

5-1-1959

A Critical and Comparative Analysis of John Calvin's and the Early Friends' Doctrine of the Word of God

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Recommended Citation

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A CRITICAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF
JOHN CALVIN'S AND THE EARLY FRIENDS'
DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

By

Peter R. Schuler

A Thesis

Presented to
the Faculty of the
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

Portland 22, Oregon

May 1, 1959

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

The question has been raised since the inception of the Friends or Quaker movement, "What position do the Friends hold in reference to a basis of authority for their proposed and propounded doctrines?" This basis of authority was first questioned by various religious leaders of the day when George Fox went about preaching against the cold, dead formalism of the churches in England, and remains a matter of some debate today.

Since the beginning of the Friends movement, it has held the Bible in great reverence and has used it as a basis of their teaching. Other groups, too, considered the Bible their source of authority - groups such as John Calvin brought into being. We find that Calvin's approach to Christianity was logical and systematic, whereas George Fox preached a purely experiential religion. They both used the Bible as their authority, yet they arrived at widely divergent conceptions of Christian rules and faith.

Every theological system has some thing or some one as a basis of its authority. For the Christian religion this source is called the Word of God. But in the consideration of defining the Word of God, it would seem every separate group in Christianity has a different view of what the term consists. When there are divergent views on what the

Word of God consists there will be different views of Christian doctrine and faith.

It is proposed to state as concisely as possible the views of John Calvin and the early Friends in an attempt to discover where and for what reasons there is this divergence of views between them.

Some theologians feel that within the scope of the term Word of God are involved more than merely the written Scriptures. It is essential that three phases of study be undertaken here for all are directly related to such a study in any group. These phases or areas are (1) Revelation in general (2) Revelation in regard to the Word of God, and (3) Revelation in regard to the Sacraments.

Some of the specific problems to be considered are: (1) How has God revealed Himself to man and does He still reveal Himself: Is revelation finished? (2) Of what does the Word of God consist - i.e. is it limited to the written Word, and if so, to what extent? If not, what are the other phases of the Word of God? (3) Of what do the sacraments consist and what part do they play in the salvation of man? Are they essential to salvation? If there any real merit or value between the spiritual and physical or corporeal elements?

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The attitude of any group toward Scripture as the basis of authority for Christian faith is a determining factor in the doctrinal structure of every church or denomination. Because of this it is essential to examine the divergent positions, in an attempt to clarify and estab-

lish the individual position.

This writer has had a personal interest determining what position the Friends held concerning the Word of God and the sacraments in relation to faith.

Since the early Friends held such different views, concerning the Word of God and the sacraments than other traditional religious groups it seemed expedient to explore and compare the teachings of one of these groups with the early Friends to determine the basis of their position. According to the knowledge of this writer there has not been a satisfactory analysis previously done in this area.

DELIMITATIONS

It is proposed, for the purpose of this investigation, to compare the early Friends' views with the position of John Calvin. It would be impossible to completely cover every point of difference between John Calvin's views and those held by the early Friends. This study will therefore be confined to the attempt to locate and compare the two positions concerning revelation, the Word of God and the Sacraments.

For this investigation, it is proposed to limit this study to a brief statement concerning the condition of man for each of the views under consideration. Calvin believed in the total depravity of man, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the Elect. The early Friends also believed in the total depravity of man, but they believed in freedom of the will, universal

atonement, resistable grace, and the possibility of sinning unto death after atonement. Due to the magnitude of material necessary to cover in this area the writer shall, of necessity, limit the study here.

As one investigates the life history of the Anglo-Saxon people it is seen that few periods are more significant than the one commonly called the Commonwealth period, covering from about 1640 to 1660. There were political struggles which produced tremendous constitutional changes; antiquated kingships were set aside and principles of self-government were established. But this civil and political commotion was the outcome of a much deeper strife. For a century the real burning questions had been religious questions. The Church of that time was the result of compromise. It consisted of a large stock of mediaeval thought and tradition and earnest religious men were endeavoring to bring about some measure of fresh reform. The old idea of an authoritarian Church was outgrown but yet no religious system had come in its place which provided for a free personal relationship to God.¹

The long struggle for religious reforms in England followed two main lines of development. One was a well-defined movement toward Presbyterianism while the other was a somewhat chaotic search for freer religious life - a movement toward Independency.²

The movement toward Presbyterianism, according to H. Orton Wiley

¹George Fox, An Autobiography. (with Introduction by Rufus Jones), p. 16-17.

²Ibid., p. 17.

of Pasadena, California, falls into two broad divisions - the Lutheran and the Reformed. Both are sacramentarian in their approach to religion but the Lutheran group is more deeply sacramentarian, whereas the Reformed is more intellectual and doctrinal.¹

For the purpose of this investigation there will be but mention made of the Lutheran group whereas the Reformed groups will be dealt with extensively. Since the groups under consideration in the body of this writing both stem, in the main, from the Reformed group, this investigation shall be limited to that area.

The first leader and instigator of the Lutheran group was Martin Luther (1483-1546). The first real systematic theologian of this group and of the Reformation was Melanchthon (1497-1560). The first leader of the Reformed group was Zwingli (1484-1531). According to Wiley, Zwingli is not commonly thought of as a theologian, As Luther, the leader of the former group was, though he produced a written work along the usual lines of theological order.² This task was left John Calvin (1509-1564) whose most important work, The Institutis Christianas Religionis, first appeared in 1536 and is considered the most important work of the Reformed theology. This work consisted of four books, the first three of which follow the creed and the fourth contains the doctrine of the Church.³

¹H. Orton Wiley, Christian Theology, I, 76.

²Ibid., p. 76.

³Ibid., p. 76.

The Reformed Movement was essentially stabilized by Calvin and Zwingli. The theologians who immediately followed these two were able representatives of the true Calvinistic positions.¹ Then Theodore Beza (1519-1605) began a powerful movement toward an overstraining of Calvin's position, or hyper-Calvinism. This movement progressed rapidly and influenced greatly the theology of his time.²

This rapid spread of Presbyterianism increased rather than decreased the general religious unrest. It soon became clear that this movement was merely another form of ecclesiastical authority as rigid as the old, and lacking the sanction of custom, which the old had.³

As a result, while theology was stiffening into a fixed form with one group, it was becoming more and more flexible among great masses of people throughout the nation. Religious authority ceased to count as it had in the past and existing religious conditions were no longer accepted as final.⁴ Against hyper-Calvinism there arose a reactionary movement which was not a return to Calvinism but to an avowed modification of it. The movement was begun by Cocceius (1603-1669), who renounced the old scholastic form and introduced a purely biblical method.⁵ There was a widespread movement toward a more spiritual religion which produced

¹Ibid., p. 85.

²Ibid., p. 85.

³Ibid., p. 86.

⁴Fox, An Autobiography, op. cit., p. 18.

⁵Wiley, op. cit., p. 86.

many "sects."¹

Some of these "sects" were the Baptists - which at that time were often called Anabaptists - Seekers, Ranters, and Fifth-monarchy men. Some of their beliefs were: the separation of Church and state, a lay ministry, objection to infant baptism, and the use of "steeple-houses."²

In Holland and England there arose at the start of the seventeenth century, in the form of Arminianism, a protest against the Calvinistic teaching of that day. The leader, James Arminius (1560-1609), as a youth studied under Beza but later broke away from the Reformed theology and became involved in a fierce controversy with the Reformed Gomarius (1563-1641). At the death of Arminius, Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) became the leader and carried on the controversy with Gomarius.³

Among the Puritans in England the most noted leaders were: John Goodwin (1593-1665), John Fletcher (1729-1785), and John Wesley (1703-1791), the "Father of Methodism."

In this same period of time there arose a group in England called the Society of Friends, or Quakers. Though they were not strictly of the Arminian type of theology, they had much in common and were thoroughly evangelical. They, like the Arminians, reacted against the strict cold, dead, logical formalism of Calvin. Rufus John states in his in-

¹Fox, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 19-20.

³Wiley, op. cit., p. 86-87.

troduction to George Fox's Autobiography:

Then, too, the Calvinistic theology of the time did violence to human nature as a whole. Its linked logic might compel intellectual assent, but there is something in a man as real as his intellect, which is not satisfied with this clamping of eternal truth into inflexible propositions. Personal soul-hunger, and the necessity which many individuals feel for spiritual quest, must always be reckoned with. It should not be forgotten that George Fox came to his spiritual crisis under this theology.¹

Fox found many vital and essential truths in the groups or "sects" among Independents, which he fused together into one great truth or religion. This was more than just a feeble attempt by man to reach God, for Fox testified that he had received this personally and received new life from his living central idea.²

England had been facing religious problems of a deep and complex nature since the start of the Reformation. Though many reformers had come and attempted to replace the shallow religious worship of the day with a type similar to that of the New Testament Church, none had succeeded. Though some forward progress had been made, there had been long years of ingenious, patchwork compromise, but no distinct profit.³

"George Fox is the first real prophet of the English Reformation, for he saw what was involved in this great religious movement."⁴ Perhaps the best proof of this is not the immediate results of his work, though

¹Fox, Autobiography, op. cit., pp. 17, 48.

²Ibid., p. 18-24.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 24.

these are very significant, but rather the easily verified fact that the progress of religious truth in the last 150 years has been toward the very truth which Fox made central in his message.¹

PROCEDURE

It is the purpose of this study to examine the views of John Calvin and the early Friends in relation to revelation, the Word of God, and the Sacraments.

Chapters II, III, and IV will be concerned with Calvin's view of revelation, Word of God, and the Sacraments respectively. Chapters V, VI, and VII will be concerned with the early Friends' view of the Word of God, revelation and the Sacraments. Chapter VIII will be devoted to a summary of the two positions with conclusions.

Among the authors referred to, large reference to primary sources has been made from The Institutes of John Calvin; Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments by Ronald Wallace; Calvin's Commentaries; Barclay's Apology; and the Works of George Fox.

¹Ibid., p. 25.

CHAPTER II

CALVIN'S VIEW OF REVELATION

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CALVIN'S VIEW OF REVELATION

INTRODUCTION

Down through the centuries, Calvin has become known as the Doctor of Predestination. Though this may be true to a certain degree, it is apparent that he would have been the first to repudiate this title. Kenneth Kantzer of Wheaton College states that if Calvin had been consulted, he would unequivocally have pronounced in favor of a very different degree, Doctor of Sacred Scripture.¹

In his own estimation, Calvin was first and foremost an interpreter of Scripture. Just before his death, as he looked back across the years, he said to his fellow pastors in Geneva,

Concerning my doctrine, I have taught faithfully, . . . and God has given me the grace to write. I have done this as faithfully as possible and have not corrupted a single passage of Scripture or knowingly twisted it.²

To Calvin, his life's work was the faithful exposition and systematization of the teaching of the Bible.

NATURAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION

Calvin's doctrine of Scripture can be understood only against

¹Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Calvin and the Holy Scripture," Inspiration and Interpretation, ed. John W. Walvoord, p. 115.

