commitment to the Christ of the gospel deepened during the years of her contacts with Calvin.

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Who, then, was this woman of royal birth with whom the reformer corresponded so faithfully and what were his initial contacts with her and her court that gave rise to his letters?

Renee d'Este, born October 29, 1510, was the second daughter of Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany. Since no sons were born of this union, she could well have become queen of the land upon her father's demise were it not for the Salic law. Thus the throne passed to France I, a cousin who had married her older sister.¹⁴

Early in life, largely because of contacts with Marguerite of Navarre, she inclined to the reform movement within the church with its strong evangelical emphases. In this she was strengthened by the teachings of Jacques le Fevre d'Etaples¹⁵ who helped to prepare the way for both Farel and Calvin. In keeping with the spirit of that age she displayed a fine taste in literature and art, thus making the court of Ferrara after her marriage a center of culture.

As princess of France which was then playing an increasingly dominant role in European politics, she was engaged to be married no less than five times. Among the suitors for her hand were Charles V of the house of Hapsburg and later Henry VIII of England. For reasons of state all these connections were broken off at an early date. On her physical appearance we find great differences of judgment. Some have described her as very attractive with the appearance of strength of character; others have made mention of her as thick-set, even ugly and "a monster." Doumergue in his sizeable volumes on Calvin¹⁶ mentions five drawings of her as a young girl engaged in devotional exercises. These are to be found in her prayer-book, done by an unknown French artist and carefully preserved in the library at Modena. The truth, perhaps, lies somewhere between the two extremes.

Before her eighteenth birthday she was married on June 28, 1528, to Hercules II, son of Lucrezia Borgia and heir to the duchy of Ferrara. Of him we are informed that he was a true Renaissance prince. He was tall, well-favored as a painting of him also preserved in Modena demonstrates, and skilled in all the arts of chivalry, war and learning. His character as husband of the spiritually sen-

sitive Renee, however, left much to be desired. He was vain and ruled with a tyrannical insistence on personal authority. Often he displayed little sound judgment in seeking the welfare of the realm over which after his father's death in 1534 he began to reign. Bonnet adds that his allegiance to the Roman faith, as superficial as it was apparently sincere, did not inspire him to keep his passions in check.

When the couple made their royal entrance into Ferrara during December of 1528, Renee was accompanied by several French ladies-in-waiting. Chief among these was Mme. de Soubrise, a "gift" from her mother to serve her with good and wise counsel. Mention is made also of that lady's two daughters, Anne and Renee de Parthenay. Especially the mother was strongly devoted to the evangelical faith. From her and others, including Anne de Beauregard who died at an early age trusting only in the all-sufficiency of Christ, the duchess took great encouragement in her strange new home.

Ferrara, like several other Italian cities and duchies, was at the time by no means wholeheartedly devoted to Rome and the papacy. Here Savonarola, the flaming preacher of Florence, had been born in 1455. A statue commemorating him and his work had been erected in the town square. The city which numbered at that period some 60,000 inhabitants was far from insignificant. Many of its public buildings, palaces and castles were as imposing as they were attractive, adorned with recent Italian paintings and sculptures. Its university drew students from several lands, chiefly Switzerland and Germany. And this amid the prevailing clamor for church reform, gave entrance to "Lutheran" ideas. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the pope and his cardinals kept watchful eye on that hot-bed of dissension.

Amid her many duties Renee became the devoted mother of five children. While her husband also for political reasons was strongly attached to Rome, she never hid her evangelical sympathies. By the time of the duke's accession to the throne, the duchess had welcomed Clement Marot and Lion Jamet, both of whom had been too deeply involved in the affair of the Placards (1534) in Paris. The first became her personal secretary; the second served the duke in the same capacity for some years. Also others compelled to flee France for the sake of their religious loyalties found in Ferrara for a time safe haven under her protection. Soon her court became French in language, sympathies and loyalties. Renee also encouraged Bruccioli to prepare an Italian version of the Bible, the first

edition of which (1541) he dedicated to her. Of her influence a papal historian complained bitterly, "With them (i.e. the refugees) she forms at the court of Ferrara a hearth of anti-Catholic machinations, breaks fasting and permits meetings of reformers of the faith to be held in the Palazzo San Francesco."¹⁷

Here sometime early in 1536 John Calvin appeared. On the circumstances, purpose and length of stay historians are far from agreed. Even Beza's passing comments in his three editions of Calvin's life do little to help us out of the impasse. We do know that he, like most scholars in those years, desired greatly to see Italy as cradle of the new learning. And knowing Calvin's strong convictions even in those early years of his life, we find it far from inconceivable to claim that he was hoping to bring the gospel to a land seething with religious ferment.

By this time the young adherent of the Reformation was in danger of losing his life. He had left France for Basel "expressly for the purpose of being able there to enjoy some obscure corner of repose." In that city he prepared for publication the first edition of the *Institutes* and by August 23, 1535 completed his prefatory address to Francis I. Time was needed to correct the proofs, a bound of copy of which was taken with him to present to Renee. Through Marot, somewhat inclined to the evangelical religion and translator of the psalms, Calvin had received from her an invitation and was welcomed warmly. She then introduced him to her husband as Charles d'Espeville, the name under which he was to write her repeatedly.

How well Calvin knew already then the depth of cruelty, treachery and perfidy to which Rome was willing to stoop to control every soul in every land. Possibly en route or from here he penned letters to Duchemin, his former host at Orleans, and to Roussel, a former teacher whose fear had led him to warn Calvin to speak more moderately and now had accepted from the pope the bishopric of Oloron. Concerned about the former, he wrote, "Look out, faithful man, be on the alert! Let your life be so much kindness, mercy, purity, and innocence, that even the superstitious will have to admit, however unwillingly, that you are in truth a servant of God."¹⁹ But at the age of 27 he wrote to the latter as "to a former friend, and now a Prelate,"

What happens to one who like you deserts his captain and runs over to the enemy and destroys the ground for the defense of which he swore to give his life? . . . O Rome, Rome! How many of the spirits who were born for the good

do you keep in bondage; how many are you casting into eternal perdition!¹⁹

How long Calvin stayed in Ferrara cannot be precisely determined. Some argue for a period of only a few days; others for some two or even three months. But that during this time he enjoyed close contact with the duchess is evident from several sources, including the account of Beza. His speaking with her, and that also in the presence of others inclined to the Reformed faith, "strengthened her in a true love for piety." To claim, as d'Aubigne does, that he preached in the royal chapel enhanced with a famous painting by Titian must be relegated to the realm of legend. Already by March 1536 the cardinals in Rome were well aware of what was transpiring in Ferrara. Pressures were exerted on the duke from time to time. For political reasons, since he often changed allegiances and alliances, he had banished Mme. de Soubrise, possibly about the time of Calvin's arrival. And it seems likely that with the coming of the Inquisition to that city during April Calvin together with several other French evangelicals was compelled to flee.

Of his influence during this brief period Stickelberger writes, "New life streamed into the colorful, checkered society of Ferrara, taking the shape of a well-grounded Reformed congregation. Like the Waldensian valleys it became an island of faith in a wide sea of superstition."²⁰ This evaluation seems too optimistic, although Calvin did meet a sizeable number of fellow believers there with whom he kept up correspondence in later years. His stay was not a passing episode in a long and influential career. The Jesuit Tiraboschi does not hesitate to affirm that his presence in Ferrara did more damage to the Roman church in Italy than all the emissaries of Luther. And when Roman persecution broke out in full fury throughout that unhappy land, many evangelicals fled to find safety in Geneva under Calvin's protection.

But bereft of many of her friends the duchess began to feel greater restraints, even though she suffered little open repression until after 1545 when the Council of Trent was in session. By that time already one letter from Calvin had reached her.

With sterner measures from the side of the Inquisition the reconquest of the city, the university and the duchy to Romanism began. This increased as the years passed. Upon receiving the cooperation of Henry II of France—necessary because Renee was a princess-royal of that land—Hercules compelled her to listen to sermons which denounced her deepest convictions. At a somewhat later

date he caused her to be imprisoned with two ladies-in-waiting. Against her earnest pleas the daughters were removed from her influence and placed in a convent to receive instruction in the Roman faith. This broke her spirit. Soon she promised to attend Mass faithfully. After two and a half months she regained some greater freedom. In those circumstances Calvin and other friends provided her with counsel and encouragement. Never again did Renee d'Este turn from the Reformed faith.

Her husband died on October 3, 1559, after exacting from her an oath no longer to correspond with Calvin. But, as the letters demonstrate, from this she was absolved by the reformer.

Meanwhile her son Alphonse succeeded his father. Influenced by the clergy and even by Pope Pius IV he demanded that his mother either renounce her faith or leave Italy which for many years had been her home. She decided to return to France. All her children except Anne, who against her mother's wishes had married Duke Francis de Guise, were left behind in Ferrara. By this time France was deeply embroiled in political and religious conflicts soon to break out in a serious of brutal civil wars which spanned some thirty years. Various royal families were striving for power; the throne being occupied for a time by minors under the regency of the Queen-Mother, Catherine de Medici, for more than a decade. In these plots and counter-plots the duke de Guise, always ambitious, was a strong and fiercely loyal protagonist for the Roman religion which had honored his brother with the cardinalate of Lorraine. But Renee, despite the involvement of her son-in-law, did not hesitate to heap severe criticisms on the Guises for their cruelty and disloyalty to the throne.

By the time Francis II died unexpectedly during his minority she espoused the Protestant cause openly, yet always striving for reconciliation and peace between the opposing factions which were devastating the kingdom.

At first, as befitted her station in life, she occupied two residences, one in Paris and the other in Montargis not far from Orleans. Here she completely restored the castle which had fallen into a serious state of disrepair. Reformed pastors and other leaders were her frequent guests. Soon she became as well-known for her charities and good counsel to persons of all classes as she had been in Ferrara. When her son-in-law initiated the bloody civil wars, she made Montargis a refuge for persecuted Huguenots, sometimes for as many as six hundred at one time. This also became her permanent home, when the terms of a temporary peace demanded that no

Reformed worship might be conducted in her Paris residence or in the "temple" there as Huguenot church buildings were then called. At Montargis she established a flourishing school, greatly beautified the surrounding town and interested herself in a translation of the Bible into Spanish. About that time Calvin, now on his death bed, addressed her a last letter.

Comparatively little is known of her life thereafter.

During the second religious war and then again on the night of the St. Bartholomew massacre (August 24, 1572) Renee d'Este was in Paris for attendance upon the royal wedding of Henry of Navarre to her niece. As a princess of the royal house her life was spared. She was also able to rescue several of her fellow believers. These she took with her to Montargis and afterward assisted in leaving France where their lives were in mortal danger. This noble woman, whose life and labors meant so much for the Reformed faith in her troubled land, died on June 12, 1575. In her will she left an eloquent testimony to her deepest convictions.

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Calvin's first letter to the duchess of Ferrara is dated October 1541.²¹ Some five years had passed since he had left Italy. It was a time of distress for him as well as for his friend and fellow believer at the Italian court.

Only recently had the reformer returned to Geneva after an exile of two years in Strassburg. There he had been able to serve the French congregation with much joy and fruit. Now he was facing sharp division between the churches of Zurich and Geneva. This was, according to his testimony, occasioned by the almost idolatrous honors which the former were paying to their dead hero Zwingli. All his attempts to persuade Zurich of a richer evangelical doctrine of the Lord's Supper had met with distaste and disapproval. Also there were political tensions between Berne and Geneva in which the former was seeking to undermine the independence of the latter. Plague had again ravaged Strassburg. Some of his former church members had died.