²Ibid., p. 116.

a background of his view of natural revelation. According to Calvin, a man's knowledge of God¹ may be divided into two parts, knowledge of God as creator and knowledge of God as redeemer.¹

Knowledge of God as creator is primarily concerned with man as a human being originally created in the divine image. Knowledge of God as redeemer is a knowledge of man as sinner fallen from his original state and righteously condemned by God. The sources for this dual knowledge of God are twofold: the natural revelation and the special or supernatural revelation.³

Through His revelation in nature God presents man with evidence conclusive enough to establish both the existence of a divine being and the essential attributes of the God of the Bible, including His mercy and goodness. These evidences are so overwhelmingly conclusive that no rational mind can fail to be convinced.

Because of His infinite love, God is not satisfied to merely leave men without excuse. He approaches the sinner with "another and

¹"Knowledge of God" to Calvin is "that by which we not only see that there is some God, but also apprehend what is for our interest and conducive to his glory, what in short it is fitting to know concerning him." Calvin further defines the phrase by insisting that knowledge of God rightly so called must be full and complete, certain, deeply rooted and permanent, pure and undistorted, and includes acquaintance as well as information. Neglect of this definition has prevented most students of Calvin from understanding his views on natural revelation (Footnote # 7 from Kantzer). Ibid., p. 117.

²Ibid., p. 117.

³Ibid., p. 117.

⁴Ibid., p. 120.

better help" to "guide him properly to God." This second help, above and beyond the natural revelation, is the Word of God embodied in the written Scriptures, the Bible.¹

The advantage for sinful men in this new source of revelation is threefold.

Scripture serves first to republish the knowledge of God as creator which men ought to have gleaned from natural revelation but which, because of the blindness of sin, they did not secure there.

.....

In Scripture we find not only the repetition of what is revealed in nature but additional information about God as creator. The special revelation, therefore, embellishes the natural by telling us of God as triune and of details concerning creation, angels, providence, and man.

.....

A final benefit of special revelation is the knowledge of God as redeemer. It was necessary, held Calvin, "in passing from death unto life that they should know God, not only as Creator but as a Redeemer also, and both kinds of knowledge they certainly did obtain from the Word."²

To Calvin, all knowledge of God as redeemer can come only through special revelation. This is both necessary and absolute because Christ is not revealed in nature and as a result God as redeemer cannot be known except through special revelation. The knowledge of God as creator must come from Scripture; but in this case Scripture is only relatively necessary owing to our sin. Ideally, if man had never fallen into sin, natural revelation would be sufficient to bring men to God. For the sinner, even the specially illuminated sinner, however, natural revela-

¹Ibid., p. 120-121.

²Ibid., p. 121.

tion may only lead towards a true faith in God or it may confirm a true faith which is primarily grounded in Scripture. But, natural revelation cannot lead man into a true knowledge of God as either creator or redeemer. Only the Bible can do this.¹

The ultimate authority of Scripture is founded on its being spoken by God. As the Word of God, it can be given the absolute trust which is due to God Himself, who is truth.

Hence, Calvin argues, the highest proof for the authority of Scripture is uniformly taken from the character of Him whose Word it is. The prophets and apostles boast not their own acuteness or any qualities which win credit to speakers nor do they dwell on reasons; but they appeal to the sacred name of God in order that the whole world may be compelled to submission. The faithful ought thus "to embrace the Word of God as they know that they have not to deal with men, the credit of whom is doubtful and inconsistent, but with Him who is the true God, who cannot life, and whose truth is immutable."²

SCRIPTURE AS REVELATION

Calvin nowhere discusses completely the proofs for the divine authority of Scripture. However, in the opening chapters of his Institutes he puts forth enough material to indicate the direction of his thought. He realized this subject needed more explanation, but simply refers to the plan of his work as a whole as a defense for his superficial survey of the proofs for the divine authority of Scripture.³

¹Ibid., p. 121.

²Ibid., p. 121.

³Ibid., p. 122.

Calvin outlines his defense of the Scriptures, dividing his argument into four parts. He lists first a number of internal evidences. He refers to the subject matter of Scripture, the dignity of the divine content, the majesty of Scripture, the power of truth to be found in its scope, and many others. These internal evidences are manifest to whoever will read the Scriptures. Entirely apart from any external supports for its authority, they alone are adequate to establish the divine authorship of the Scriptures.¹

From internal evidences, Calvin turns to special proofs from the Old Testament, concerning the antiquity of the books, its miracles and predictions, and God's providential care in preserving them.

Next Calvin goes to the New Testament evidence, where he considers the harmony of the Gospel writers, the simplicity of the writings, the evidence of a supernatural call to the apostles, particularly Paul.

Finally Calvin adduces various proofs from church history. He evaluates the argument derived from the consent of the Church; notes universal agreement on the doctrine of Scripture; and the constancy of the Christian martyr's witness.²

In Calvin's thought, miracles represent one of the greatest evidences for the authority of Scripture. The crowning miracle is the resurrection of Christ. By this miracle, as well as others recorded in the four Gospels, Calvin establishes both the authority of Christ and

¹Ibid., p. 122-123.

²Ibid., p. 123.

His true deity. For Calvin the rational argument for establishing the authority of Scripture is beyond question.¹

"Unfortunately for man, all the evidence in the world can fall on his ears without accomplishing its goal."² Man's sinfulness causes this. Many unregenerate men even acknowledge the fact of Christ as the Son of God and the Scripture as God's Word. To Calvin, this is historical faith, so far as its content is concerned, and cannot be distinguished from true faith. In the case of the non-elect, this historical or special faith will never lead to salvation. It will instead serve to bring greater condemnation on those who stubbornly refuse to exercise true faith.³ In the case of the elect, this special faith serves a two-fold purpose:

- (1) They "prepare the mind for faith" and thus lead to a true and saving faith. (2) They confirm the true believer in the certainty of the faith which he already possesses on other grounds (Institutes II. xvi. 3).⁴

There is one thing these evidences cannot do and that is "they cannot of themselves produce the right kind of faith in Scripture."⁵ Therefore, Calvin feels it is foolish to attempt to convince an infidel that the Scripture is the Word of God.

¹Kenneth Kantzer, "Calvin and the Holy Scripture," Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 124.

²Ibid., p. 125.

³Ibid., p. 126.

⁴Ibid., p. 126.

⁵Ibid., p. 126.

In both the natural and special revelation, despite the complete validity of their rational support, because of man's sin he will not and cannot act upon this evidence and enter into a true knowledge of God.¹

OLD TESTAMENT REVELATION

According to Calvin, the great barrier to the possibility of revelation taking place between God and man is the intervening gulf created on the one hand by the holiness and majesty of God and on the other hand by the sinfulness and feebleness of man.² So great is the majesty and holiness of the infinite God that sinful man is brought to nothing before His greatness.³ "The light of the majesty of the glory of God is not only as the brightness of the sun, but is greater than ten thousand suns."⁴ "This glory of God, contemplated alone by man, could only fill the beholder with despair."⁵ Therefore, should God not institute some medium of communication directly between heaven and man, the immense distance at which we stand from Him would strike us with dismay and paralyse invocation.⁶

If the angels tremble at God's glory, if they veil themselves with

¹Ibid., p. 127.

²Hugh Thomas Kerr, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin, p. 81.

³John Calvin, Commentary on Psalms, VIII, 384-85.

⁴Ronald Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, p. 1.

⁵John Calvin, Commentary on Hebrews, p. 110.

⁶Calvin, Commentary on Psalms, VIII, 385.

their wings, what should we do who creep upon this earth?¹
 For if the mountains melt at the sight of Him, what must needs
 happen to mortal man, than whom there is nothing more frail and
 feeble?²

When Calvin comes to the discussion of passages which speak of man as having "seen" God, he almost always points out that they should not be interpreted as meaning they actually saw the complete, absolute God as he "really is", but in a limited way, or "as far as He can be beheld by mortal man."³ When God revealed Himself to man in ancient times He transformed himself by covering over in Himself that which man in his sinfulness cannot bear to see, and by altering that in Himself which man's finite mind cannot grasp.

God in revealing Himself, adapts Himself to man's capacity. Since man cannot behold God as He actually or "really is", without being annihilated or brought to utter despair there is a gulf between God and man that only through a miracle of God's grace may be bridged. God can and does reveal Himself in such a way that God's elect can really come to know Him and enter into communion with Him.⁴ To man's finite understanding this limited and disguised revelation seems so full and satisfying that man says he sees God "face to face". In the commentary on Psalm 78:60 Calvin says, "As we cannot attain to that infinite height

¹John Calvin, Commentary on Ezekiel, I, 106.

²Wallace, op. cit., p. 2.

³Calvin, Commentary on Ezekiel, I, 106.

⁴Wallace, op. cit., p. 3.

to which He is exalted, in descending among us by the exercise of His power and grace, He appears as near as is needful, and as our limited capacity will bear."¹ We see God through a veil, catching glimpses of defining marks here and there, giving an obscure picture, not beholding God's glory freely and directly, but at least we see him from behind.

For this reason, whenever we read of God appearing to men or being present with men in the Old Testament there is always really something other than God that appears as a sign or symbol that God is there. Calvin places in this category of signs or symbols the Ark, Burning Bush, the cloud and smoke and flame, and also in the ceremonies ordained for the temple. These signs or symbols need not be material forms only but may occur equally as well by means of visions or dreams, such as Isaiah's vision in the temple. The symbolic form most frequently used in the Old Testament though was the form of the angel of the Lord.

Mr. Wallace comments to this point:

Calvin shows a fascinating realism, and goes into rather daring speculation, in his comments on the appearances of angels to men in the Bible. They are sometimes called men, but "we ought not to believe them to be really men. Christ indeed was really man. . . . But as regards angels, God clothes them for a day or short period in bodies for a distinct purpose and special use". After discussing the eating of fish by the risen Jesus, Calvin comments: "Thus the angels at the table of Abraham, having been clothed with real bodies, did actually, I have no doubt, eat and drink, but yet I do not admit that the meat and drink yielded them. . . refreshment. If we acknowledge that the bodies which they assumed for a time were reduced to nothing after they had discharged their embassy who will deny that the same thing happened as to the food?" Calvin does not insist that they were always clothed with real bodies, however.

¹Calvin, Commentary on Psalms, III, 270.

"To me it is enough that the Lord gave them a human shape so that the women might see them." This all done "on account of the ignorance of men."¹

Although God has never appeared in His immeasurable glory and has never manifested Himself as He really exists, yet we must nevertheless hold that He has so appeared as to leave no doubt in the minds of His servants as to their knowing that they have seen God.²

Calvin positively asserts that Christ, the Word of God, who is God Himself, was always the bond of connection between God and man. He was the source of all revelations, was always present in all the oracles and never did God reveal Himself outside of Christ. Therefore, the Mediator of all revelation between God and man in the Old Testament is the Word of God, the second Person of the Trinity, the Christ who became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.

NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION

Revelation in the Old Testament is an event which God, by his grace and power, overrules all that separates His sinful creatures from Himself. Revelation in the New Testament mean the Cross and all that it involves in the self-humiliation of God, and undeserved mercy revealed there. The form which God assumed in Jesus in order to reveal Himself was not a form of glory and divinity, nor a form that could be called a worthy medium for revealing God's true nature; but was a form that was, for God, a form of deep abasement. Calvin speaks in several

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 6.

²Calvin, Commentary on Ezekiel, I, 106.

passages of the "mean condition of Christ in the flesh." When the Scripture says that the "Word was made flesh," or rather "was made man" this point is being emphasized. When Scripture speaks of man contemptuously, it calls him "flesh". In Christ we see the infinite glory of God united to our polluted flesh in such a manner that they become one. His purpose in this, says Calvin, was "in order that we might have easy access to Him and that we might have no uncertainty of being received."¹

To Calvin, the humanity of Jesus was the veil which concealed God's majesty in order to reveal Himself. Calvin says in his commentary on Phil. 2:7: "The abasement of the flesh was like a veil by which His divine majesty was concealed." So thick was this veil of humanity that few saw anything divine about Him and consequently people were offended when He spoke of Himself as being more than mere man.² Calvin taught that in the act of the incarnation the Word of God did not abandon His heavenly throne, but that at the same time the Word continued to fulfill all His heavenly functions unimpaired. Calvin strongly repudiates any suggestion that the union of the divine and human altered either nature in any way.

There have been heretics who have endeavoured to maintain that the the majesty and Godhead of Jesus Christ, His heavenly essence, was forthwith changed into flesh and manhood. Thus did some say, with many other cursed blasphemies, that Jesus Christ was made man. What will follow hereupon? God must forego His nature and His spiritual essence must be turned into flesh. They go on further

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 12.

²Calvin, Commentary on Philippians, p. 56-58.

and say Jesus Christ is no more man, but His flesh has become God. These are marvellous alchemists to make so many new natures of Jesus Christ.¹

To Calvin, Jesus revealed God in many ways. There were features of the humanity of Jesus that shone with divine glory. These features are not seen in any striking physical or psychological characteristics but rather in the gentler characteristics of a gracious and beautiful character. He possessed gifts and graces in which He far excelled all others. His miracles gave indication to divine power and glory. The transfiguration is for Calvin the supreme occasion where there was a temporary exhibition of His glory. Since this was witnessed only by three people, they were warned to keep it a secret until He was risen.²

Ultimately it is in the resurrection that we have a clear witness of His divinity which has been hidden. When Jesus showed Himself alive it was done to answer the challenge to prove His divinity and it was necessary that we might have assurance of our salvation. No one is convinced of Christ's divinity by studying His Humanity, which was full of weakness and in which He suffered a shameful death. It was only when He was raised by the power of the Spirit that "He displayed at last a glory under which we all, both great and small ought to tremble."³

Whatever signs of His divinity Jesus gave during His earthly

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 19.

³Ibid., p. 19.

life, His divine nature could be discerned only by those who had faith. Because those who were offended in Him despised His cross they could not see His glory, for there is no other way to the divinity save through the humanity of Christ.

As the veil covered the recesses of the sanctuary and yet afforded an entrance there, so the divinity, though hid in the flesh of Christ, yet leads us even to heaven; no can anyone find God except he to whom the man Christ becomes the door and the way. Thus we are reminded that Christ's glory is not to be estimated according to the external appearance of His flesh; nor is the flesh to be despised, because it conceals as a veil the majesty of God, while it also conducts us to the enjoyment of all the good things of God.¹

The glory seen by the disciples when they witnessed the resurrection of Jesus was not the full glory of God. Even then they were far from seeing God "as He is." Calvin seems to teach that even Christ's glorified humanity is a veil which obscures for us the full glory of God, but that ultimately even this will be changed and we shall see God face to face.

This discussion should enable us to understand more clearly the place Calvin gives to the Word of God and the Sacraments as means of revelation. They are the forms or symbols by which Christ today confronts finite man with His grace and challenge. It is to these symbols and forms we must turn if we wish to enter into communion with Him. We need no longer expect to have revelation mediated to us by means of angels and visions. God has put in His place a man like ourselves, a minister of the Gospel, who speaks to us that "He might draw us to

¹John Calvin, Commentary on Hebrews, p. 235.

Himself."¹ In other words, by the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments, we may be united to God and we are to use these helps with reverence. In his comments on Genesis 28:17 Calvin says:

The preaching of the gospel is called the Kingdom of Heaven and the sacraments may be called the gate of Heaven, because they admit us into the presence of God.²

The Word and Sacrament then become to us what Jesus, His Word and works were to those who received His grace during the days of His flesh. Thus the Word and Sacraments are the chief treasure of the Church. They are the signs of the presence of Jesus in the midst of His people. "By baptism and the Lord's Supper, God appears to us in His only begotten Son."³

The word used by Calvin to describe the function of the Word and sacrament in revelation is a mirror into which men can look to see the image of God. In the Word men view the secrets of Heaven which otherwise would be too much for them to comprehend.

Calvin actually refers the text John 12:23, "The hour is come when the Son of man should be glorified," not to the death and resurrection of Jesus, but rather to the time that the Gospel would begin to be preached all over the world. For it is through hearing the Word that men behold His glory.⁴

UNITY OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION

¹Ronald Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament, p. 22

²Ibid., p. 23.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

For Calvin, all revelation in the Bible is revelation of Christ the Mediator. All the Old Testament stories of God's appearing to men must be understood and interpreted in the light of the incarnation of Christ if the understanding and interpretation is to be correct. All revelation then is thus a participation in the one light shed over every age by the coming of Jesus Christ. Even the religious ceremonies of the Children of Israel were a means of revelation and were also sacraments through which the participants received the benefits and blessings of Christian redemption. "The ancients were reconciled to God in a sacramental manner by the victims, just as we are now cleansed through baptism."¹

Revelation under the New Covenant, is to Calvin, superior to that under the Old for several reasons.

1. Revelation under the New Covenant is more "rich and full" than under the Old. The Holy Spirit was "more abundantly given" under the Gospel than under Law, when God gave His redemptive gifts "not so freely and extensively as now."

.....

2. Revelation under the New Covenant is more "vivid and distinct" than under the Old. Christ was formerly beheld at a distance by the prophets, but now has made Himself familiarly and completely visible.

.....

3. Revelation under the New Covenant is more satisfying than under the Old. The men of the Old Covenant "had only a slight foretaste; to us is given fuller fruition."

.....

The regenerating power of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant

¹Ibid., p. 30.

"penetrates into the heart and really forms us for the service of God," whereas under the Old it was more a doctrine than an experience. The sense of sonship to God under the old dispensation, though so real that they called God "Father", is now so much greater that we can boldly cry "Abba Father."

.....

4. Revelation under the New Covenant is more "familiar" than under the Old. The dispensation of the law is full of terror, but the Gospel contains nothing but love, provided it be received by faith.

.....

5. Revelation under the New Covenant is more "immediately substantial" than under the Old. Those who enjoyed revelation under the law were conscious that their present experience was but a small pledge of a future glorious reality. In their experience of revelation they were conscious of grappling with a hidden mystery, the secret of which would belong to a future generation. Even though they knew themselves truly to possess what the coming Redeemer was to bring them, they possessed it as the promise of their future inheritance. . . . Under the New Covenant, however, this eschatological tension, though not removed, has been lessened. What was formerly possessed and enjoyed as at a distance has been made a present experience.

.....

6. Revelation under the New Covenant is more simple than under the Old. God accommodated Himself to the "weaker and unripe" apprehensions of the fathers by the rudiments of ceremony, while He has extended a simple form of worship to us who have attained a mature age.¹

Thus one may see that according to Calvin, God is revealed to man both by natural and special revelation, but all knowledge of God as Redeemer must come by special revelation. This special revelation consists of Scripture, the preached Word, and the Sacraments. But, though this special revelation comes to all men, only the elect of God benefit by it, while the reprobate is condemned the more.

¹Ibid., p. 33-38.

CHAPTER III

CALVIN'S VIEW OF THE WORD OF GOD

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INTRODUCTION

The method of inspiration as outlined by Calvin indicates that God dictated to the writers of the Scriptures, whether they be prophet or apostle. "The Holy Spirit dictated to the prophets and the apostles" the writings of Scripture so that what He wished was contained in the final production.¹ He applies this to the written message, rather than the message received in the mind of the prophet or writer.

God . . . was pleased to commit and consign his word to writing . . . he commanded also the prophecies to be committed to writing, and to be held part of his word. To these at the same time were added historical details, which are also the composition of prophets but dictated by the Holy Spirit. The whole body, therefore, composed of the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and Histories formed the word of the Lord to his ancient people. . . .²

In the titles Calvin gives to Scriptures one can plainly see the identity between the Word of God and the written word. He continuously refers to Scripture as the "sure and infallible record,"³ the "unerring standard"⁴ "the pure Word of God,"⁵ and the "infallible rule of his

¹Kenneth Kantzer, "Calvin and the Holy Scriptures," Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 137.

²Ibid., p. 137-138.

³Ibid., p. 142.

⁴Ibid., p. 142.

⁵Ibid., p. 142.

holy truth."¹

Kantzer feels that Calvin does allow for "textual errors" in the Scriptures. In his Institutes, Calvin says that in every detail the words written down by the prophets were written by God and are therefore, inerrant down to the very last jot and tittle.² The "textual errors" come in with carelessness in recopying the Scriptures. It is merely the originals or autographs which are inerrant.³

PREACHING AS THE WORD OF GOD

Calvin felt that since God not normally allowed His voice to sound as thunder directly from heaven on the ears of the children of Israel but rather spoke through the medium of a prophet it may be said that in so doing God so closely identified the prophet's speech with His own Word that it may be said that the mouth of the prophet was the mouth of God Himself. Thus, the speech of man can really become God's Word if it is spoken to those who are intended to hear it.

Commenting on the power of Haggai's word to arouse the people to begin building the temple, Calvin says:

The people received not what they heard from the mouth of mortal man, otherwise than if the majesty of God had openly appeared. For there was no ocular view of God given; but the message of the prophet obtained as much power as though God descended from heaven,

¹Ibid., p. 142.

²Ibid., p. 144.

³Ibid., p. 144.

and had given manifest tokens of His presence. We may then conclude from these words, that the glory of God so shines in His Word, that we ought to be so much affected by it, whenever He speaks by His servants, as though He were nigh to us, face to face.¹

The Word of God is heard today in a similar manner. It is heard through the word of a man, a preacher of the Gospel who is called and appointed by God for this task. He is to expound the Scripture to the people expecting that by His grace God will cause His word to become a Word that proceeds from God Himself. Thus, the word preached by man can become "God speaking." Calvin says in his remarks on Haggai 1:12 that "the Word of God is not distinguished from the Word of the prophet."² Calvin again says in a comment on Isaiah 50:10, "God does not wish to be heard but by the voice of His ministers."³

The task of preaching must therefore be undertaken, and the word of the preacher should be heard, expecting that Christ will come and give His presence where the Gospel is preached and cause men to hear His voice through the voice of the minister.

To Calvin "words are nothing else but signs."⁴ Through the preaching of the Word, Christ therefore gives His sacramental presence in the midst of His Church. He also imparts the grace promised in the Word to men, and establishes His Kingdom through preaching. Christ uses the

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 82.

²Ibid., p. 83.

³Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah, IV, 61.

⁴Wallace, op. cit., p. 84.

preached word as a means of revelation and self-communication in much the same way that He uses the other signs of His presence and grace in acts of revelation. Thus Calvin refers to preaching as a token of God's presence and as a means for God to come near us.¹

Preaching also is a means whereby Christ establishes His rule in the hearts of His people. As David ruled over his kingdom by a golden sceptre and sword of iron, Christ has chosen to rule over His kingdom with the sceptre of the Gospel.²

Calvin seems to feel that through preaching Christ also directs the whole course of history and creates the disturbance among nations that is to bring about His desired purpose.