On the larger European scene events were no more promising. Luther in his pamphlet *Hans Wurst* had scathingly attacked the Swiss evangelicals. Meanwhile the Turks were ravaging much of Hungary and threatening other eastern territories. Nor did the Diet of Ratisbon, at which all the western churches were to be

represented, hold out much hope for reconciliation. With their usual guile the Romanists were sabotaging its sessions, as Calvin had already written Farel on March 28, 1541.

Openly they pretend that they promote the conference which we desire; but underhanded, they oppose not only by great promises, but also by threats. They are ready to assist the Emperor with a large sum of money, if he wishes at once to have recourse to arms; or what Contarini rather wishes, if he can put us down without blood. Should the Emperor make any concession distasteful to the tyranny of the See of Rome, they threaten to fulminate those excommunications with which they are wont to set the whole world a trembling with terror.²²

Meanwhile the duchess was experiencing growing difficulties with her husband and his Romanist friends. Of these Calvin had been apprized by Madame de Pons. She acquainted him with the presence of a "Master Francois" whom Renee had appointed as her preacher and who engaged in persuading her "that it would not be a bad thing, if after hearing mass, to hold some sort of communion, which must be somehow the Supper of our Lord." One of her ladies-in-waiting had for conscience sake strongly disapproved of this. But against that woman the preacher had inveighed so sharply that the duchess accused her of "giving birth to scandals to no good purpose among the faithful." But, as Calvin's informant added, the duchess also wished "very much to be more fully instructed."

Aware of the gravity of the situation, the reformer did not delay his response. Her welfare, as someone daily surrounded by many who were hostile to sound doctrine, moved him deeply. Thus he wrote that she might, indeed, find in his letter "a too great plainness of speech." But as the Lord's servant he could not speak otherwise, also because he had found in her "such fear of God and such disposed faithfulness to obedience" that, despite her exalted rank, he was convinced that she would hear him out. Although with no full awareness of it on her part, the spiritual danger in which she now found herself moved him to write fully and frankly, adding,

. . . that I cannot bear that the Word of God should be thus to you concealed, perverted, depraved, and corrupted in such essential things, by those in whom you have some confidence, to whom you have given authority.

First, then, Calvin addressed himself to the character of "Master Francois." He urged that she be on guard "not to confide too unreservedly in his doctrine." For this he had ample reason, having

himself attempted to instruct the man on earlier occasions.

As for this same individual, I have been aware from having long known him, that whatsoever small understanding of the Scripture God has vouchsafed him, he has always made subserve his own profit and ambition, preaching whatever he saw that it would help to gratify his avarice, forbearing to preach whatever he found that it began to be troublesome to him . . .

With regard to the man, so he added, anyone could well ascertain "whether the holy and sacred Word of God was but a sport and mockery." Here was no desire to speak ill of someone, even though he had "plenty of material concerning him which I conceal." What concerned Calvin above all was his duty in this situation to God and the church.

But our Lord does not mean, when we see a wolf, under the colour and appearance of a pastor, scattering his flock, that we should quail in silence through fear of speaking evil of him. He rather commands us to discover the perversity of those who, like the pestilence, corrupt by their infection and mar the face of the Church.

No warfare, so he continued, was so fierce for him "as with those who, under the shadow of the Gospel, wear a rough garment outwardly towards princes, amazing and entertaining them by their finesse and subtilty, enshrouded in some cloud, as it were, without ever leading them to the right object" which is always the true knowledge of God and His will for our lives. Thus Calvin can rely on the oath of Master Francois no more "than upon the chattering of a magpie." Let then the duchess, if she is at all observant, "see at a glance that he preaches the Word of God only in so far as he wishes to gratify" her and so gain benefices without displeasing anyone who might do him hurt.

All this served as an introduction to the issue which the reformer now deemed of supreme importance. That would-be evangelical had argued that the Mass was not so abominable that true believers would have to absent themselves and that those who disagreed were "stirring up scandals among the weak, whom we are commanded to strengthen." How well he understood that such reasoning might appeal to the duchess because of the invidious position in which she found herself in Ferrara. To follow such advice might keep peace with her husband and restrain the suspicions of the Roman clergy.

Hence the detailed response of Calvin.

He would now touch "briefly" on the matter, assured as she must be that the Mass is a sacrilege.

In so far as the mass is a sacrifice, appointed by men for the redemption and salvation of the living and the dead, as their canon teaches, it is an unbearable blasphemy by which the passion of Jesus Christ is quite overthrown and set aside, as if it were of no effect whatever.

Here he called her attention to the teaching found in the epistle to the Hebrews as well as to words of the institution recorded by Paul in I Corinthians 11. Thus communicating with "such abominations" in which the creature is adored rather than the living God must be considered no less than the "idolatry" which God condemned so severely in Ezekiel 20.

But Calvin had more instruction to give, when turning to the subject of "scandals," that is, stumbling blocks for the weak and ignorant as these involved all forms of Christian worship. At no time, so he affirmed, should anyone yield to such pressures, no matter how persuasively they might be urged. What "Master Francois," charged with the welfare of souls,

. . . does not consider (is) that, in reference to those things which are either commanded or forbidden of God, although it might offend the whole world, we must not go beyond His ordinances. That which is commanded us, to support and strengthen our weak brethren, by doing nothing which may wound or offend them, refers to lesser things of no great consequence, which are of themselves indifferent and permitted of our Christian liberty, as the whole Scripture bears.

This is now explained by appeal to the Bible, specifically to Romans 10 and I Corinthians 8 and 10. Never should the duchess forget the results of following the subtle reasoning which she had been hearing.

Wherefore, Madame, I do beseech you not to permit that under the name of scandal any one should beguile you; for there is not a more pernicious scandal in the world than when our Christian brother, by our example, is entrapped in ruin and driven forward into error. If we would avoid all scandal, we must cast Jesus Christ behind us, who is the stone of offense at which the most part of the world trips and stumbles.

To this he now added the assurance that those who allow themselves to be guided solely by God's Word would not go astray. What is essential is an understanding of the sound doctrine which . . . ought to become fruitful, and so bring forth fruit in us,

and that is when it so transforms us by the renewal of our heart and mind, that His radiant glory, which consists in innocence, integrity and holiness, relumes the soul within us.

Again and again in his writings Calvin will return to this theme of the goal towards which every believer should aspire, that of having Christ formed in and shining through them. Nor according to him can this be achieved in a single day, even as he immediately added in this letter for her further instruction and edification.

I do not say this to admonish you to do what you do not do at present, but on purpose that the work of God, which is already begun in you, may be confirmed from day to day.

Lest the letter become much longer, Calvin concluded by saying that he was enclosing for her further guidance in these matters an "epistle" and a "little tract." The former had been addressed to Louis Duchemin under the title "On shunning the unlawful rites of the ungodly, and preserving the purity of the Christian religion."²³ The latter had been written by him and published only a short while before as his *Short Treatise on the Supper of our Lord*.²⁴

From this initial letter to her we learn how gently, persuasively but also firmly he dealt with someone in great perplexity. Always the appeal was to the Word as the only safe and reliable guide for doctrine and duty. Because he was much more fully aware of the peril in which she found herself than she, he addressed her at great length. While providing detailed instruction, he did not hesitate to extend a large measure of encouragement and consolation. She must look into her own life, seeing there the beginnings of God's work of grace. At the same time she is exhorted to be on guard lest the salvation of herself and those entrusted to her care is imperiled. Here, as becomes evident at once to anyone who peruses Calvin's letters, the glory of God and the truth of Holy Scripture and the spiritual welfare of believers are always inextricably intertwined.

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Nearly thirteen years elapsed between the first and second letters to the duchess.²⁵ In view of the cordial relationship which had been established this strikes us as strange.

Are there, perhaps, still hidden away in some European archives letters which Bonnet and others could not include in their collections? Is it at all likely that she would forget Calvin and his solicitude for her spiritual welfare? We do know that her life was

not one of ease. And this must have come to his attention from time to time, especially since he acquainted himself with the political, social and religious disturbances which engulfed the continent.

During this period conditions were worsening for the evangelical faith in that far-off Italian court. Rome was again on the offensive. Every voice raised in the interests of ecclesiastical reform was ruthlessly stifled. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) refused to make even a single concession on doctrinal matters and, in consequence, branded all who disagreed with its positions as heretics deserving of its "anathemas." In carrying out its will for the triumph of the Roman faith its leaders found a useful instrument in the Inquisition.

That all contact between Calvin and the duchess was not broken can be demonstrated.

Ferrara had long remained one of the strongest centers of protest against papal power and tyranny in Italy. Despite growing opposition on the part of her husband and his friends she was still widely esteemed as "the hope and support of the reformation in Italy." In 1551 Guillaume Prevost, a Parisian seeking refuge from persecution which had broken out in that city, looked for some safety in Ferrara. He asked of Calvin a letter of recommendation to Renee as the best means of receiving a warm reception. But by this time even the pope had urged duke Hercules to remove the offense which the presence of evangelicals in his territories was creating. At first the duke hesitated for political reasons. However by August 1550 one heretic had been publicly condemned to be followed less than a year later by another. All this made the position of the duchess hazardous.

A letter from Paul Gaddi, dated at Cremona on July 3, 1553, supplied the reformer with news about her. As the preacher of Valteline he had been able to spend two days in Ferrara. He learned that she was now surrounded by spiritual leaders, likely Jesuits, whom she was not able to dismiss. Through Gaddi she requested that Calvin send her a faithful preacher of the gospel. His informant also urged that the reformer send her frequent letters, since "your letters are not only very pleasing to her but also of great profit." Also, the pernicious views of Servetus were being widely circulated throughout Italy. Only Calvin, so he judged, would be able to refute those errors convincingly, "since I know what influence your writings have among those who in Italy reverence the name of the Lord."²⁶

At about the same time the duchess forwarded through her

faithful retainer, Lion Jamet, a lengthy missive urging that Calvin supply her with the service of two widows "to have the care and direction of the young ladies" in her house.

The reformer seems to have been deeply moved by these appeals. By August 6, 1554, his answer was ready. Although he had first planned to delay a month before responding, he had received no further news of her situation and feared that "there may be danger of our coming too late to your aid." He added that he would, had this been possible, have come to her in person,

. . . but because God keeps me confined here, I have selected the bearer of this letter, as the man, so far as I can judge, the best calculated to render you every kind of service, both in what concerns his doctrine, and his fitness for the situation of your almoner.

For this man Calvin had nothing but praise. He was Francis de Morel, surnamed Monsieur de Colognes.²⁷ In years to come he would attain a great reputation as one of the faithful preachers of the Reformed religion during the fearful civil wars. The reformer asked her "to receive him, not as one sent by me, but rather directed to you by God." As to the widows requested of him, he had already selected one if she would be pleased with his choice. This woman was not only virtuous but also of honorable birth, therefore unlikely to arouse envy and suspicion among those of a lower station in life. What a realist he was with his intuitive sense of how people, especially at a court where rank counted for so much, would react. This letter Calvin concluded by commending her again to the protection of the heavenly Father with a prayer that she might be so guided by the Holy Spirit as to increase "in all good, to the end that he may be more and more glorified in you."