Wallace states that Calvin claims for preaching even the function of renewing the whole fallen creation.

He gives his views on this matter in his application of Isaiah 51:16, That I may plant the heavens. "that is, restore all things to its proper order." "Heaven and earth are said to be restored by the doctrine of salvation; because in Christ, as Paul says, are collected all things that are either in heaven or earth. . . . Since, therefore, the whole face of the world is disfigured. . . there are good grounds for saying that godly teachers renovate the world. . . . Thus, the heavens are said to be planted and the earth to be founded when the Lord establishes the Church by the Word."³

Calvin elevates the preached Word of God in the Church and world to such a high plane that though it be spoken through frail human words,

¹Ibid., p. 84-85.

²Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah, IV, 10.

³Wallace, op. cit., p. 87.

God's Word cannot be separated from His action. Therefore though Jacob falsely obtained Isaac's blessing, when Isaac discovered that he had been deceived, Isaac could not go back on the blessing he had spoken for it had been God's word and had been effective in bringing to being what had been promised.¹

Thus when God speaks through the mouth of a preacher and offers forgiveness, all those who hear in faith are immediately absolved from their sins, for the Word effects what it declares.²

Calvin very seldom if ever refers to the preaching of the Gospel without exalting it highly and beseeching people to prize it beyond all other gifts of God to the Church, for it is the Word which is able to save the soul.

The word of the preacher can only become the Word of God through a free act of the Holy Spirit. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit alone that preaching can be effective. Thus the work of the Holy Spirit is joined to the Word of God in that the external word is of no avail except it be empowered by the Spirit.³ Thus preaching may fail to be the Word of God and if so, all efforts put forth by the preacher avails nothing.

To make man's act of preaching the effective Word of God, a relationship is established between the speaker and the divine action of

¹Ibid., p. 88.

²Ronald Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament, p. 88.

³John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, II, 327-330.

grace, which may be called a sacramental union. This will be discussed when dealing with the Sacraments.

Men complained to Calvin that Christian preaching made the world worse rather than better. His answer was, "The Gospel is never preached in vain, but has invariably an effect, either for life or death."¹ "As the Word is efficacious for the salvation of believers, so it is abundantly efficacious for the condemning of the wicked."² Therefore preaching has a dual effect; It softens the hearts of God's elect and hardens the hearts of unbelievers. To Calvin the proper office of the Gospel is edification, which it does in believers, but the condemnation to unbelievers is not intended or accidental. The latter is to be imputed to the depravity of mankind.

Since the preached Word is really the Word of God also, it follows that the ministry of this Word is an office of such great importance in the fulfilling of God's purpose in His Church, that no man has a right to attempt to fulfill this office unless called by God Himself. Since God no longer reveals Himself in the same manner as in the Old Testament, but yet is to make Himself known it must by ministers of the Church. It is logical that if God calls men to the ministry, He will also give them the necessary gifts to effectively fulfill their ministry. Therefore, nothing more than a call is necessary. As a result Calvin states

¹Ibid., p. 160.

²Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah, IV, 172.

in his Commentary on John. "It frequently happens that God selects vile and worthless persons to instruct and warn us, in order to subdue our pride." (John 9:34)¹ When we are addressed in the name of God by "a contemptible mortal who has just emerged from the dust, we give the best evidence of our piety and reverence toward God Himself if we readily submit. (Institutes IV. iii. 1.)² The ministry must be accepted as an ordinance of God.

This is not just a one way proposition for there is a very great responsibility which falls upon those who fulfill the office of a minister. Through the preaching of the Word of God Christ rules within His Church. Therefore the minister is bound to the Scriptures as the only source of material. They are to be handled with the utmost reverence and must not over-dramatize, mix his own ideas with the pure doctrine, or strive after novelty.³

The minister must strive to be a scholar. "None will ever be a good minister of the Word, unless he is first of all a scholar."⁴

Being in such an elevated position the minister is also in danger. Calvin constantly warns against the temptation of giving way to pride, ambition, or seeking to please hearers by hiding the more harsh portions of God's Word.

¹Calvin, Commentary on John, p. 386-87.

²Ronald Kerr, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin, p. 162.

³Wallace, op. cit., p. 119.

⁴Ibid., p. 120.

In conclusion we may sum up Calvin's position by stating that for men to be confronted with God's grace offered through the preaching of the Word is a fearful thing. Through the preaching of the Word the judgment of the world continues constantly. In giving their inescapable decision about the Word, as it comes through the preacher, men are giving their eternal decision about God, for if the Word is Christ's scepter, men cannot reject it without treating Him with open contempt.

This two-fold effect of the true Word of God acts as a benefit for the Church. On one hand it acts in behalf of the spiritual health of the believer by constantly confirming their faith. On the other hand it produces a violent reaction against the Church on the part of those whose hearts are hardened and thus the Church is partly cleaned and those who by their own choice are not Christ's sheep are warded off from the fold.

THE WRITTEN WORD AS THE WORD OF GOD

Calvin felt that if anyone desired to proclaim the Word of God in the name of Christ Jesus, he must obtain the word he has to speak from the witness to Jesus Christ given in the Old and New Testament. God has given us a written word to consult in order that we do not have to seek "daily oracles from heaven" in order to hear from Him. The original purposes of the written law was that the people might know the Word of God apart from just the orally spoken word.

When it pleased God to raise up a more visible form of a Church, it was His will that His Word should be committed to writing in order that the priests might derive from it whatever they would communi-

cate to the people (Institutes, IV. viii. 6).¹

The Scripture in its early form were oracles which God had been pleased to give to the patriarchs. These oracles had been carefully preserved in their oral transmission and men knew they came from God because they bore the testimony of the Holy Spirit (Institutes, c.f. I. iv. 2; IV. viii. 5).² To this nucleus was added the law and later the oracles of the prophets, who were interpreters of the law, adding nothing to it except prophecies (Institutes, IV. viii. 8).³ Lastly came the writings of the Apostles whose job was to expound the ancient Scriptures and show that all these things were accomplished in Christ (Institutes, IV. viii. 8).⁴

Therefore if we desire to know and bear witness of Jesus Christ we must turn to this record. The Scriptures for us are the only authoritative witness to Christ, and we may trust them as reliable sources.

God has admirably provided for our sakes in choosing Moses His servant, who was the minister of their deliverance, to be also the witness and historian of it; and this too among those who had seen all with their own eyes and who, in the peculiar frowardness, would never suffer one, who was so severe a reprover of them to make any false statements of fact. Since this is so then his authority is sure and unquestionable.⁵

These writings of the Apostles are to be received as the oracles

¹Hugh Thomas Kerr, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin, p. 169-170.

²Ibid., p. 8; p. 169.

³Ibid., p. 171-172.

⁴Ibid., p. 172.

⁵Wallace, op. cit., p. 97.

of God and "others have no other office than to teach what is delivered and sealed in the sacred scriptures (Institutes, IV. viii. 9).¹

Prophesying at this day amongst Christians is almost nothing else than a right understanding of the Scripture, and singular gift of expounding the same, since all old prophecies and oracles have been finished in Christ and His Gospel.²

Therefore for Calvin the Word of God is the Scripture. The importance of the place given to Scripture by him is indicated in two statements from his commentary on John's gospel: "Christ cannot be properly known in any other way than from the Scriptures,"³ and Christ is rejected when we do not embrace the pure doctrine of the Gospel.⁴

In the witness of the Apostles, God has said everything concerning His Son until the final consummation when He shall be seen in glory. The Apostolic writings are thus the "limits of revelation."⁵

The Bible, for Calvin, is not only the sole source of Church proclamation, but also the sole authority that must rule the life of the Church. As has been previously pointed out, through the preaching of the Word of God, Christ rules within His Church. Also, the minister of the Word, being bound exclusively to the Scripture, indicates that the

¹Kerr, op. cit., p. 172.

²John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, p. 460.

³John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel of John, I, 218.

⁴Ibid., II, 51.

⁵Wallace, op. cit., p. 98.

Scripture is set over the Church by God as the authority that must be allowed full freedom to rule the life of the Church. It must be given a place of unsurpassed honor and authority within the Church.

Calvin admits that it is the duty of the Church to distinguish between genuine and false Scripture, as sheep will hear the voice of the shepherd and not listen to strangers. But to do as the Roman Church and "to submit the sound oracles of God to the Church, that they may obtain a kind of precarious authority among men, is blasphemous impiety.¹ The claim by the Roman Church was and is that the Church had a superior position of authority over the Word. The Church has infallible power to interpret Scripture according to its own traditional or natural insights. Calvin replies to this claim:

The prophecies can now be no more understood by the perspicacity of the human mind than they could at first have been composed by it. . . . We should pray to have their genuine meaning opened up to us by the Spirit of God. Nothing is to be given to ambition - nothing to arrogance.²

In his commentary on II Timothy 3:16 Calvin says, "We owe the Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God because it has proceeded from Him alone and has nothing belonging to man mixed with it."³ Unless we approach the Scripture with reverence, expecting to hear the Word of God, and be willing to obey that Word, we will not find the assurance

¹Ibid., p. 100.

²John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, p. 249.

³Wallace, op. cit., p. 103.

and certainty it is designed to give us. Neither will we find it yielding to us its stores of divine wisdom.¹

We must therefore possess a reverent and humble approach to the Bible within the life of the Church for the authority of the Word demands such. This authority is authenticated by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit who gives inward testimony to the believer that this word is the Word of God.

"Calvin," says Wallace, "is tireless in making the claim that to those who have faith you do not need to prove the authority of Scripture. It will be most readily accepted."²

Calvin states that it is only on the minds of those who have faith that the Scripture so impresses itself. "It is foolish to attempt to prove to infidels that Scripture is the Word of God. This it cannot be known to be, except to faith" (Institutes, I. viii. 13).³

Part of the reverence due to Scripture, if we are to profit from it as the Word of God, is the belief that the whole Scripture is the gift of God. Every part of it has significance for the Church and those things which we do not understand will yet become plain and understandable if we adhere to the Word of God. Though we may not be capable of understanding great portions of the Scripture, all of it is important, and we should labor to learn it, for it were contumely against the Holy Spirit if we should think that He hath taught anything which were not

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 103.

²Ibid., p. 102.

³Kerr, op. cit., p. 17.

material for us to know.¹ "We must not pick and call the Scripture to please our own fancy, but must receive the whole without exception."²

Calvin seems to understand the difficulties which will confront one endeavoring to fulfil such a command and become a reverent student of the whole Scripture, for he says, "Sometimes, perhaps, we shall have to wait long (i.e. for light!) but at length the Lord will rescue and deliver us if we are willing to obey him."³ His advice to the ordinary student of Scripture is:

He manifestly confesses his ignorance of the darker places. There be many things in Isaiah which need no long exposition, as when he preacheth of the goodness and power of God, partly that he may invite men unto faith, partly that he may exhort and teach them to lead a godly life. Therefore, no man shall be so rude an idiot which shall not profit somewhat by reading that book and notwithstanding yet he shall, peradventure, scarce understand every tenth verse. Such was the eunuch's reading. For seeing that, according to his capacity, he gathered those things which served to edification, he had some certain profit by his studies. Nevertheless, though he were ignorant of many things, yet was he not wearied, so that he did cast away the book. Thus we must also read the Scriptures. We must greedily, and with a prompt mind, receive those things which are plain, and wherein God openeth His mind. As for those things which are hid from us, we must pass them over until we see greater light. And if we be not wearied with reading. . . Scripture shall be made more familiar by constant use.⁴

The unique origin of the Scripture, for Calvin, speaks for its authority as a witness to Jesus Christ, and its right to be the sole

¹John Calvin, Commentary on Epistles of Paul to the Romans, p. 516-517.