The next letter followed less than six months later. It is dated February 2, 1555.²⁸ In a footnote Bonnet, drawing from Laboureur and Muratori as his sources, describes the circumstances.

Persecution was raging in Ferrara. Neither age, sex, nor rank escaped its fury. On the 7th of September, 1554, at the instigation of the king of France, Henry II, and of Pope Julius III, the Duchess of Ferrara, declared guilty of the crime of heresy, was carried off from her palace, separated from her children, and subjected to a rigorous confinement in the old castle of d'Este. She owed the recovery of her liberty to an act of weakness which Calvin deplored, and which was speedily followed by one of repentance.

Under constant pressures from the Romanists, who had received

full permission from Henry II as ruler of France and her nephew to deal firmly with his aunt, she had abjured the evangelical faith and promised to attend Mass faithfully. How deeply this melancholy event wounded Calvin we can learn from a letter written by him a few months earlier.

Of the duchess of Ferrara a sad report, but better confirmed than I could wish, says that, overcome by threats and reproaches, she has fallen off from her profession. What can I say but that an example of constancy is a rare thing among princes?²⁹

Yet he begins with true gentleness and a measure of understanding. He knew to what severe trials her faith had been subjected. But no additional news had been coming his way. Evil and malicious reports were being spread about her, but these he will not indulge. He had already attempted to restrain an Italian by the name of Mark but to no avail, for that man "broke out in invectives against me." Now he would write to pour out his heart to her on the matter.

Calvin indeed regarded it, especially in its effects on the reformatory movement, as "an evil sign, when those, who have waged with you so relentless a war to turn you aside from God's service, now leave you in peace." This he construed as a signal triumph for the devil on account of which he, too, would hang his own head in shame. But instead of rebuke we find this letter full of tender counsel and consolation.

For the rest, Madame, as our heavenly Father is ever ready to admit us to his mercy, and when we have fallen holds out a hand to us that our falls prove not mortal. I entreat you to take courage, and if the enemy on one occasion has had some advantage over you, because of your infirmities, let him not boast as of a victory completely won, but feel that those whom God has raised up have a two-fold strength to stand against all assaults.

How well he realized that additional attacks would be levelled against her. She is now

. . . to think how much you owe to Him, who has ransomed you at such cost, and daily invites you to his heavenly inheritance . . . Call upon him, trusting that he is sufficient to help our infirmities, and meditate on those noble promises which are to exalt us by the hope of glory in the heavens. For the foretaste alone should make us forget the world, and trample it under our feet.

Who when reading such a letter can still speak of Calvin as harsh, cold and indifferent to the plight of those who have stumbled even into grievous error? Such attitudes he reserved only for those who wilfully persisted in evil and dealt deceitfully with the gospel.

With that same sympathetic understanding Calvin addressed her again a few months later on June 10, 1555.³⁰ By this time her captivity had been somewhat relaxed. Yet she is still surrounded by the enemies of her faith. Tranquility of mind and heart in the Lord's service he regarded, indeed, as a great boon. But at the same time, aware of her state, he rejoiced to learn that she was "not weary of groaning and being in pain, in order to seek the means of fulfilling" her duty. Once again he reminded her of the devil

. . . who never suffers God to be fully honoured by us, without his laying obstacles in our way. For your share you have much more of them than others; but our heavenly Father knows well why he so proves you, for the anguish which you experience is a trial of your faith, to make you feel the value of that inestimable treasure, the gospel, which is so much despised by the world.

No matter how long she may languish in this spiritual condition, he would encourage her to hope for "a favourable issue to your perplexities." The sorrow which she was enduring he counted much more desirable than the joy of those who "flatter themselves in their lukewarmness."

Here we find again the direct and practical application of what he taught from the pulpit and in commentaries on the nature, the necessity and the high purpose of those chastisements which the Lord often inflicts on his children. God, so he wrote her, "seeks to lead us like poor blind persons, so that we may stop devising expedients which are improper to be followed," adding that he is also eager to enable his own to surmount every obstacle. But they must pray earnestly that their eyes be opened to his leadings. Only when he who loves them grants a clear sign may they follow it without hesitation. When pursuing this path of obedience and still feeling that they fall short of the mark, they may console themselves that they have stretched towards it not in vain, "for our progress is certain, provided we keep following, however faintly, and such an assurance should fortify us to resist all temptations."

In the same connection Calvin warned the duchess against cherishing any false security. She was indeed somewhat at greater liberty. But she ought not delight in her present unhappy state, sorrowing overmuch for past failing, for that would shut the door to

God's compassions. For consolation he ended the letter with the assurance that the Lord who began a good work in her would surely bring it to perfection.

Three years passed before another letter from the reformer to her appears in the Bonnet collection.³¹ It is dated July 28, 1558. Although brief its contents deserve some comment.

In Geneva a greater measure of peace and prosperity was beginning to prevail. The libertines who had always opposed Calvin's insistence on being ruled by the gospel had lost much of their influence in the city councils after the death of Servetus. Refugees from many lands, notably from France where the edicts of Henry II against the Reformed religion were being enforced with ever greater rigor, flooded the city to strengthen Calvin's position. But dangers from without had been increasing. Berne was again encroaching on Geneva's independence, using for this those libertines who had found there a refuge and did not hesitate to vilify the reformer. This conflict which lasted for some years became so intense that Viret together with fellow Reformed preachers in the Vaud were expelled. And after Luther's death his less worthy followers engaged themselves in denouncing Calvin and the faith which he so ardently defended and promoted.

Nor was the position of Renee d'Este one of serenity. By this time after persecutions by some in her family and in her court she was living in retirement in the palace of San Francesco or the villa "Consedre" nearby. Only in greatest secrecy had she been able to receive exhortations from Calvin as well as from those who had been sent to her by him. Life was changing for her. Her daughter Anne was now married to Francis, Duke de Guise. Her son Alphonse, soon to replace his father on the throne, was no friend of the Reformed faith. In this situation Calvin found occasion to write her again.

The duchess had been greatly pleased with the minister whom Calvin had sent. But now he could no longer continue in her service. This departure would rob her once again of the instruction and comfort which she so desperately needed. To this matter Calvin addressed himself. Thrown largely upon her own spiritual resources, she must remember "to be daily taught in the school of Jesus Christ" from which the mortal enemy of all believers will tempt her to turn away. Should her trial seem too sharp and heavy, she must "weigh well" what the apostle had written about metal being tested by fire. Every promise of the Lord she may confidently apply to herself. He also urged her to seek whatever good counsel

she might still obtain from among those friends who remained. He promised to send another minister should she request this of him. At all times, so she is admonished, must she persevere in the faith to which God had reclaimed her and which she had again been professing.

Two additional matters are discussed in the letter.

Calvin had been reliably informed that she was not without "torments in her household" consisting of several ladies-in-waiting besides other servants. Should she dismiss those hostile to her evangelical faith, she might well experience their "vengeance by backbiting and calumnies." But she must be willing to run that risk for

. . . the main point is to purge your house, as God commands you to do, and for which you have the example of David in Psalm ci. When you have taken pains to dedicate it pure and undefiled to God, trust that he will be the protector of it.

Even if this could only be done "by halves," Calvin encouraged her to remember that "we have this privilege when we aim at the mark, that God accepts the will for the deed."

At that time, however, the duchess was afflicted by some serious scruples. These involved the presentation of gifts or "benefices" to Roman Catholic priests serving in her household. He reminded her first of all that what she was giving did not actually belong to her but was her husband's property. He then suggested that she "entrust the direction of it to the worthy abbe, who will be delighted to take it off" her shoulders. Thus her conscience need be disturbed no further by that matter. But he added,

If you find contradictions in yourself, let not that astonish you, for however valiant a champion St. Peter was, yet it is said of him: They will lead thee whither thou wouldest not. In which we have a proof that we can never belong to God without some opposition on our part, forasmuch as our flesh shrinks from the struggle.

This letter also demonstrates her interest in the welfare of her Italian co-religionists. To one of these Calvin now referred, undoubtedly as a reminder that other evangelicals with whom she was well acquainted were not without their great and grave difficulties.

Galeazzo Caraccioli, Marquis de Vico, was an illustrious noble of Naples.³² His wife was the daughter of the duke of Nocera. After being converted to the Reformed faith by the preaching of Peter

Martyr, he left Italy to seek freedom to practice his faith in Geneva. Family, friends and inheritance he had been compelled to leave behind. Several times he had returned in great secrecy in the hope of persuading his wife to join him. On at least one occasion he had forwarded a letter from Calvin to the duchess. Now, as Calvin added, Caraccioli had crossed the sea and arranged to meet his wife in Dalmatia because in his native land his life was in danger. Let her to whom the letter is addressed remember the even greater loss which her friend was enduring for the sake of his faith, for,

I fancy . . . that he will soon be back, if God does not miraculously change the heart of his wife, who loves him in such sort, as to draw him on, if she could, to perdition. But at all events, it will be enough for him to have discharged his duty in order to be held excused before God and man.

In the usual way Calvin ended this letter with a prayer on her behalf.

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The sixth letter which we are to consider is dated July 5, 1560.³³ By that time radical changes had affected the life of both this French princess and her fellow believers.

Hercules d'Este had died on October 3, 1559, after exacting an oath from his wife to cease all contact with Calvin. He was succeeded by his son Alphonse. The young duke, feeling the need of papal support in war-torn Italy, placed his mother before a most difficult choice. Either she would renounce her faith to become an obedient daughter of Rome or else leave Italy which for years had been her home. Her choice was undoubtedly mixed with a large degree of perplexity and pain. But confirmed in her Reformed faith, she decided to return to France. There she hoped to influence the court on behalf of those whose lives were being increasingly imperiled.

By the time Calvin wrote preparations for her departure were well advanced, much to the dismay of the townsfolk. Quoting from Muratori's account of the ruling house of d'Este, Bonnet writes,

The loss of the princess gave great sorrow to the population of Ferrara, because attaching everybody to her by the liveliness of her disposition and her pleasing manners, she had not her match for her liberalities, nor was she ever tired of relieving the poor with her alms.³⁴

The reformer also regretted her leaving, since he had always hoped

that her presence in Italy might in some way help the spread of the Reformed faith in that land.

Nor was the situation which then prevailed in France any more promising.

That land was passing through a severe political crisis which would soon issue into the civil wars not resolved until the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes (1598).³⁵ Henry II had died suddenly during July 1559. His had become increasingly a reign of terror for Reformed believers. With savage fury he sought their extermination as soon as he was released from the pressures of his foreign wars. And slowly but surely the Reformed were now being drawn into political conflicts, since the house of Bourbon into which princess Marguerite had married showed some sympathy for them.

Francis II, young and sickly, succeeded his father as a minor. He was completely under the control of his ambitious mother, Catherine de Medici, who by marriage had become a niece of the duchess of Ferrara. By this time Reformed churches had spread throughout much of the kingdom. Everywhere these small but growing groups had broken officially with Rome, were conducting their own worship in secrecy and at times even organized themselves into well-regulated congregations according to the pattern which Calvin had explained. These people hailed the king's death as a judgment of the Lord and now cherished hopes for a change for the better. By right the government was to be guided by the house of Navarre, princes of the blood. But the inconstancy of their leader enabled the fanatically Catholic house of Guise to seize power. Within ten days the situation became even more ominous for all evangelicals. And with the failure of the Conspiracy of Amboise (March 1560)³⁶ all hope for redress seemed gone. Into such a confused situation the duchess was now to involve herself. Only because she was of royal blood could she hope with a large measure of circumspection to escape open attack.