²Wallace, op. cit., p. 105.

³Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah, II, 348.

⁴Calvin, Commentary on Acts, p. 353-354.

source from which the Church derives its message or proclamation. He places much importance on the inspiration under which the writers of the Scripture wrote. Since we no longer are given daily responses from heaven and the only record we have of God for continual remembrance is in the Scripture,

The full authority which they ought to possess with the faithful is not recognized, unless they are believed to have come from heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them (Institutes, I. vii. 1).¹

Calvin often uses phrases that suggest he felt the Scriptures were orally dictated from heaven. "The law and the Prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will and pleasure of men but dictated by the Holy Spirit."² "The ancient prophecies were dictated by Christ."³

Wallace feels there are many passages in Calvin's writings, also, which seem to indicate that when Calvin speaks of a dictation of the words from heaven he really means that the writers were inwardly moved to utter as the Word of God something that was at the same time the product of their own inspired thinking and feeling. The Holy Spirit "directed" David's tongue in the composition of his Psalms.⁴ When the prophets gave their inspired words, though they "obediently followed the Spirit as their guide," were, however, "not bereaved of mind (as the

¹Kerr, op. cit., p. 15.

²John Calvin, Commentary on Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, p. 249.

³Wallace, op. cit., p. 107.

⁴Calvin, Commentary on Psalms, I, 94.

Gentiles imagine their prophets to have been).¹

Calvin no doubt means to emphasize that, though the resultant Word was really the Word that God intended should be uttered in all its details, nevertheless the prophet acted throughout as one who really experienced all that he said and who gave forth the message as one coming naturally from his own heart through a process of thought, on a psychological level, no different from that of ordinary human authorship. These points are brought out in his comments on Ezekiel 2:8. Ezekiel sees the roll of a book and this leads to the comment: "There is no doubt that this volume comprehended whatever the Spirit of God afterwards dictated to the prophet; and yet the effect was just as if God had made a mortal the channel of His Spirit: as if He had said, 'Now you shall utter nothing human nor terrestrial; because you shall utter what my Spirit has already written in this book.'" But then Ezekiel has to eat the roll of the book, and Calvin further comments, "The true servants of God . . . not only learn what they speak of, but as food is eaten, so also they receive within them the Word of God, and hide it in their heart so that they may bring it forth as food properly dressed." Calvin further adds, "God's servants ought to speak from the inmost affection of the heart."²

MAN'S RELATION TO THE WORD

Calvin felt that even with all that God has done to reveal himself, a man could look at all of the evidence and yet not see that anything of God is revealed. God may speak but sinful man may be spiritually deaf and unable to hear. It is in vain that God reveals Himself, except at the same time He also works within the mind and heart of man to create the power to grasp what is being revealed. This power is faith.

Faith is openness to revelation. It is the power to recognize these hidden revelations of God's grace. It is the ability to hear the

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 108.

²Ibid., p. 108.

Word of God coming through the words of man. Faith arises in response to the spoken word, the central part of any revelation, not in response to the visible sign.¹ Since "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God," "take away the Word, then, and there will be no faith left." (Institutes, III. ii. 6)²

Since the Scripture contains threats as well as promises, Calvin points out that it is the promises that are chiefly used in giving faith. "The human heart is not excited to faith by every word" (Institutes, III. ii. 7).³ This faith which comes in response to the promises of God is not a mere intellectual assent to a doctrine or fact, but it is instead our response to the mercy of God provided in Jesus Christ, by which we are saved. Faith is a rational laying hold of that which reaches us by knowledge.

Calvin finds the key to his defense of the divine authority of Scripture in the testimony of the Holy Spirit. By the rational arguments for theism and special revelation, man could come to only a human judgment as to the truth of God. Such a view or judgment is distorted by sinful human intellect, therefore, to know God rightly man must renounce the sufficiency of his sinful human reason and seek the ultimate ground of his faith in a divine reason. Because of this man comes to regard the Scriptures to be the Word of God not merely on the grounds of his

¹Ronald S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament, p.123-24.

²Kerr, op. cit., p. 91.

³Ibid., p. 91.

own judgments, but primarily on the grounds of God's perfect wisdom provided for man. This is available to man in the witness of the Holy Spirit.¹

In vain [Calvin argues in the Institutes] were the authority of Scripture fortified by argument or supported by the consent of the Church or confirmed by any other helps, if unaccompanied by an assurance higher and stronger than human judgment can give. Till this better foundation has been laid, the authority of Scripture remains in suspense.²

This assurance or witness is called fides divina or the divine alternative. The omniscient God brings by His judgment, a full knowledge of Himself to the human mind. He imposes this knowledge upon the mind so that full certainty is obtained. God wills to make this witness of the Spirit deeply rooted, including the entire nature of man. He also chooses to seal it permanently on the hearts of his elect.³

One of the most difficult problems in the study of Calvin's doctrine of Scripture is "to find precisely what to Calvin is the nature of the testimony of the Holy Spirit."⁴ There are about as many different interpretations as there are views or positions on the matter.

In his Institutes Calvin says,

The office of the Spirit promised to us is not to form new and unheard of revelations. . . but to seal on our minds the very doctrine

¹Kenneth Kantzer, "Calvin and the Holy Scriptures", Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 127.

²Ibid., p. 127.

³Ibid., p. 128.

⁴Ibid., p. 128.

which the Gospel recommends.¹

Calvin asserts the importance of the heart to a true faith in Christ or in the Scriptures.² Basically Calvin is not appealing to anything in man, whether it be in man's intellect, feelings, or inner consciousness, but is making his appeal directly to God. Calvin declares emphatically that the witness of the Spirit is a divine judgment hidden within the believers mind by the immediate activity of the Spirit without the necessity of human testing or human judgment. The clearest form of his doctrine of the testimony of the Holy Spirit is, according to Kantzer, found in the first part of his Institutes. He quotes Calvin:

If, then, we would consult most effectually for our consciences, and save them from being driven about in a whirl of uncertainty, from wavering and even stumbling at the smallest obstacle, our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from a higher source than human conjectures, judgments, or reason; namely, the secret testimony of the Spirit.

Scripture carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it, to the testimony of the Spirit.

Enlightened by him, we no longer believe, either on our own judgment or that of others, that the Scriptures are from God; but, in a way superior to human judgment, feel perfectly assured - as much so as if we beheld the divine image visibly impressed on it - that it came to us by the instrumentality of men, from the very mouth of God. We ask not for proofs or probabilities on which to rest our judgments, but we subject our intellect and judgment to it as too transcendent for us to estimate.

Such, then, is a conviction which asks not for reason; such, a knowledge which accords with the highest reason, namely, knowledge, in which the mind rests more firmly and securely than in any reasons; such, in fine, the conviction which revelation from heaven alone can produce.

¹Ibid., p. 129.

²Ibid., p. 130.

Then only, therefore, does Scripture suffice to give a saving knowledge of God when its certainty is founded on the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit. Still, the human testimonies which go to confirm it will not be without effect, if they are used in subordination to that chief and highest proof, as secondary helps to our weakness.

The testimony of the Spirit, it is immediately evident, is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is an act of God by which He gives certainty to man. There is no appeal to any part of man whether to intellect, will, or emotions. There is no new evidence provided for man to judge. Rather, there is a divinely originated and energized and a divinely formulated judgment within, though not stemming from, the human intellect.¹

The testimony of the Spirit is a work of the Holy Spirit. It is an act of God whereby He gives certainty to man. There is no appeal to any part of man, but rather it is a judgment within which is of God, not of man.

It is also an illuminating or opening of the mind to see the truth, and a fixing of this truth securely and firmly on the human mind. The Spirit witnesses to the right knowledge of God.

For the right knowledge of God is a wisdom which far surpasses the comprehension of man's understanding; therefore to attain it no one is able except through the secret revelation of the Spirit.²

The person of Christ is also witnessed to by the Spirit and many others but the truth of the gospel is primary. Calvin states "We point to the promise of mercy as its special object."³

Not only does the Spirit enable man to know the truth of the

¹Ibid., p. 131-132.

²Ibid., p. 133.

³Ibid., p. 134.

Gospel, but Calvin writes, "The Holy Spirit becomes the witness of adoption." Only through the testimony of God Himself can man know for certain that he is a son of God.¹

It was stated earlier that it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that the word of the minister can become the Word of God. Equally so, the Word of God can have no effect unless the Holy Spirit also creates faith in men's hearts and opens their minds to the Word. The Spirit "must form the ear to hear and the mind to understand."² However this does not take place apart from the external word.

Calvin compares the relationship between faith and the Word to the relationship between the sun and the rays of the sun - one cannot be had without the other (Institutes I. ii. 2).³ It may be stated simply, faith is born through the promises of the Word but lives by the complete Word of God.

The Word of God, rightly interpreted and rightly applied by the Spirit of God, is the absolute rule of life. If religion is based on Scripture, it is approved of God. If it is not based on Scripture, God does not approve. True obedience to God in matters of the Spirit requires not only complete subjection to the revealed will of God but also requires that we add not one thing to the law of God. "There is no true

¹Ibid., p. 134.

²Kerr, op. cit., p. 20.

³Ibid., p. 6.

religion before God except it be formed according to the rule of his Word."¹

In conclusion, one is able to see that for Calvin, the spoken Word and the written Word are a part of the Word of God. God uses the spoken Word to offer forgiveness to man and all those who hear in faith are immediately absolved of their sins. This is accomplished through a sacramental union. Since the preached Word is really the Word of God, there is a great and inescapable obligation placed upon the speaker to see that the words he speaks are Scriptural.

This naturally leads us to the proposition that the written Word is the Word of God also. They are the oracles of God given to man. This is the medium in which Christ is revealed to man as Savior, for Christ was not revealed in nature. It is the sole authority that must rule the life of the Church. It is the inspired gift of God to man and must be approached with a reverent, humble attitude. It must be readily accepted with a true faith in the heart. If accepted in this manner the written Word provides salvation for man, but if not accepted in true heart faith the written Word serves to condemn the individual more.

CHAPTER IV

THE SACRAMENTS AS SIGNS AND SEALS

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THE SACRAMENTS AS SIGNS AND SEALS

INTRODUCTION

When God, under the New Covenant, offers us in Christ the "treasure of heavenly grace,"¹ He gives us not only the Word, but also signs or sacraments which seal the promise given in the Word. A sacrament of the New Covenant is a ceremony instituted by Jesus Christ to fulfill the same function as the various signs of the Old Testament. Calvin defines them as "an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences His promises of good will towards us that our faith might be upheld" (Institutes, IV. xiv. 1).² "It is a visible sign of a sacred thing, or a visible form of an invisible grace" (Institutes, IV. xiv. 1).³

When Calvin tested the various sacraments of the Roman Church with the above definition he found authority for only two - Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Calvin felt that a sacrament could never be celebrated without a clear command of Christ and the promise of Christ in the hope of which the Church fulfills His ordinance.