For some two years there seems to have been little contact between her and Calvin. Now he could again write, even though he was not fully clear as to her desires with regard to sending another preacher. While not ready to doubt the honesty of the messenger who had given him report of her situation, Calvin added that she, too, must realize "how many persons may be suborned to draw from me things that might occasion you much trouble and regret."

Now he addressed himself directly to the matter of her oath. This had caused her a crisis of conscience as well as great sorrow. He could not gloss over the deed in which she had "failed in your duty and offended God in taking it." Yet without lengthy argument he absolved her from keeping it.

. . . so you are not bound to keep it, any more than a superstitious vow. You know, Madame, that Herod is not only not approved of for having too well observed the oath which he had taken in an unguarded moment, but it is imputed to him for a two-fold condemnation. This I may say to you, not to importune you to write to me, but that you may have no scruples about what God leaves you free to do, and of which he absolves you. I have discharged my duty in letting you know.

This having been said, he directed his attention to her resolve to return to France. Her "captivity" in Italy during the long years of marriage had indeed been "hard and worthy of compassion." But more fully aware of what awaited her in France than she, Calvin wrote at some length.

I must declare to you, Madame, that you will not have gained much by having escaped from one gulf to be plunged into another. For I do not see in what this change can better your condition. The government with which they intend to mix you up is at present in such disorder that everybody utters a cry of alarm.

Should her opinions be heeded, he can be somewhat satisfied that "things will not go on quite so badly." But hardly can this be expected. He realized into what intrigues the Romanists would seek to entrap her also because of her son-in-law. Therein would lie "manifestly a temptation of God."

I desire your prosperity, Madame, as much as possible; but if the elevation and grandeur of the world should prevent you from approaching to God, I would be a traitor to your interests in making you believe that black is white. If you were thoroughly resolved to conduct yourself with straightforwardness and greater magnanimity than you have done hitherto, I should entreat you forthwith to take a greater share in the management of affairs, than what they offer you; but if it is only to say amen to everything which is condemned both by God and men, I have nothing to say, but that you beware of falling from bad to worse.

Calvin could not ignore the fact that under pressure she had some six years earlier compromised her faith in order to regain freedom.

Therefore he felt constrained to warn her against entanglements "which might fetter you as much as, and even more than the former ones."

Deep concern also moved him to warn against "continuing too long in a languid state." She must show compassion to herself since "Jesus Christ certainly deserves that you should forget for him both France and Ferrara." The time has come for her to live in closer fellowship with the God of her salvation who is calling her also through her widowhood to look ahead to the Christian's inheritance and rest. This message he would leave for her further meditation.

By the time the next letter was written during February 1562 much of what Calvin had feared was reality.³⁷

France was embroiled in a complicated series of religious and political plots. By this time Renee was well-established at the court in Paris. The kings of Spain and France had confirmed their mutual alliance to root out the Reformed faith by arms. Even Geneva, bordering on French territory, was seriously threatened. Beza had warned Calvin to keep strict watch at the gates of that city especially during those times when its inhabitants were attending divine worship. Shortly after the return of the duchess the Guises had successfully pursued their policy of consolidating control over the young king. By the end of October 1560 both Navarre and Conde had been lured to Orleans where the latter had been arrested and illegally condemned to death. But when Francis II died unexpectedly on December 5 of that year, Catherine became regent for young Charles IX and Conde was reprieved. For a short season persecution ceased. Throughout the following year the balance of power shifted again and again. Some hope for resolving the religious differences had been expected from the colloquy at Poissy but in vain.³⁸ Yet the assembly at St. Germaine by its edict of January 1562³⁹ had again authorized Protestant preaching yet without the erection of additional "temples." This seems to have somewhat encouraged the duchess that the troubles might in time be pacified. Within towns all meetings for religious purposes by the Reformed, whether public or private, were strictly prohibited. Mutual abuse, provocations and the possession of firearms by the citizenry were forbidden, lest civil war break out. For iconoclastic activities and the printing of placards against the Mass and other Roman practices as well as their distribution the penalty was death. It now appeared that the Huguenots would enjoy a larger measure of toleration than during the reign of Henry II.

Even though Calvin claimed he had little of importance to communicate, he did write her in that volatile situation. He expressed his joy that she had in her household "a man every way qualified to exhort you and confirm you in all you stand in need of." This was Francis de Morel who had served her faithfully for some time in Ferrara. He had been appointed to that position with the full consent of the Genevan Council on July 3, 1561, when it refused, according to its records of that date, to relinquish the services of either Calvin or Beza.

On one matter in this letter Calvin unburdened himself and that "not without great regret" since it involved someone dear to her. This he explained in detail.

You know, Madame, what the enemies of the truth are hatching; witness the league of the Pope with the king of Spain, the Venetians, and the potentates of Italy, in which our neighbor (i.e. France) is included. They verily think that it is their duty to banish all Christianity out of the world. And with that introduction the reformer wrote about the involvement of her daughter Anne, Madame de Guise. While as a child in Ferrara she had been instructed in the Reformed faith, she repudiated it upon her marriage into the house of Lorraine. Her husband was both an ardent Catholic and its strongest military leader, deeply committed to extirpating what he regarded as heresy. Of Anne Calvin now wrote that she was

. . . pursuing a course which can only lead to her own confusion, if she continue in it; for though she does not think so, yet it is most certain that she is seeking the ruin of the poor churches in France, of which God will be the protector in order to maintain them.

This he did not write to add to the uneasiness of the duchess. Yet he desired that by her authority she would induce her daughter "to moderate her passions, which she cannot obey as she does without making war on God." Undoubtedly this was for him as well as for the duchess one of the most distressing letters which he was compelled to address to her. Within Renee's own family was one whose affections were pitted against her and those whom she loved. But as a worthy pastor Calvin was convinced that he might not keep silent. When the cause of the Lord was involved, it was a mother's duty to give straightforward counsel even to a married daughter. No price was too high to pay for a disciple of the Lord.

Whether this counsel was followed may be questioned. In less than a month the duchess would hear the tragic tale of massacre at

Vassy.⁴⁰ There the Huguenots, meeting in agreement with the terms of the edict of St. Germaine, had been foully attacked and slaughtered by soldiers under the control of the duke de Guise. Now the Reformed, embroiled as they were against the will of many of them in political intrigues, felt they had no recourse but to take up arms for their own defense. Thus the first civil war broke out with fury in the fair land of France.

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Calvin's next letter to the duchess⁴¹ requires some grasp of the complicated events which threatened the destruction of his native land where his friend resided.

The reins of government were for the first time firmly in the hands of Catherine de Medici (1519-1589), the widow of Henry II. As a foreigner she was fully aware of her precarious position. Her policy helps to account for much of the confusion and contradiction which stains the pages of twenty shameful years of French history during the closing years of Renee's life.

She was then (at the death of Francis II in December 1560) 41 years old, but, although she was the mother of nine children, she was still very vigorous and active. She retained her influence for more than 20 years in the troubled years of the wars of religion. At first she listened to the moderate counsels of l'Hopital in so far as to avoid siding definitely with either party. Like so many of the Italians at that time she looked upon statesmanship as a career in which finesse, lying and assassination were the most effective weapons. By habit a Catholic, but above all things fond of power, she was determined to prevent the Protestants from getting the upper hand, yet resolved not to allow them to be utterly crushed, in order to use them as a counterpoise to the Guises.⁴²

Thus she "pursued policies that were makeshift, expedient and deceitful."

Neither side took satisfaction with this. In consequence many began to use religion, whether Protestant or Catholic, to gain power over the throne in the years of the king's minority. After the colloquy of Poissy Catherine granted the Huguenots some measure of dignity and recognition at her court. This greatly enraged the Catholics, chiefly those of the house of Guise. And when the first civil war broke out after the massacre of Vassy (March 1562), inter-

national intrigues began to play a greater role. Elizabeth of England encouraged the Huguenots, while Philip II of Spain rendered invaluable support to the Catholics. Even the pastors of Geneva became involved to the extent of pleading for funds and urging German and Swiss mercenaries to assist their fellow Protestants. Soon the civilian population became victims of surprise attacks and guerrilla activities. Robbery, rape and murder were the order of the day. And none inspired such confidence among the Catholics as the duke de Guise, son-in-law of the duchess.

By October 1562 the Catholics had captured the influential city of Rouen. In exchange for their help the English were awarded the port of Le Havre. Now the Huguenots marched on the city of Paris, citadel of Roman power, only to be driven back. Relentlessly pursued by the Catholic army, they withdrew to the city of Orleans. And here the duke was assassinated by a twenty-six year old Calvinist, Jean de Poltrot from Saintonge, with serious repercussions also for the family of the duchess. Of this Montluc writes,

His death which was courageous and Christian spread consternation among the Catholics and completely altered the state of affairs. He left only children too young to succeed to his power and his widow, Anne d'Este, a princess of violent and pronounced character, but having no influence because she was a foreigner, could inspire in them only the vengeful feelings with which she was animated.⁴³

The Queen-Mother took immediate advantage of the loss of the Catholic leader. An exchange of prisoners were arranged and soon thereafter she published the edict of Amboise. This again allowed liberty of conscience to all Protestants. Preaching was permitted on certain estates of the nobility together with one town in every "bailliage." But at no time might the Reformed worship according to their order within the city of Paris. Because of this the duchess retired permanently to her castle at Montargis.

On May 10, 1563, Calvin sent a letter to his friend,

With many of the Reformed he was disappointed by several of the terms of the treaty. Yet he expressed the hope that Conde, now in Catherine's good graces, would help stabilize the situation and that she would be able "to make good by your authority what has been concluded to the advantage of our brothers." If not, then "the peace will be like a body without a soul."

Calvin praised fulsomely her generosity and faithfulness demonstrated in the most difficult of circumstances. He regretted

not having been able to communicate with her for some time, since the roads had been unsafe and even now "for some time yet there will be robbers and bandits." Unless she, too, would use whatever influence she had with leaders to enforce the provisions of the recent edict, conditions would soon grow even worse.

His praise of her was genuine. She had been willing to make of her home "God's hostelry" and not ashamed "to bear the opprobrium of Jesus Christ, while the pride of the enemies rose above the clouds." But he had not forgotten the days when in a moment of weakness she had yielded to the pressure of her foes.

Oftentimes I have thought, Madame, that God had reserved such trials for your old age, that you might have an opportunity of paying him the arrears due him for the timidity of times past. I speak after the manner of men . . . But what I mean is, that he has done you a singular honour in employing you in such a duty, and making you carry his banner in order to be glorified in you, while your hospitality entertained his word which is the inestimable treasure of salvation, and afforded an asylum to the members of his son.

But her difficulties, according to Calvin, were far from over even with the coming of peace. At all costs she must now regulate her household that it be free from scandal. And for one in control of a royal court this would be far from easy. Yet that house of hers, including the large estate over which she exercised authority, must be preserved "pure and uncontaminated."