Calvin felt that man could not be without external signs of their

¹Ronald Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, p. 133.

²Hugh Thomson Kerr, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin, p. 185.

³Ibid., p. 185.

religion because all pagan religions had idols and vivid ceremonies.

For this reason God instituted the sacraments, that man's carnal nature might be satisfied. Thus the sacraments confirm the Word by making it more visible and concrete to the senses.

They are also true visible representations of invisible spiritual things to which the Word directs us. "By the corporeal things which are produced in the sacrament, we are by a kind of analogy connected to spiritual things" (Institutes, IV, xvii. 3).¹

The aspect of the Gospel which the sacraments chiefly bring before our eyes in clarifying for us the promises given in the Word is that of our mystical union with the body of Christ. For Calvin, this union is one of the most important doctrines for anyone to grasp if they desire to understand the Christian life, faith and ordinances.

The nature of this union with Christ is such a spiritual mystery in itself that it is incomprehensible to the natural mind. It is even difficult for believers to grasp its meaning and reality. Therefore God has appointed the two sacraments to visibly depict this mystical union.

Calvin teaches that through His life and death and resurrection Jesus Christ performed in His human nature all that was necessary for the salvation of mankind. Since this was done in and through His human body and nature, the benefits of His work are not available to us, unless we are brought into some kind of communion with His human nature

¹Ibid., p. 197.

and body. This union between us and the human nature of Christ effects the completion of the reconciling act of God in uniting to Himself in Jesus a human nature. In this union there takes place, Calvin says, "a wondrous exchange" (Institutes, IV. xvii. 2)¹ whereby Christ takes upon Himself what is ours, and transfers to us what is His own.

Calvin speaks of both sacraments as being signs of our incorporation in the body of Christ. When Calvin thinks out the nature of this union he finds it shown forth in the sacraments to be a mystery. Our bodies as well as our souls are involved in this union and therefore in the sacrament of the supper, the elements representing the body and blood of Christ are not simply beheld and adored but really eaten by the participant. This is brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit.

These sacraments are signs and bear witness to a union that is begun, and is moving constantly onward toward completion, but which can only be completed in heaven.²

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Calvin outlines the nature and purpose of the Sacraments in his Institutes where he states:

Connected with the preaching of the gospel, another assistance and support for our faith is presented to us in the sacraments; on the subject of which it is highly important to lay down some certain doctrine, that we may learn for what end they were instituted, and

¹Ibid., p. 196.

²Wallace, op. cit., p. 156.

how they ought to be used. In the first place, it is necessary to consider what a sacrament is. Now, I think it will be a simple and appropriate definition, if we say that it is an outward sign, by which the Lord seals in our consciences the promises of his good-will towards us, to support the weakness of our faith; and we on our part testify our piety towards him, in his presence and that of angels, as well as before men. It may, however, be more briefly defined, in other words, by calling it a testimony of the grace of God towards us, confirmed by an outward, sign, with a reciprocal attestation of our piety towards him. Whichever of these definitions be chosen, it conveys exactly the same meaning as that of Augustine, which states a sacrament to be "a visible sign of a sacred thing," or "a visible form of an invisible grace" . . . (Institutes, IV. xiv. 1).¹

THE MYSTERY OF SACRAMENTAL UNION

We have already seen Calvin felt that God, in revealing Himself takes up into His activity an earthly event, and unites with Himself a human element for a moment. This is God's sacramental action.

In such sacramental action a union takes place between the divine element and human activity, so that the whole event conveys the grace depicted in its outward form. Therefore, what God depicts in the sacraments, He actually brings to pass through their agency. (Institutes, IV. xvii. 3).² Thus to Calvin, the function of the sacraments is not to merely produce a healthy psychological effect, but to be the instruments of a divine action whereby what is represented to us is also presented to us.

Therefore the sacraments deserve to be ranked along with the

¹Kerr, op. cit., p. 185.

²Ibid., p. 185.

Word as true means of grace, and along with the Word of the Gospel can be called the "power of God unto salvation."

Calvin felt that in the sacraments we have such a close connection between the symbol and the spiritual gift which it represent, that we can "easily pass from the one to the other," (Institutes, IV. xvii. 21)¹ in our speech and refer to the bread as being actually the body of Christ, and baptism as being the "laver of regeneration" and as an act that washes our sins away.²

For, though there is an essential difference between the symbol and the thing signified, the former being corporeal, terrestrial, and yet visible, and the latter spiritual, celestial, and invisible, yet, as the symbol is not a vain and useless memorial, a mere adumbration of the thing which it has been consecrated to represent, but also a true and real exhibition of it, why may not the name of that which it signifies be justly applied to it?" (Institutes, IV. xvii. 21)³

Calvin refers to this manner of speaking as a sacramental mode of speaking. He attaches it to the wilderness journey when the cloud went before Israel, Moses say "the Lord went before them," not the clou, and many other instances. The material elements in the action are spoken of as being actually done by God, at the same instant. The union formed between the divine and human activity in the event of God's action in the sacrament is so close as, practically speaking, to become one of identity. Calvin felt that this same close sacramental union holds good

¹John Allen, Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin, II, 546.

²John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel of John, I, 61.

³Allen, op. cit., p. 546.

in the preaching of the Word. In preaching it is not the human effort of the preacher which saves and regenerates men, but this sacramental union between man's speaking and God's Word is so close that the word of the minister almost accomplishes that which is God's prerogative alone.

The close sacramental union which Christ sets up between Himself and the signs which testify of Him gives us a right to speak of the elements of the sacraments in the terms of identity with that which they represent.

Though this sacramental union is so close at times to justify regarding it almost as a relation of identity, it is nevertheless so transcendent and freely personal that even in the event of the sacrament becoming effectual we must always hold the grace and action of God as being distinct from our human activity.¹

There are no such things as sacraments apart from the events recorded in the Bible. The sacrament is something God does in Christ with any earthly element He cares to lay hold of in His free and sovereign grace. Unless God acts in this way, nothing can possibly have any sacramental value. For Calvin the institution of a sacrament is an act of God which makes "divine mysteries lurk under things that are in themselves quite abject" (Institutes, IV. xiv. 18).² It is definitely not by nature this takes place.

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 161-166.

²Allen, op. cit., II, 469.

The efficacy of the sacraments depends entirely upon the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit . . . makes way for the sacraments, and causes them to bear fruit" (Institutes, IV. xiv. 17).¹

Wallace states:

The whole efficacy of the sacraments depends on the Spirit, who is sovereign and free in His operation through the sacrament and not in any way constrained by the human action or will. "So far, then, is God from resigning the grace of His Spirit to the sacraments, that all their efficacy and utility are lodged in the Spirit alone." Thus the sacraments are effectual only "where and whenever God is so pleased". God "uses the creatures thus freely and at His own will acts by means of them so far as He pleases." God's grace is no more tied to the elements or the action of the sacraments than it is to preaching.²

Thus the power of salvation is not included in the sacraments.

God can, if He so desires, use the sacraments to envoke salvation, but He is not forced to. The efficiency of the sacraments depends upon the one who uses it. Grace is not confined to the sacrament not within it. God chooses the way He desires to bestow grace.

BAPTISM AND FAITH

For Calvin, baptism consists of a sign of the forgiveness of sins, mortification, renewal, adoption of entrance into the Church and separation from the world. It is a sign of participation in the victory of Christ over the powers of evil. He parallels Christian baptism and circumcision, baptism of the Church and the baptism of Israel at the

¹Kerr, op. cit., p. 187.

²Wallace, op. cit., p. 169-170.

Red Sea, the baptismal font and the flood in the days of Noah. Baptism becomes the sign of the ingrafting of Christ.

In baptism, the baptized individual, as a member of Christ, is uprooted and separated from every corrupt source of life and introduced into a new sphere of common life which the members of Christ share with their exalted Head. The baptism of the individual Christian is merely one more act towards the completion of the baptism which the Church shares with Jesus Christ.

Jesus "consecrated and sanctified baptism in His own body that He might have it in common with us as the foremost bond of union and fellowship which he deigned to form with us; and hence Paul proves us to be the sons of God from the fact that we have put on Christ in Baptism" (Institutes, IV. xv. 6).¹

The Church through its baptism becomes the one redeemed body that shares not only a great experience of redemption but the one life of the redeemer. Baptism is thus rightly made the sign of initiation by which a Christian is received into the visible Church.

Nothing is more needful, if the Christian is to receive new life, than that the old life should die, and that all its sources and impulses should be mortified. Baptism is a sign that we enter into life in Christ only through death, that there is a gulf between the realm of nature and that of death, that what is new in Christ is really a new creation and not merely an improving of the old.

Baptism is more than a mere sign of the need of mortification,

¹Kerr, op. cit., p. 190.

however. Mortification is a gift of Christ given along with the sign of baptism. It is the effect of union with Christ for it is something which is given to us and done for us within our hearts as part of the grace of baptism.¹ "Christ by baptism has made us partakers of His death, ingrafting us into it." (Institutes, IV. xv. 5).²

The purging out of the old life in mortification is accompanied by the forgiveness of sins.

We are to receive it as from the hand of its author, being firmly persuaded that it is Himself who washes and purifies us, and effaces the remembrance of our faults; that it is Himself who makes us partakers of His death (Institutes, IV. xv. 14).³

Union with Christ in baptism means union with His resurrection as well as with His death. Mortification is a necessary beginning to the Christian life, and for Calvin the Christian life consists mainly of self-denial. But true mortification in Christ is always accompanied by a positive renewal of life in Christ. This new life is the life of sonship of the Father in unity with Christ, who was declared the son of God by the resurrection from the dead. Baptism is thus a sign of adoption into the family of God.

In Baptism, the first thing to be considered is, that God the Father, by planting us in His Church in unmerited goodness, receives us by adoption into the number of His sons. Secondly, we cannot have any connection with Him except by means of reconciliation, we have need of Christ to restore us to the Father's favour by His

¹Wallace, op. cit., pp. 177, 178.

²Kerr, op. cit., p. 189.

³Allen, op. cit., p. 486.

blood. Thirdly, as we are by Baptism consecrated to God, we need also the interposition of the Holy Spirit whose office it is to make us new creatures.¹

Calvin looks at baptism as a sign of separation from the world to God. The baptismal font stands as a sign of division between the Church and the world, separating those within from those without. This separation signified in baptism involves the forsaking of all false lords and the confession of allegiance from that time on to Christ alone as Lord.

To this Paul referred when he asked the Corinthians whether or not they had been baptized in the name of Christ, intimating that by the very circumstances of having been baptized in His name they had devoted themselves to Him, had sworn and bound themselves in allegiance to Him before men.²

Calvin is very clear in stating that baptism has no efficacy where there is no faith in the one receiving it. "From this sacrament we gain nothing, unless in so far as we receive in faith" (Institutes, IV. xv. 15).³ Calvin appeals for utmost care in performing the ceremony on only those from whom there are clear signs that they either have faith or are likely to come to full faith. The absence of faith in the person being baptized does not take away from the fact that through the very administration of baptism grace may be offered, even though it is not accepted. The validity of baptism is kept open before the one baptized unless there is a deliberate renouncing of the sacrament.

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 180.

²Kerr, op. cit., p. 192.

³Ibid., p. 193.

We acknowledge therefore that at that time Baptism profited us nothing, because we totally neglected the promise offered to us in it, without which baptism is nothing (Institutes, IV. xv. 17).¹

Where there is faith baptism can become a powerful means of grace in the life of a believer, assisting faith, directing and inspiring Christian living. The main practical use of baptism is to give us the full assurance of salvation and carrying with it all the effects of renewed and confident living that such an assurance inspires. Baptism saves us by assuring us that we are indeed saved.

. . . the right consideration of sacramental signs consists not merely in the external ceremonies, but that it chiefly depends on the promise and the spiritual mysteries. . . . The Scripture shows . . . in it is the remission and purgation of sins, which we obtain in the blood of Christ; and the mortification of the flesh . . . by which believers are regenerated to newness of life. This is the sum to which we may refer everything delivered in the Scriptures concerning baptism, except that it is also a sign by which we testify our religion before men (Institutes, IV. xvi. 2)²

Such an assurance can be a strong incentive to us to start anew in Christian life, and to face all the evils of life with the confidence that will enable us to be victorious.

For in this manner, in baptism, he promises, and gives us a sign to assure us, that we are extricated and delivered by his power from the captivity of Egypt, that is, from the servitude of sin; and our Pharaoh, that is, the devil, is drowned, though still he ceases not to harass and fatigue us. But as the Egyptians did not remain sunk to the bottom of the sea, but, being cast upon the shore, still terrified the Israelites with the dreadful sight, though they were not able to injure them, so this enemy of ours still threatens, displays his arms, and makes himself felt, but cannot overcome

¹Allen, op. cit., II, 488.

²Ibid., p. 495.

(Institutes, IV. xv. 9).¹

Baptism is a sign given once to each believer, but the sign on that one occasion can in later years still remain continually effective if it is properly used. The power of baptism never "becomes obsolete" in a believer (Institutes, IV. xv. 3).² Even though the believer cannot remember the occasion of his baptism, nevertheless in remembering the simple fact that at one time he was baptized, his baptism can in his time of need yield all the efficacy attached to the sacrament by the promises of God. Moreover, the spiritual grace of mortification, of which baptism is a sign, is not given simply in one great crisis but is "a continued process" taking place throughout all the length of the Christian life.³

This is an important factor in infant baptism. According to this view of Calvin's there is nothing to hinder the baptism of infants for though they remember nothing of the event, they come completely under the effect of the grace of baptism later in life.

We ought to conclude, that at whatever time we are baptized, we are washed and purified for the whole of life. Whenever we have fallen, therefore, we must recur to the remembrance of baptism, and arm our minds with the consideration of it, that we may be always certified and assured of the remission of our sins (Institutes IV. xv. 3).⁴

¹Ibid., p. 482-483.

²Kerr, op. cit., p. 189.

³Wallace, op. cit. p. 188.

⁴Allen, op. cit., II, 478.

Baptism possesses a dormant power when given to infants. It cannot impart grace to them yet for they have not yet shown an active sign of profiting from it, but the active agent is lying dormant as a seed that has been sown, and springs forth later in life.

"Children are baptized for future repentance and faith. Though these are not yet formed in them, yet the seed of both lies hid in them by the secret operation of the Spirit." It is obvious here that Calvin is thinking of the seed of future repentance and faith, . . . not as a present possession of the child but as held over the child transcendentally and eschatologically through the potentiality of Baptism and the Spirit.¹

Under the Old Covenant, to be born an Israelite meant an entrance into the privileges of the covenant God made with Abraham and his children to a thousand generations. A sign of this covenant was given in circumcision. The promises of the New Covenant held out to the children of the Church may be sealed by bestowing baptism on them.

Now, as the Lord, immediately after having made the covenant with Abraham, commanded it to be sealed in infants by an external sacrament, what cause will Christians assign why they should not also at this day testify and seal the same in their children? (Institutes, IV. xvi. 6).²

Calvin's views on infant baptism seem to be influenced greatly by his views of early regeneration of Christian children. He feels that there is no doubt that some are saved in the earliest infancy. "It were dangerous," says Calvin, "to deny that the Lord is able to furnish them (i.e. infants) with knowledge of Himself in any way He pleases."³

¹Wallace op. cit., p. 190.

²Allen, op. cit., II, 498.

³Wallace op. cit., p. 195-196.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

The word of Jesus in instituting the Supper must be interpreted, according to Calvin, sacramentally not literally, according to the normal usage of Scripture, whereby the sign is given the name of the thing signified. Also, with equal stress Calvin rejects any purely figurative interpretation of the words of institution, which might make the sacrament nothing more than an empty symbolic action. Calvin felt that when Jesus instituted the Supper He was not speaking in a purely figurative manner.

There is a mystery of sacramental union here indicated that lifts His language far above being legitimately called "figurative" without any qualification. "Let our opponents, therefore, cease to indulge their mirth in calling us Trapists, when we explain the sacramental mode of expression according to the common use of scripture."¹

Thus the word "is" in the words of institution denotes a sacramental union. The bread is called body in a "sacramental manner."

The account of the institution of the Lord's Supper is one of the obscure passages of Scripture which must be interpreted according to the rule of faith, derived from the study of the clearer parts of Scripture.

Calvin asserts both the reality and the wholeness of the gift of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The wholeness of Christ is given in that His Spirit, His divine nature and also His humanity are given. Wallace

¹Ronald Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, p. 197-198.

quotes Calvin as saying "The sacraments direct our faith to the whole, not to a part of Christ."¹ The whole of Christ is "really given" in the sacrament.

If any one inquire of me respecting the manner, I shall not be ashamed to acknowledge, that it is a mystery too sublime for me to be able to express, or even to comprehend; and, to be still more explicit, I rather experience it, than understand it. Here, therefore, without any controversy, I embrace the truth of God, on which I can safely rely. He pronounces his flesh to be the food and his blood the drink, of my soul. I offer him my soul, to be nourished with such aliment. In his sacred supper, he commands me, under the symbols of bread and wine, to take, and eat, and drink, his body and blood. I doubt not that he truly presents, and that I receive them. . . . The presence of Christ's body . . . is such as the nature of the sacrament requires; where we affirm that it appears with so much virtue and efficacy, as not only to afford our minds an undoubted confidence of eternal life, but also to give us an assurance of the resurrection and immortality of our bodies. For they are vivified by his immortal flesh, and in some degree participate his immortality. . . .²

Thus through our participation in the body of Christ through the Supper there comes to righteousness, forgiveness, sanctification, and all the blessings that are the fruit of His death, for this sacrament is in figure not only a participation in His body, but also in His death.

The body, therefore, which was once offered for our salvation, we are commanded to take and eat; that seeing ourselves made partakers of it, we may certainly conclude, that the virtue of that life-giving death will be efficacious with us (Institutes, IV. xvii. 1)³

Wallace puts forth an outline of the nature of the communication of the gift of the body and blood of Christ.

¹Ibid., p. 200.

²Hugh Thomson Kerr, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin, p. 199-200.

³Ibid., p. 195.

First, "the body of Christ," in which He wrought our redemption and apart from which we are unable to be saved, in being given to us in the sacrament, "remains," throughout the participation, "in heaven," beyond this world, "and retains all its human properties."

Secondly, "Communion with the body of Christ is effected through the descent of the Holy Spirit, by whom our souls are lifted up to heaven," there to partake of the life transfused into us from the flesh of Christ. Calvin does not expect us to fully understand this, nor does he fully understand it himself, but if we are to begin to understand the sacrament we must believe it.

Thirdly, partaking of the flesh of Christ in the supper is thus a "heavenly action," in which the flesh is "eaten in a spiritual manner." This heavenly action involves the receiving of life from the substance of Christ's flesh into our souls. This is a spiritual participation.

Fourthly, the presence of the body of Christ in the Supper, though it may be called a "real presence" and a "descent of Christ" by the Spirit is nevertheless also a "celestial mode of presence" and leads to no localisation of Christ's body on earth, no inclusion of it in the elements, no attachment of it to the elements. Calvin appears to be inconsistent in his statements about the Supper. He can in one place deny that Christ "descends to earth" in the Supper, and yet in other places he speaks freely about Christ as descending through the Supper.¹

¹Wallace, op. cit., p. 203-210.

In the sacrament the body of Christ is received by faith, and this eating is for Calvin the fruit of Faith. If an unbeliever participates in the Supper he does not receive the body of Christ in the sacrament, though the body is present to the unbeliever.

Man does not offer anything to God in the sacraments by way of a propitiatory sacrifice. Man's part is to receive with thanksgiving all that is offered in the one completed sacrifice on the Cross.

Thus for Calvin, the sacrament is indeed a love in which the members of Christ "cherish and testify" towards each other that mutual charity the bond of which they see in the unity of the body of Christ.¹

In conclusion, one sees that the sacraments are signs and seals to man of the incorporation of the individual's body in the body of Christ. As a result the sacraments deserve a place equal to that given to the Word as a true means of grace and along with the Word of the Gospel can be called the "power of God unto salvation." Calvin contended for two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and placed the efficacy of them entirely upon the Holy Spirit.

Baptism gives the full assurance of salvation and possesses a dormant power when given to infants. In the Lord's Supper, the body of Christ is received by faith and for Calvin, this eating of the fruit is faith. Through the Supper there comes to the individual righteousness, forgiveness, sanctification, and all the blessings that are the fruit of His death.

¹Ibid., p. 211-216.

CHAPTER V

THE FRIENDS' VIEW OF REVELATION

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INTRODUCTION

The early Quakers built no system of theology, this was left to learned men of the next generation like Penn and Barclay, but certain principles were basic in their religion. They were of Calvinistic theological background and were optimistic as to the purposes of God. They were in the succession of a great mystical tradition. God was attainable by man and had a personal salvation to offer to all who desired it and met the requirements. They believed in an Inner Light which included three related ideas: (1) It stood for God as knowable to and within men. (2) It meant also the capacity in all men to perceive, recognize and respond to God - to his truth, his love, and his will. (3) The Inner Light was also a designation for God as inwardly known; for a man's whole experience of God.¹

The central Quaker faith in the seventeenth century was a testimony that man may live in vital contact with the divine Life-stream and that that divine stream of Life can flow into expression through men.² The early Friends regarded the Bible as the record of men inspired by the Spirit of Christ, but they did not regard revelation as either

¹Elbert Russell, A History of Quakerism, p. 52, 53.

²Ibid., p. 53.

ended with the Bible or confined to it. The Bible is to be used as a guide book - to help them find and experience for themselves the truths recorded in it. The Bible was also a means of testing religious beliefs and experience.

To the Friends a corporate experience in the will of God is known most fully and in social worship the Inner Light is apprehended most clearly, therefore the Friends meeting was based on an informal seeking together, usually called a silent meeting, until any member has a truth, experience or exhortation to be shared vocally.

Early Friends were so occupied with attempts to order their lives according to their principles of spiritual autonomy and brotherhood that they did not attempt a thorough criticism of the political and economic order.¹

BARCLAY'S WITNESS

The early Friends felt as did the early church that no one was to be judged a Christian unless he had the Spirit of Christ as in Romans 8:9. In the day of the start of the Quaker movement there were many who boldly called themselves Christian but yet laughed at anyone who claimed to have the Spirit of Christ. Of old they were accounted "the sons of God, who were led by the Spirit of God," as in Romans 8:14. In the day of the early Friends, many called themselves the sons of God

¹Ibid., p. 53.

but knew nothing of the Spirit who was to lead them, and they ridiculed those who knew the Spirit and proceeded to call them heretics.¹

Barclay chooses to distinguish, for better understanding of the Friends' view, between the certain knowledge of God and the uncertain; between the spiritual knowledge and the literal; the saving heart-knowledge and the soaring airy head knowledge.² The uncertain or literal knowledge of God may be obtained in many ways, but the certain or spiritual knowledge of God may be had by no other way than the inward immediate manifestation and revelation of God's Spirit, shining in on the heart and enlightening it and opening the understanding.