Here the reformer was not simply laying down a few broad principles of Christian conduct. Scandal had reached his ears which compelled attention. A young man, brought up and settled in marriage by the duchess, had dismissed his wife "to keep up intercourse with a strumpet." Such practices were common among the nobility, and against them Catholics had never raised more than a few feeble admonitions. Even some popes had been notorious for their sexual irregularities. But for the reformer not only Geneva but every house wherein the Reformed religion was professed, and this included hers, should serve as an example of faith which produced the fruits of godly living. Her obligation was to enforce this pattern or else dismiss from service those who would not follow it. Indeed M. Biry, in whom both she and Calvin placed great confidence, assured him that much had been done to correct the disorder. But, as her counselor insisted, "though there had been apparently some amendment, people did not know that it would last." Thus he

urged her to be watchful "in order to shut the mouths of the ungodly who ask for nothing better than to blaspheme the name of God."

Two other matters also engaged Calvin's mind when writing this letter.

Once again she asked him for a faithful preacher. But so many similar requests had reached him, that he had not yet been able to find a suitable one for her. This matter he promised to pursue further, even though he hardly knew where to turn. "At any rate, you may count upon being served in preference to all others, and were you present here you would see that it is not without cause that I beg of you to have patience."

Also an old acquaintance had asked Calvin to bring a matter of deep concern to the attention of the duchess. He was Francisco Porto from the island of Crete who for a time had taught Greek at the university of Ferrara. Banished because of his loyalty to the Reformed faith, he had first gone to Venice and then to Geneva where he again taught Greek at the Academy and enjoyed the status of a citizen. Upon one occasion the duchess had promised to show interest in providing the man's daughter "now of a marriageable age" with a suitable husband. Even with his small salary he requested no financial help. But concern for the young lady prompted him to ask Calvin to remind her ladyship of her earlier promise. Although pressed by problems of far greater magnitude, he could not dismiss lightly from his mind the need of a single person. In keeping with Renee's generous nature the matter was soon satisfactorily arranged as Bonnet adds in a footnote on Porto, "He received during his old age numerous tokens of affection of the duchess of Ferrara, and died in 1581, leaving many writings which procured him the esteem of Joseph Scaliger."⁴⁴

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Calvin's correspondence with the duchess concludes with three letters sent in rapid succession. By now afflictions which for years had plagued him were greatly aggravated. On February 6, 1564, he preached for a last time in the church of St. Pierre. A few days earlier he delivered his final lecture at the Academy on the prophecies of Ezekiel. Soon thereafter he took to his bed. Only with the greatest distress and the assistance of friends could he arise for short periods. But the care of souls and concern for the congrega-

tions left him no rest. His was the high calling of working so long as even a few short days remained.

Sometime during December 1563 Francis de Morel, again in service at Montargis, had complained to Calvin of difficulties encountered in connection with ecclesiastical discipline. In keeping with a custom then largely prevailing, the duchess at times sat in on the sessions of the eldership. And the conduct of some of her servants and retainers seems to have been far from exemplary. Thus the preacher wrote,

Great danger arises from a woman being the sovereign. The church is in a miserable condition. I was obliged to forego dispensing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the bypast month of September, because from other quarters came so many dogs and swine that I should have been obliged to admit along with the sheep.⁴⁵

His language, the reader will note, was hardly restrained; much less flattering. Now Christmas was approaching at which time the sacrament was again to be administered. Thus he added, "I do not know how to act. Do you, then, my most worthy father, advise me."

So deeply did this disturbance affect Calvin that he replied on January 8, 1564.⁴⁶ He urged the duchess to uphold at all costs the authority of the consistory. It was charged with the welfare of God's people and the right administration of the sacrament. By this time she had left Paris which had never been much to her taste. But this the reformer also regretted, since "it would have been desirable that you had remained constantly at court for the relief of the poor churches." But now that she is at Montargis, her duty is clear.

Well Calvin realized that people, including many who professed the Reformed religion, were obstinate. He does commend her for any attempt to keep order and purity in her household. But she is exhorted according to the words of Paul never to grow weary in well-doing. And this demanded a repressing of all vices and a removal of all scandals. Thus,

Let your household be a mirror to set the example to those who show themselves indocile, and to confound those who are incorrigible and entirely hardened.

But what concerned Calvin even more was maintaining the authority of the consistory without which the church would be spiritually ravaged. Its members should always be

. . . men fearing God, of holy life, and much sincerity and straightforwardness that nothing shall prevent them from

doing their duty, having such a zeal as becomes them in maintaining the honour of God in its integrity.

All, no matter of how exalted a rank, should be willing without shamedfacedness to submit "to the order which the Son of God has established, and bend his neck to receive the yoke." Apart from this Calvin recognized no remedy against unbridled licentiousness. Thus he expressed, not without a measure of cynicism, his amazement.

It is wonderful (!) to see how those who have voluntarily subjected themselves to the tyranny of the pope cannot endure that Jesus Christ should bear gentle rule over them for their own salvation.

But this, too, is the devil's work who seeks to bring God's truth into disrepute and causes true religion to be despised and the name of the Redeemer to be blasphemed by men's behavior. With this argument he proceeded,

Thus, Madame, to have a church truly Reformed, it is more than ever requisite to have people charged with a superintendence to watch over the morals of each; and that no one may feel himself aggrieved in giving an account of his life to the elders, let the elders themselves be selected by the church, as nothing can be more reasonable than to preserve it in this liberty, and this privilege will tend also to produce greater discretion in the choice of fitting men and approved of as such by the Consistory.

Calvin expressed as his conviction that she was, indeed, aiding the minister with her authority to establish some degree of order. He added that he knew full well to what corruption the courts of princes were usually subjected. But therein lay no excuse for laxity. Above all, she must not be persuaded to attempt a change in the order of the church "such as God has consecrated it by his blood." Nor might anyone in her household enjoy special privileges or exemptions, for that would be like "cutting it off from the body of the church." Should her influence be employed in that direction, the consequences would be serious "since if your domestics were spared, all respect for the Consistory would disappear like water from a leaky vessel."

In this letter we find only passing references to himself and conditions in Geneva. On such matters the bearer, Jean de Bude, would inform her more fully.

But one matter was included which sheds a fascinating light on the friendship and esteem with which Calvin honored the mistress

of Montargis. He still had in his possession a gold medal which her father Louis XII had struck at the time of his disputes with Pope Julius II. Inscribed on it was the motto "Perdum Babylonis nomen" (I will destroy the name of Babylon). This he would now offer her.

Think how bold I am; but because I supposed you had a similar one, I have not ventured hitherto, for it is only its rarity that can give it any value in your esteem. Finally, I have delivered it to the bearer to show it to you, and if it is a novelty to you, will you be pleased to keep it? It is the finest present that I have in my power to make you.

This event had a most delightful outcome. In a letter, now to be found in the library at Paris, she responded with great warmth. At the same she demonstrated in it her unswerving devotion to the Reformed faith.

As to the present you have sent me, I assure you, that I have seen and accepted it with very great pleasure, and I have never had any like it. I have praised God that the late king, my father, had adopted such a device. If God did not grant him the grace to put it into execution, perhaps he reserves for one of his descendants to take his place to accomplish it.

Less than three weeks later Calvin wrote her again.⁴⁷

The duchess had in the meanwhile communicated to him her great sorrow that the duke de Guise, after his assassination, was being constantly vilified and condemned to hell while the king of Navarre, killed in the trenches at Rouen and by no stretch of the imagination an example of godliness, was praised excessively by some Reformed preachers. On the degree of responsibility of the duke for the massacre at Vassy we find little agreement among historians. He had been captain of the troops. And even if the slaughter had been begun without his instigation, he had done nothing to stop it. Yet the duchess was hearing his life continually maligned. Hardly did she have to remind Calvin how eagerly she had attempted to promote reconciliation between the warring factions who had mixed politics with their professed religions. Now she explained at some length,

I have no wish to excuse the faults of my son-in-law for not possessing the knowledge of God, but against the accusations that he was the only one who kindled those fires of discord. It is well known that he had retired to his house, and was unwilling to stir from it, and also that he was urged by letters and messages to make him leave it; and now that

he is dead and gone, there is so envenomed and deadly a hatred which never ceases to blacken his memory by all the falsehoods that may be raked up or imagined, that I am compelled to declare that I cannot hold or esteem such lying words to come from God . . .

I know that he was a persecutor, but I do not know nor do I believe, to speak out to you undisguisedly, that he is reprobated by God, for he gave signs of a Christian man on the contrary before his death . . .⁴⁸

Let us note how tactfully yet uncompromisingly Calvin attempted to counsel her in her distress. He understood well how deeply wounded she was by the bitterness and rancor displayed even from some of the pulpits. Yet she did not waver from her Reformed loyalties but only desired that he would admonish especially the preachers to greater charity.

Such a letter of response would tax his pastoral abilities. Thus he wrote, "Before I proceed more closely to examine that question I pray you in God's name to reflect seriously, that on your part it is also requisite to observe moderation." Her affection for family connections including the bereaved daughter, so he opined, might well cause her to forget what otherwise she knew sufficiently. She had argued that while in the Old Testament it was allowable to hate one's enemies, this was now disapproved by God. But Calvin appealed to the example of David and sought to explain this to her in detail. Her understanding of God's Word at this point he deemed in need of correction.

Now, Madame, this gloss (i.e. of setting aside much of the Old Testament) would lead to the overthrowing of the whole Scriptures, and for that reason we should shun it as we would a deadly plague. For we see that David surpassed in kindness of character the best of those that would be found in our days.

That man even shed tears for those who plotted his death; hence personal hatred should not be ascribed to him. And with that Calvin continued,

But when he says he holds the reprobate in mortal aversion, it cannot be doubted that he glories in an upright, pure, and well regulated zeal, for which three things are requisite: first, that we should have no regard for ourselves nor for our private interests; that we should possess prudence and discretion not to judge at random; and, final-

ly, that we observe moderation not to exceed the bounds of our calling.

To this he added several other references from Scripture to demonstrate that, while personal revenge was never to be approved, nonetheless more was at stake in the issue of love and hate. Even John who spoke much about love "clearly shows that we ought not, under show of an affection for men, to become indifferent to the duty we owe to the honour of God and the preservation of his church."

Having instructed her, Calvin applied the truth to the situation in which the duchess found herself. She would do well to remember that she was by no means alone in sorrow. Many of God's dear children had suffered because of the duke de Guise "who had kindled the conflagration." And now he opened his heart even more fully to her.

For my part, though I have often prayed God to show him mercy, yet it is certain that I have often desired that God should lay his hand on him in order to deliver out of his hands the poor church, unless it pleased God to convert him. So that I may protest that before the war, I had but to give my consent to have had him exterminated by those men of prompt and ready execution, who were bent on that object, and who were restrained only by my exhortation.

To condemn the duke as reprobate without "some certain and infallible mark" would, according to Calvin, go much too far. Only the Judge before whom all must appear can know and determine that. Calvin also found it "still more exorbitant" to pronounce the king of Navarre in paradise. That man was clearly an apostate. Thus he would counsel all to "more moderation and sobriety." Here he appealed to the example of the queen of Navarre, well known and related to the duchess herself. She had lost her husband, a connection far more intimate of that of a son-in-law. Also when Reformed preachers knowing of the king's lack of constancy had refused to pray in public for him, she had at first complained. But when realizing that they would then have to pray openly for his conversion, which might well have grieved her deeply, she yielded. And to this Calvin added, "The remedy for all that is to hate evil, without taking persons into account, but leaving every one to his Judge." Let her, then, not disquiet and irritate her mind "for a little talk, which you could afford to treat with the most thorough contempt." Instead she should remember what

. . . we are all agreed, that in order to be recognized as children of God, it behooves us to conform ourselves to his

example, striving to do good to those who are unworthy of it, just as he causes his sun to shine on the evil and the good. Thus hatred and Christianity are things incompatible. I mean hatred towards persons—in opposition to the love we owe them. On the contrary we are to wish and even procure their good, and to labour, as much as in us lies, to maintain peace and concord with all men.

Two months later Calvin dictated from his death bed a last letter to Renee d'Este.⁴⁹ It is dated April 4, 1564. He asked to be excused for not writing with his own hand "in consequence of my weakness and the pains I suffer from divers diseases." He was still awaiting the return of Jean de Bude through whom she had promised to send him news. Also he declined to comment on "the differences in your household" in the light of no information from the pastor. Gently he chided her for misunderstanding what he had written about the vilification of the duke de Guise. He urged that he "had distinctly separated the person of the duke de Guise from the question, and protested that those who according to their fancy damn people are too presumptuous."

Instead of perplexing mind and heart further about the matter, she is urgently requested to show concern for Margaret, sister of the late king Henry II and married to Emmanuel Philibert, duke of Savoy. Calvin is convinced that the lady had strong inclinations to the Reformed faith from which many would seek to dissuade her. Because of her timidity, he appealed to the duchess.

Now, Madame, I am of the opinion that there is nobody in this world who has more authority over her than you; for that reason I would entreat you in God's name not to spare a good and earnest exhortation, in order to give her courage to take a decided resolution; in which I hold it for certain that you will do your whole duty according to your zeal for having God more and more served and honoured.

With this his correspondence with an old and increasingly dear friend came to an end.

Only two later letters are found in the Bonnet collection. One dated the same day as his final message to the duchess was sent to Bullinger. Less than two months later he dictated a brief note to Farel, now very old and destined to outlive him. "I draw my breath with difficulty, and every moment I am in expectation of breathing my last. It is enough that I live and die for Christ, who is to all his followers a gain both in life and death."⁵⁰

And on May 24, 1564 Calvin breathed his last.

From Calvin's letters to the duchess of Ferrara, comparatively few as they are in the massive collection available to us, several conclusions can be drawn for an understanding of his pastoral ministry.

At no point do these which we have surveyed conflict with messages sent to others in even radically differing circumstances. Calvin's work as pastor was always of one piece. Every aspect of this ministry shines through in the materials reviewed. He teaches and comforts; he finds occasion to exhort and admonish and even rebuke when he deems this necessary. And the "spiritual life" to which he addresses himself is never isolated from the exigencies of everyday living. Soul and body, individual and society, this present life and that of the age to come are intimately connected with each other. From this all those commissioned to have care for others can learn much needed and valuable lessons.

Let us note that Calvin did not obtrude himself and his convictions into the life of this noble lady without warrant. He waits time and again for her invitation to respond. He speaks plainly but "not so much from rashness, or from over-weening self-conceit, as from pure and true affection" for her and her service in the Lord. This note he repeatedly strikes. He forms no judgments about her person or conduct from rumor or idle chatter. Reports which he does receive are weighed judiciously, at times discounting even statements by those who lived at her courts. Nor can he be accused of giving offense. If offense is taken, as it was upon at least one occasion by the duchess, this he attributes to a misunderstanding which at once he attempts to clear away. Sometimes he hesitates to write until she supplies him with more information. Nor is any preacher sent, profitable as he knows such services will be for her and her household, without a request on her part. While conscious of her station as a princess royal of France, he addresses her as frankly as he does the humblest member of the congregations. Rank, to be sure, must be respected as an arrangement from God, but it never absolves from duties to self, fellowmen and God. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that she with many others looked repeatedly to him for that guidance on which she dared to depend.

Always Calvin, eager as he was to win and influence people for good, was profoundly conscious of his divine calling. His responsibility was first and foremost to God who had appointed him to

office. When commending her frequently to the care, instruction and protection of the heavenly Father, he was doing far more than ending his letters with a few pious phrases. His advice, of this he was convinced, would prove fruitless unless applied by the Spirit of God. As pastor he saw himself as servant, as representative, as messenger of his sender.

From this it is clear that his pastoral care always and inescapably had to be based directly on Holy Scripture. No other message might be brought by him. It alone was the trustworthy guide for mind and heart and daily conduct. While understanding the imperfections and weaknesses which plague the lives of believers, he never would allow these to be used as excuses for being unfaithful to the God of grace and salvation. What all must learn is unhesitating and unconditional obedience to the Word. By it alone the Lord truly comforts and directs and blesses the lives of his children.

This being so, we are not at all surprised that also these letters are replete with instruction in the faith. Life cannot be truly lived apart from the knowledge of God and of man in his relationship to God. Such knowledge always included for him much more than some intellectual acquiescence and acceptance. It must be so applied personally and practically that all of life is directed joyfully and with increasing perseverance to wholesome worship and obedience. Never may the believer rest content with the degree of progress in godly living to which he has attained by God's grace. Always spiritual growth is urged by him, in order that God's glory may be reflected and his purposes more fully realized. Such faith-obedience will also produce in the duchess a richer assurance that she belongs to Christ in life and death.

Doctrine for Calvin provided the solid foundation for recognizing and fulfilling one's duty in a manner well-pleasing to God.

He thus used also his letters to the duchess as opportunities to lead her more fully into the knowledge of God's will for her life. Here, too, he deals with several issues at that time perplexing to Reformed believers who had been trained in the Roman faith with all its unwarranted regulations but now rejoiced in evangelical truth. But that freedom allowed no one to think lightly of God's will or live carelessly. Obedience was for him the touchstone of a lively and genuine faith in God's grace.

Hence we find already in his first letter a lengthy discourse on the nature and purpose of the Lord's Supper. All forms of Romish

supersition must be abolished; all erroneous conceptions must be abandoned from mind and heart. So important was this for him, that he supplied added materials on which he urged her to reflect carefully. But other matters are also dealt with. In the light of Scripture he considers with her the place and power of prayer, the use of preaching as a means of grace, chastisements which God so frequently sends his own, as well as the nature of oaths and scandals. Only the Word may bind the conscience, but it is intended to bind clearly and convincingly.

Of particular interest is the manner in which Calvin used Holy Scripture in these letters.

At times he quotes quite directly from the sacred page; much more frequently he contents himself with summarizing one or more passages. Upon occasion he mentions specific psalms or chapters from the prophets and evangelists. Throughout these letters he makes clear allusions to what the Bible says. He thus presupposes also from her side a rather thorough acquaintance with God's Word. He is fully aware that some of the more difficult questions of understanding and application need elaboration. Yet the perspicuity of the Word is never in doubt. Always the Spirit will open mind and heart to God's truth when this is sincerely requested.

On one matter the duchess needed more precise instruction. It concerned the Old Testament in its relationship to Christian faith and duty. To this we find several references in his letters to her. While acknowledging a distinction between the old and the new dispensations, Calvin did not hesitate to affirm that the Old Testament was fully God's Word and that it could and should be employed to give direction in the ways of a godly obedience. Thus he laid foundations for a Reformed use of the Old Testament also in pastoral care and counseling. An echo of this we discern in the *Belgic Confession* wherein those churches testify,

We believe that the ceremonies and symbols of the law ceased at the coming of Christ . . . yet the truth and substance of them remains with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion. In the meantime we still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel, and to regulate our life in all honorableness to the glory of God, according to His will. (art. XXV)

That Word in its application, however, he never divorces from the life-situations in which she found herself. This is evident in the specifics addressed to her. How differently he could write at times

to those who had openly defected from the gospel. Such persons he sharply calls to time, lest persisting in their error they fall into the hands of the living God who never allows his truth to be despised. But with all in whom some measure of true faith is found Calvin deals gently. At no time and under no circumstance, however, does he allow for a kind of "situational ethic." Nothing may lead to a setting aside of the Scriptures, God's will for him, and this he seeks to impress also on the duchess, is always good and holy and righteous. In it alone can she hope to find rest and peace. Therefore no price is too great to pay for that blessed fellowship which he grants her as a believer through his Son.

In these letters we find no recapitulation of the *Institutes*, the tracts or the numerous commentaries which he wrote. Yet their teachings are never contradicted or even cloaked with an aura of confused argumentation, when he seeks to apply the Word to specific conditions and circumstances. God's truth is always unto godliness; doctrine should issue into a life of duty which glorifies him who calls her to his service and adorns her with so many gifts. Runia has appropriately commented concerning the theological work of the reformer,

Calvin did not write a new "Summa theologiae," but a "Summa pietatis," which is reflected in the words with which he begins the *Institutes*. Nearly all wisdom which we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts, the knowledge of God and of ourselves.⁵⁷

What he then adds helps us understand better Calvin's many letters.

Yet also the other, the existential aspect must be no less accentuated. The great stress on God is never at the expense of man. Nowhere is man 'crushed to death' in Calvin's theology. Often one hears that Calvin championed a purely objective, even a deterministic system in which there was ultimately no place for man and his existential responsibility. But this criticism cannot be maintained in the light of the facts.⁵²

This sheds light on what the letters have to say about the Christian life.

All is of grace. Here the reformer lays solid foundations in the work which God has accomplished and continues to accomplish in the Lord Jesus Christ. The pastoral care which he offers is distinctly trinitarian; never is it narrowly theological to the neglect of the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Let all in need of succor and

strength always look to him as the heavenly Father whose compassions know no limits. Yet this infinite mercy may never dim the believer's awareness of God's sovereignty and majesty and holiness. His rule is sweet and gentle indeed; it is nevertheless also unswerving in its demands. It therefore shocks Calvin that some who readily submitted to many unjust and unlawful papal demands, even to the point of tyranny over conscience, seemed so unready to yield full allegiance to the blessed Savior. While in their indifference and indolence they flattered themselves with their profession, they were practicing self-deception. Only those who steadfastly walked in the Lord's ways had the right to see themselves as his children and heirs. For them the way to forgiveness for their failings remains open, when in genuine sorrow for their sins they look again to Christ. This is freely declared in the Word which Calvin does not hesitate to call "the inestimable treasure of salvation."

That new life in Christ is always, according to him, called to fruitfulness. This demands growth in the grace and knowledge of him to whom the duchess belongs.

Many aspects of this are referred to in letters addressed to her.

For the sake of the believer's progress God repeatedly sends in his own time and way chastisements. From these the duchess will not escape. Always, then, she does well to remember that through them God is working out his grace in her life. Nor do they come "without some opposition on our part, inasmuch as our flesh shrinks from the struggle." How well Calvin knew this not only from Scripture but also from personal experience. Yet such trials are always for the good. Believers including her were for him no plaster-of-Paris saints. Although always called to strive toward perfection, in his theology and pastoral care he found no room for perfectionism. As long as we are in this life we must find ourselves "in the school of Christ." And the lessons to be learned frequently are difficult and distressing. Nor do they decrease even in "old age," as the duchess will discover despite any desire on her part for a greater experience of rest and ease.

In dealing with this subject, however, Calvin again demonstrates that he is not the fatalist which many of his critics have claimed. When passing through seasons of anguish or affliction more is required of God's children than mere passive submission. Always he urges them to do their duty as God gives them to see it in his Word. This involves the will together with the emotions as well as the mind. Temptations are to be resisted with resolution. Trials are to

be endured with patience and perseverance. Testings are to be acknowledged as coming from a loving Father who would have his children draw with ever greater confidence near to him. Even when this is done only "by halves," she may comfort herself that her efforts are not in vain. But herein she may not rest content. Rather than chiding herself for past failings because of an inability to stand the test, she too must press on to the high goal of her high calling in Christ Jesus.

In all this Calvin appeals to the will or law of God. But that law is never abstract, impersonal and harsh. It is the will of him who always seek her good. Thus in discharging her duty, she may confidently expect greater strength to face what might still lie in the future. Even the remembrance of her former weakness ought to serve as a spur to continue with greater fervor in the way which God had appointed for her life. New opportunities may well be the occasion, and here he would speak "after the manner of men," given her to pay God the arrears due him by which he will be even more glorified in and by her life. This for Calvin was the road to greater assurance, contentment and hope in the troubles which at times seemed to overwhelm her.

In this connection Calvin speaks, without explicating these in any detail, of those Christian graces and virtues which deserve to be cultivated by her. All are intimately related to her life-situations. Repeatedly he urges her to courage which can come alone by meditating on the promises of the gospel. But she must also grow in moderation, a grace none too prevalent in that day of unholy ambitions and heated argumentations. Nor must she chide herself unduly when thinking about the past. To do that would be a looking to herself rather than to the riches of God's forgiveness in Christ. Also patience, which is the ability to stand up under and face without fear whatever happens, is to be cultivated. In all things God looks for faithfulness which is above all a matter of the inward disposition of the heart.

As we read these and other letters, we become more fully convinced that for Calvin obedience was not simply a matter of external conformity. He cannot be accused of legalism when offering pastoral guidance. Love for God, the Word and the church are to prompt the proper responses. Placed as she is in a lofty position and thus able to influence many around her, duty must be pursued at all costs in the hope of winning others for the Lord's service. He looks as he tests his children and their motives. Therefore the heart also of the duchess must be safeguarded by the Word and Spirit. In

this light we understand why so often Calvin makes mention of and gives direction with respect to her household, not only her family but also those who serve her or are present as guests in her court. Time and again he commends her for what she did at great risk to her own comfort and security. But this is to encourage her to make, if necessary, even more sacrifices. For the reformer, when using that term, this was no cliché. He regarded it as the offering up of oneself to the Savior who had also ransomed her at such great cost.

We cannot escape the profound impression which her devotion to fellow believers made on him. He alludes to it often and does not hesitate to mention it specifically. But here again his pastoral comments are uniquely theological. What she has been doing and hopefully will continue to do is not simply humanitarian service; she has been engaging in giving shelter to "the members of his (i.e. God's) son." Never does he want the God-ward intention and direction of service to others to escape her attention.

Therefore she as a duchess ought never be overcome with fearfulness when meeting her obligations. Privilege of position and power laid upon her heavier responsibilities than upon many other children of God. This path of growing in a true and sincere godliness was not one strewn with roses to yield an odor of sanctity. Life was to be lived in the world as God had arranged this for her. From it she may never seek to withdraw herself. Thus one of the Christian virtues to be exercised by her was that of using her authority aright. More was demanded than setting a godly example. She is to give counsel, even on intimate matters, to several who were closely related to her. Also she is to keep her household in good order according to the will of God. No laxity or licentiousness, so evident in the courts of that day, might be excused. Not only her reputation but much more the good name of the Lord and of his church was involved. Let her then instruct and, when necessary, even rebuke and dismiss from service those who refuse to honor God and keep his commandments. That he refers in this connection to Psalm 101 reminds us again how effectively he knew and used the Word and how convinced he was of its appropriateness unto the believer's growth in grace and godliness.

Now all this, and Calvin affirms it so emphatically that it cannot escape attention, is for the "glory of God." Again and again he makes use of the phrase. For him it was the chief, the supreme goal of the Christian life. To it, if the term is allowable here, he was passionately addicted. Nor is there for him anything cold or abstract about this. The beauty and splendor and ineffable majesty of the

living God who called men and women into fellowship with himself through Christ was to be reflected, be it with limitations and imperfections, in every experience of the believer. Thus he wrote often to the duchess that his prayer for her was that God "might be glorified in you"

This deserves some elaboration.

While he saw God's glory manifested in creation and in history, it is always supremely revealed on earth in the transforming power of his grace in the lives of his children. Here we find what may rightly be called a kind of "Christ-mysticism," far removed to be sure from that imitation-ideal which often charmed medieval and later mystics. For him this was growth in that true Christ-likeness worked by the Holy Spirit in those who confessed the Savior not only as their Lord but also as their Example. Because Christ dwelled in them, believers including the duchess should seek to imitate his unswerving obedience to the will of the Father as this was laid down for them in the Word. Calvin clearly had no patience for any mystical contemplation on the wounds of the Savior. His sufferings were unique; they alone brought salvation with all its attendant blessings. But willingness to suffer is to be reflected also in the life of all who look to him. It is grace which makes them debtors to surrender their lives in obedient service. And the motivating power is to be love. Even towards enemies, though their deeds were to be denounced and hated, she as well as he are to show concern for their welfare in a demonstrable way. For did not God himself cause his rain and sunshine to fall on those who fought against him?

Now we see why Calvin strongly insisted on a proper and continual use of the means of grace. Only so would she, too, grow and increase to God's praise. Repeatedly, therefore, he supplied her with preachers able and willing to sustain her with the Word. Of single importance for her, surrounded with Romanists, is also the observance of the Lord's Supper in accordance with its gospel institution. His opposition to the Mass derived not from some abstract doctrinal formulations wherein he differed radically from the Roman church. At stake was her spiritual welfare together with the glory of God and the reliability and clarity of his Word. No blessing may be expected by those who fail to rely solely on the all-sufficiency of the Savior's passion and death and resurrection. No feelings, stirred by external pomp and pageantry, but rather a faith fully informed by the teachings of the gospel will receive the assurance of forgiveness and the power to lead a new and holy life by the Spirit's work. Hence its administration is always to be

carefully supervised. For this Calvin again appealed to the institution by Christ which is to be held in high honor. Those elected to this office of regulation and supervision watch over the souls of believers for their good. To allow the unbelieving and ungodly to partake is desecration. At times he does not hesitate to call this blasphemy.

Not much in these letters is said directly about the exercise of the communion of saints. Yet time and again it is implied or alluded to. Frequently he reminds the duchess of conditions in which many congregations were finding themselves in those days. He exhorts her to seek counsel with friends of the faith who may happen to be residing at her court for a season. All who are one with her in Christ experience similar sorrows and sufferings. He passes on information about dangers and distresses to many of God's people not to discourage but rather to involve her mind and heart as a remedy against too much preoccupation with her own condition.

Explicit mention is made from time to time of her duty to meditate much on the Scriptures. Never does the reading or hearing of the Word suffice. It is to produce the fruit of a piety marked by charity, humility and total dependence on God's grace. This includes especially a reflection on the future life. How important such "eschatological" expectation is for Calvin's view of the Christian life we find clearly indicated and elaborated in the *Institutes*. But also his letters to the duchess make mention of it. Never may this deflect her from duties laid upon her in the present age. Rather it will supply her with encouragement, with a sure and steadfast hope that heaven not only awaits her at the end of life's journey but that meditating upon it will fill her soul with a strength which nothing is able to destroy. Even "obstacles" placed in the way by the devil and enemies of Christ may not dim the hope of everlasting glory. This is the inheritance safeguarded for all who look to Christ and seek to do his will. Of that victory she is to assure herself.

For Calvin the gospel never came as a "cheap grace." Always the cost of discipleship was high. At issue was more than some inner peace or contentment, although this is never to be despised. But higher than that is living to God's glory and for the advancement of his cause here and now. In every situation the Word was to shed its precious and penetrating light also on the life of the duchess of Ferrara. God himself had appointed to her a unique place and therefore a uniquely personal responsibility. Her calling was to live by his truth, molding her thoughts and words and deeds under the Spirit's guidance to his will.

Throughout it has become clear that for Calvin "preaching" and "pastoral care" were of one piece. And this note has not been completely ignored by Reformed churches today.

Some years ago one of the Dutch churches summarized this emphasis which the reformer sought to put into practice.

Preaching as the administration of the word occurs in the exposition and application of Holy Scripture. It contains the proclamation of forgiveness and the announcement of judgment, the giving of consolation in spiritual temptations, the offering of wisdom in life's riddles, the initiating into the Lord's fellowship, the teaching of keeping his law, the dealing of his promises concerning the coming of the kingdom.⁵³

And to this Bolkestein has rightly added,

And in the footsteps of preaching follows the care of souls. In it are all the manifestations of the kingdom: the forgiveness of sins, offering of comfort, presenting of wisdom, initiation into God's fellowship, guidance in keeping his commandments, and sealing this with his promises. In this way the arena of spiritual pastoral care becomes broader and fuller. And especially in relationship to modern man, who suffers less from a sense of guilt than from the chaos of the demonic powers, such care has a significant task to perform. Pastoral care is the approach to the guilt, the need and the problems of others from the point of view of God's kingdom, wherein Jesus Christ is fully present, in order to unite others with Him in faith and hope and love.⁵⁴

Calvin, of course, lived in a world which seems at times radically different from ours. Yet man always remains the same in every changing circumstance. He is always one created and sustained by the Almighty God; so that his life can only become personally meaningful and lived meaningfully in the light of God's self-revelation. Here he learns to know himself as image-bearer now deeply fallen into sin and shame with all their fearful consequences. And the only "remedy" worthy of the name lies in God's saving and sustaining grace through the Lord Jesus Christ as applied by the Holy Spirit.

All this is fully declared in the gospel.

And that gospel must not only be explained and applied to the congregation as a whole; it must find its way into the life of all who hear.

For Calvin this was chiefly the task of ministers of the Word

together with the elders. But even believers, as in the case of the duchess of Ferrara, were challenged in so far as opportunity was granted to extend spiritual concern and care to those around them. In this way life's burdens could be somewhat lifted; life's temptations vigorously resisted; life's sorrows healed. The paths by which the Lord is pleased to lead his own are often as many and as varied as there are individual believers. But for all of them, so Calvin confessed and practiced, the Word was the sure guide. It was a staff for support; a rod to drive away the foes.

In that confidence he sought to discharge his calling as a shepherd of souls. And with that Word a great multitude, including the duchess of Ferrara, found their peace and strength.

NOTES

¹On these efforts cf. Philip E. Hughes, "John Calvin: Director of Missions" in *The Heritage of John Calvin* (ed. John H. Bratt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 40-54.

²On the missions to the Americas cf. R. Pierce Beaver, "The Genevan Mission to Brazil," in *Heritage*, 55-73.

³John T. McNeill: *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row, 1965; Torchbook ed.) 197, 198.

⁴Jean-Daniel Benoit, *Calvin, Directeur d'Ames: Contribution a l'Histoire de la Piete Reformee* (Strasbourg: Oberlin, 1947) 11. This work which should be made available also in English has been translated into Dutch by A.J.A. Mondt-Loving under the title *Calvijn als Zielzorger* (Nijkerk: G.F. Callenbach, n.d.) Although reasonably accurate and complete, it fails to reproduce much of the beauty and delicate precision of the original.

⁵Quoted by B.B. Warfield in "Literary History of the Institutes" in the Allen translation of Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (2 vol. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) I, x.

⁶Frederic Greeves in his *Theology and Cure of Souls* (Manhasset: Channel Press, 1962) sounds a gentle but pertinent alarm against the neglect of theology and theological language in pastoral care. His message seems to have been too much unheard or ignored. Some of his comments help to set this article in perspective.

"All the contemporary tendencies at which we have glanced—sociological, psychological, and those that have to do with current attitudes to life in general and religion in particular—present us with questions which are ultimately theological. It is what we believe about God and about all things in the light of God, that ultimately determines our responses to the situations and to the points of view that I have mentioned. If God is God, then answers to all the most significant questions that men can ask are answers about God.

"We cannot therefore shrink from the full implications of two facts:

theology matters supremely, and there are different theologies. These cannot all be completely true, although (as has been said) the real contradictions may be fewer than at first sight appears. This means that God can be misrepresented, and it follows that His children, who need His care, may be hurt by false theology. Man has it in his power to hurt or to help his fellow man; why should we think that pastoral care is immune from either possibility?" (30)

Later he warns against "ways in which aesthetic feelings, kindled by beauty in ritual, music and other artistic creation, can become a substitute for, instead of an expression, of Christian belief and Christian faith." With approval Greeves then quotes D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who wrote,

" . . . in presenting the Christian gospel we must never in the first place make a direct approach to the emotions or to the will. The emotions and the will should always be influenced by the mind. Truth is intended to come to the mind. The normal course is for the emotions and the will to be affected by the truth after it has entered and gripped the mind. It seems to me that this is a principle of Holy Scripture." (46)

⁹*Letters of John Calvin* (ed., Jules Bonnet; tr., David Constable. Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1855-1857 Vol. 3 and 4 in my possession tr., Marcus Robert Gilchrist. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858). This material has been reprinted in *Selected Works of John Calvin, Tracts and Letters*, the latter in vol. 4-7, by Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983. All references and quotations in this article are taken from the earlier editions.

An abridged edition of the Letters (70 in number) with an excellent biography of Calvin's life and labors was published by Banner of Truth Trust, 1980. Of Calvin's letters to the duchess it contains only the one dated Febr. 2, 1555. 165-167.

⁹Bonnet, *Letters*, 1, iii.

⁹Bonnet, *Letters*, viii.

¹⁰Bonnet, *Letters*, vii-viii.

¹¹Bonnet, *Letters*, x-xi.

¹²Bonnet, *Letters*, xii.

¹³Bonnet, *Letters*, xiii.

¹⁴Since the life of Renee d'Este was bound closely to that of her relatives, the kings of the house of Valois-Angouleme are listed here with dates of their birth and length of their reigns:

Francis I (1494) 1515-1547

Henry II (1519) 1547-1559

Francis II (1544) 1559-1560

Charles IX (1550) 1560-1574

Henry III (1551) 1574-1589

¹⁵On the importance of d'Etaples cf. Philip E. Hughes, "Jacques le Fevre d'Etaples (c. 1455-1536), Calvin's Forerunner in France" in *Calvinus Reformator* (Potchefstroom, Univ. of Chr. Higher Education, 1982).

In addition to his personal influence on such individuals as Marguerite d'Angouleme, Farel and Calvin, he is to be remembered for rediscovering the true method of interpreting Scripture and the effect of this also on Calvin and his pastoral ministry.

"What LeFevre did was to rescue the *literal* sense of the Scriptures. And by literal he did not mean literalistic; nor did he mean that there could be only one sense for the whole of Scripture. Depending on the context and the *genre* of the passage, the literal sense might be historical, allegorical, ethical, or eschatological, or even two or more of these together. The literal sense, moreover, was the *intended* sense . . . Lefevre insisted, then, that the proper literal sense was the sense intended by the Holy Spirit. But this sense was missed if the Holy Spirit was not present with regenerative power in the heart and mind of the reader or student of the Bible. (99, 100)

¹⁴The French original being unavailable at the time of this writing, reliance is on the Dutch translation of W.F.A. Winkel, vol. II, which appeared under the title of *Calvijn in het Strijdpark* (Amsterdam: W. Kirchner, 1904). The first section deals with Calvin's stay in Italy, 1-82; that on her physical appearance, 27-30.

¹⁷Emanuel Stickelberger: *Calvin* (tr. David Georg Gelzer; London: James Clarke and Co., 1959) 39.

¹⁸Stickelberger, *Calvin*, 41.

¹⁹Stickelberger, *Calvin*, 41.

²⁰Stickelberger, *Calvin*, 39.

²¹Bonnet, *Letters*, I, 271-282.

²²Bonnet, *Letters*, 220.

²³This epistle may be found in *Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith by John Calvin* (tr. Henry Beveridge with notes by Thomas F. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) 375-411. According to the note Beza assigned to the year 1537 both the letter on shunning idolatry sent to Duchemin and another on the popish priesthood sent to Roussel.

²⁴This material may be found in *Tracts and Treatises on Doctrine and Worship of the Church by John Calvin* (tr. Henry Beveridge with notes by Thomas F. Torrance; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) 163-198.

Written in 1540 and published the following year, this tract was arranged in sixty paragraphs. Beza called it "a little golden Treatise on the Lord's Supper for the use of his countrymen in French." Although Calvin clearly stated where he differed from both Zwingli and Luther, its pastoral and ecumenical concern is evident throughout and especially in the final section on "Fraternal Concord among the Churches." There he wrote

"Meanwhile it should satisfy us, that there is fraternity and concord among the churches, and that all agree in so far as is necessary for meeting together, according to the commandment of God. We all then confess with one mouth, that on receiving the sacrament in faith, according to the ordinance of the Lord, we are truly made partakers of the proper substance of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. How this is done some may deduce better, and explain more clearly than others. Be this as it may, on the one

hand, to exclude all carnal fancies, we must raise our hearts upwards to heaven, not thinking that our Lord Jesus is so debased as to be enclosed under some corruptible elements; and, on the other hand, not to impair the efficacy of this holy ordinance, we must hold that it is made effectual by the secret and miraculous power of God, and that the Spirit of God is the bond of participation, this being the reason why it is called spiritual."

²⁵Bonnet, *Letters*, III, 50-52.

²⁶Doumergue, *Calvin*, 59.

²⁷Francois de Morel, born about 1510, is not to be confused with the "Master Francois" to whom Calvin referred disparagingly in his first letter to the duchess. Morel when not directly in her service was active especially in the region in and around Paris. Bonnet claims, incorrectly, that he was the president of the first synod of the French churches. He was influential at the colloquy of Poissy. Calvin's letter to him responding to three questions which he raised is found in Bonnet, *Letters*, 252-254.

²⁸Bonnet, *Letters*, 129-131.

²⁹Bonnet, *Letters*, 88. Letter addressed to Farel on November 1, 1554.

³⁰Bonnet, *Letters*, 187-189.

³¹Bonnet, *Letters*, 447-450.

³²Galleazo Carraccioli reached Geneva in 1551 where he soon became a dear friend of Calvin. To him the reformer addressed his second dedicatory epistle in his commentary on Corinthians. In it, dated January 24, 1556, he commended this friend highly,

"For although you do not court public applause—satisfied to have God alone as your witness—and although it is not my design to herald your praises, yet it were not proper altogether to conceal from my readers what is useful and profitable to be known—that a man, sprung from a family of first rank, prosperous in honours and wealth, blest with a spouse of the noblest descent, domestic quiet and harmony, and happy in his entire condition in life, has, of his own accord, with a view to joining the camp of Christ, quitted his native country, has left behind him a fertile and lovely domain, a splendid patrimony, and a residence not less commodious than delightful, has stript himself of domestic splendour, has left father, wife, children, relatives, and connections, and after bidding farewell to so many worldly allurements, satisfied with our mean style, adopts a frugal and homely way of living, just as if he were one of ourselves." *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (tr. John Pringle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 34.

Calvin's letter to him, wishing him success on a journey to Italy is dated July 19, 1558. Bonnet, *Letters*, 440-446. Caraccioli died in 1586.

³³Bonnet, *Letters*, IV, 121-123.

³⁴Bonnet, *Letters*, 121 (footnote).

³⁵The story of the French "Wars of Religion" is exceedingly complex. Here they are of interest only in so far as both Calvin and the duchess were involved. The

following may help to clarify events referred to in this article.

The first war from April 1562 to March 1563 ended with the peace of Amboise (March 19); the second from sometime in 1566 to March 1568 concluded with the peace of Longjumeau (March 23); the third from July 1568 to August 1570 concluded with the peace of St. Germaine (August 8). The fourth arose directly out of the St. Bartholomew massacre, at which time many Huguenots were in Paris for the marriage of Henry of Navarre to Marguerite, daughter of Henry II and Catherine de Medici. Treaties and edicts no longer could assure them of safety. Out of this situation arose Beza's development of the theory of constitutional resistance to kings; also the anonymous publication "Vindiciae contra Tyrannos." The origin of the name Huguenots by which the Reformed came to be known has never been satisfactorily explained.

³⁴On the conspiracy of Amboise cf. N.M. Sutherland, *"The Huguenot Struggle for Recognition"* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980) esp. ch. 3 "Calvin and the Conspiracy of Amboise, March 1560" 62-100.

"If the conspiracy of Amboise had succeeded, it would have been a bloodless, or almost bloodless coup d'etat, accomplished by the lesser nobility, and Calvin and the churches would have rejoiced. Though the story is confused and the evidence is often vague, it seems reasonably clear that this bloodless coup is what was really intended, at least by the more responsible of those involved . . . Their original purpose was to consider by what legitimate means they could end the tyranny of the Guises and replace them by a government of the royal princes." (97)

³⁷Bonnet, *Letters*, 260-261.

³⁸On the colloquy of Poissy cf. Sutherland, *Huguenot*, 129-130. Cf. also his article in JEH July 1977, "The Cardinal of Lorraine and the *colloque* of Poissy, 1561: A Reassessment".

³⁹This edict as well as the earlier one, proclaimed October 20, 1561, is summarized and evaluated by Sutherland, *Huguenot*, 353-356.

⁴⁰On the massacre of Vassy cf. Janet Glenn Gray: *The French Huguenots: Anatomy of Courage* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 104-107.

⁴¹Bonnet, *Letters*, 313-316.

⁴²"Catherine de Medici" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ed. 1941, V, 38, 39.

⁴³Quoted by Gray, *French Huguenots*, 109.

⁴⁴Bonnet, *Letters*, 316 (footnote).

⁴⁵Bonnet, *Letters*, 348 (footnote).

⁴⁶Bonnet, *Letters*, 348-351.

⁴⁷Bonnet, *Letters*, 352-358.

⁴⁸Bonnet, *Letters*, 352 (footnote).

⁴⁹Bonnet, *Letters*, 360-361.

⁵⁰Bonnet, *Letters*, 364.

⁵¹K. Runia: *Calvijn's Beteekenis in Onze Tijd* (Potchefstroom: Instituut vir Bevordering van Calvinisme, 1970), 15, 16.

This stress of Calvin on "piety" or godliness has been described well in Ford Lewis Battles, *The Piety of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978). He quotes Calvin's definition of *pietas* as given in the *Institutes* as "that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of his benefits induces." It is intimately bound up with what the reformer understood to be true *religion*, ". . . faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also induces reverence, and carries with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed in the law." (13, 14)

⁵²Runia, *Calvijn's*, 17.

⁵³H.M. Bolkestein: *Zielzorg in het Nieuwe Testament* in series "Exegetica" (Den Haag: Van Keulen Periodiken, 1964) 121.

⁵⁴Bolkestein, *Zielzorg*, 121.