Seeing "no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth him," and seeing the "revelation of the Son is in and by the Spirit;" therefore the testimony of the Spirit is that alone by which the true knowledge of God hath been, is, and can be only revealed; who as, by the moving of his own Spirit, he disposed the chaos of this world into that wonderful order in which it was in the beginning, and created man a living soul, to rule and govern it, so by the revelation of the same Spirit he hath manifested himself all along unto the sons of men, both patriarch, prophets, and apostles; which revelations of God by the Spirit, whether by outward voices and appearances, dreams or inward objective manifestations in the heart, were of old the formal object of their faith, and remain yet so to be, since the object of the saints' faith is the same in all ages, though held forth under divers administrations. Moreover, these divine inward revelations, which we make absolutely necessary for the building up of true faith, neither do nor can ever contradict the outward testimony of the scriptures, or of the natural reason of man, as to a more noble or certain rule and touchstone; for this divine revelation and

¹Robert Barclay, An Apology for the True Christian Divinity. Being an Explanation and Vindication of the Principles and Doctrines of the People Called Quakers, p. 27.

²Ibid., p. 27-28.

inward illumination, is that which is evident and clear of itself, forcing, by its own evidence and clearness, the well-disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly moving the same thereunto, even as the common principles of truths do move and incline the mind to a natural assent: as, that the whole is greater than its part, that two contradictories can neither be both true, nor both false.¹

This true and effectual knowledge which brings eternal life cannot be attained through any source other than by the revelation of God's Spirit. Many of the ancient Churchmen such as Augustine, Clemens, Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Huirom, Athanasius, Gregory the Great, Bernard, and many others witnessed to the inward work of the Spirit of God doing His work of leading them and revealing things of God to them.² Martin Luther said,

No man can rightly know God, or understand the word of God, unless he immediately receive it from the Holy Spirit; neither can any one receive it from the Holy Spirit, except he find it by experience in himself; and in this experience the Holy Ghost teacheth, as in his proper school; out of which school nothing is taught but mere talk.³

According to the Scriptures, a true Christian is one that has the Spirit of Christ and is led by it. It matters not to what extent you may possess other means of knowledge, whether they be Scripture, traditions, works or what have you, they are to no avail and make not a true Christian. The only sure and certain way to attain the true and saving knowledge is through the inward and immediate revelation of the Spirit.

¹Ibid., p. 27-28.

²Ibid., p. 28-30.

³Ibid., p. 30.

This is, where the true inward knowledge of God is, through the revelation of His Spirit, there is all; neither is there an absolute necessity of any other.

The early Friends felt that there is no knowledge of the Father but by the Son. The infinite and wise God has done all things through His Son. This certainly put forth in the Scriptures where it states: "Jesus Christ, by whom God created all things; No man knoweth the Father, but the Son; I am the Way, the truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Therefore He is fit to be called the Mediator between God and man, because He is both God and man.

No one knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom God is revealed by the Son, then there is no knowledge of the Father but by the Son. If the Son be the way, the truth, the life and that no man comes unto the Father but by Him; then there is again no knowledge of the Father but by the Son.

The saving, certain and necessary knowledge of God cannot be acquired any other way than by the Spirit. For Jesus Christ, who reveals the Father, also reveals Himself to His disciples and friends in and by His Spirit. When Christ was on earth, His revelations were outward and now having gone to be with His Father, He teaches man inwardly by His Spirit. By the Spirit God always reveals Himself to His children.

God spoke always to the Jews, in that He always immediately spoke to the High Priest from between the Cheribim; who when returning related to the people that which God had told him. This immediate revelation

has never ceased. There were none earnestly seeking after and waiting for this fellowship who were shut out. Even though they were not of the priestly order, nor prophets, if they sanctified themselves with prayer and fasting they had this fellowship.

Paul said "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." The object of this faith is the promised word, testimony of God speaking in the mind. Noah had not the writings no prophesying of any going before, not yet the concurrence of any church or people to strengthen him; and yet his faith was none other than inward and immediate revelation, or God signifying His will unto him inwardly by His Spirit.

God used angels to appear before and speak to men, and at times used dreams and visions which have not ceased. These dreams and angels were looked upon as being from God when the Holy Spirit witnessed to this in their hearts. These revelations by the Spirit were looked upon as the ground and foundation of their hope in God and life eternal or the formal object of their faith.

Christians are now to be led by the Spirit in the same manner as the saints of old. A manifestation of this Spirit is given to all, that they might profit from it. This Spirit is inward, "He dwelleth in you, and shall be in you." That this Spirit was indwelling in the saints is proved in Scripture. It is because of the work of the self-same Spirit that they had anything worthy or desirable in them. It is by this Spirit that they could call themselves converted or redeemed

from the flesh. The work of this Spirit is to guide into all truth, teach all things, and bring all things to remembrance.

Where the law of God is put into the mind, and written in the heart, there the object of faith, and revelation of the knowledge of God is inward, immediate and objective.¹

Revelation then comes to man by the Spirit of God witnessing to and verifying God in the hearts of men. This Spirit was the agent used by God to inspire the writers of the Bible, and the Bible contains what God desired that man should write. Since the Spirit of God inspired the Scriptures, they must be less than or subservient to their author. As a result the rule of faith for the early Friends was not the Scriptures but rather the Spirit of God witnessing inwardly to every man.

¹Ibid., pp. 30-71.

CHAPTER VI

THE EARLY FRIENDS' VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

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INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures are usually denominated by Christians, "the Word of God." Though the Quakers believed them to have been given by divine inspiration, yet they reject this term. They apprehend that Christ is the Word of God, they cannot therefore consistently give to the Scriptures, however they reverence them, that name which Saint John the Evangelist gives exclusively to the Son of God.¹

The early Friends were often accused of not valuing the Bible, or accepting it as a rule of life. It is very easy to misunderstand the early Friends' view on this, but a careful reading of Barclay's chapter on the Scriptures will erase this doubt.

THE FRIENDS' VIEW OF SCRIPTURE AS PROPOUNDED BY BARCLAY

Rober Barclay, the author and apologist in the Friends movement, felt moved to write for the world to see some theological propositions of the early Friends. In his third proposition he discusses the Friends' view concerning the Scriptures.

He states that from these revelations of the Spirit of God to the saints have proceeded the Scriptures of Truth, which contain:

¹Thomas Clarkson, A Portraiture of Quakerism, p. 285.

I. A faithful historical account of the actings of God's people in divers ages; with many singular and remarkable providences attending them.

II. A prophetic account of several things, whereof some are already past, and some yet to come.

III. A full and ample account of all the chief principles of the doctrines of Christ, held forth in divers precious declarations, exhortations and sentences, which, by the moving of God's Spirit, were at several times, and upon sundry occasions, spoken and written unto some churches and their pastors.

Nevertheless, because they are only a declaration of the fountain, and not the fountain itself, therefore they are not to be esteemed the principal ground of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule of faith and manners. Yet because they give a true and faithful testimony of the first foundation, they are and may be esteemed a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit, from which they have all their excellency and certainty; for as by the inward testimony of the Spirit we do alone truly know them, so they testify, that the Spirit is that guide by which the saints are led into all Truth; therefore, according to the Scriptures, the Spirit is the first and principal leader. Seeing then that we do therefore receive and believe the Scriptures because they proceeded from the Spirit, for the very same reason is the Spirit more originally and principally the rule.¹

The Friends felt that the Holy Scriptures were the most excellent writings in the world; to which no other writings are to be preferred or even compared. Their authority comes from the canon of no church or assembly, but rather from the Spirit from which they proceed. Since many things contained therein are not discerned by the natural, but only by the spiritual man, it is the Spirit of God that must enlighten the Scriptures to man.

Barclay states:

We cannot go the length of such Protestants as make their authority to depend upon any virtue or power that is in the writings

¹Robert Barclay, An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, p. 72.

themselves; but we desire to ascribe all to that Spirit from which they proceeded.¹

Although the Scriptures are heavenly and divine writings, and though they are useful and necessary to the Church; although God in His providence preserved them pure and uncorrupted as we have them, yet they are not the principal fountain of all truth and knowledge, nor the first adequate rule of faith and manners; because the principal fountain of truth must be the Truth itself, that whose certainty and authority depends not on another. The writings and sayings of all men must be brought to the Word of God, that is, the Eternal Word and if they agree thereunto, we stand there. This Word always and eternally proceeds from God. The Scriptures' authority and certainty depend upon the Spirit by which they were dictated, and the reason they were revealed as truth is because they proceeded from the Spirit. If by the Spirit we can only come to the true knowledge of God; if by the Spirit we are to be led into all truth, and so be taught of all things; therefore the Spirit, not the Scriptures is the primary rule of faith and manners.²

The very nature of the gospel declares that the Scripture cannot be the only and chief rule of Christians, else there should be no difference between the law and the gospel. The law and the gospel differ in that the law, being outwardly written, brings under condemnation, but has not life in it to save; whereas the gospel, as it declares and

¹Ibid... p. 73.

²Ibid... pp. 75-76.

and makes the evil so, being an inward powerful thing; it gives power also to obey and delivers from evil. Because of this it is called the Good Tidings. The law or letter, which is without us kills; but the gospel which is the inward spiritual law, gives life; for it consists not so much in words as in virtue.¹

The principal rule of Christians under the gospel is not an outward letter, nor law outwardly written and delivered, but an inward spiritual law, engraven in the heart, the law of the Spirit of life, the word that is nigh in the heart and in the mouth.²

The letter of the Scripture is outward, of itself a dead thing, a mere declaration of good things, but not the things themselves; therefore it is not nor can be the chief or principal rule of Christians.

That which is given to Christians for a rule and guide, must needs be so full that it may clearly and distinctly guide and order them in all things and occurrences. But there are many things which occur with regards to various Christian's circumstances for which there can be no particular rule found in the Scriptures; therefore the Scriptures cannot be a rule to them. For instance, some are called to the ministry of the word: Paul saith, There was a necessity upon him to preach the gospel; "woe to me, if I preach not." If it be necessary now as then that there be ministers of Church, then there is the same necessity that there be ministers called to the task. Who will be called? Neither can nor does the Scripture say. There are qualifica-

¹Ibid., p. 76-77.

²Ibid., p. 78.

tions put forth in Scripture, but the individual must judge as to whether he qualifies. Also, these qualifications advanced by Scripture will fit, in some measure at least, every true Christian. How is one to know the answer if Scripture is to be the absolute rule? Is it not the Spirit's testimony in one's conscience that must be the assurance? And if one is qualified and called, what Scripture rule gives the information as to where each individual is to serve, as to locality or branch of service?

Can the Scripture give me the assurance of faith and salvation? If it be said, By comparing the Scripture marks of true faith with mine, the question arises, How shall I make the observations with an accurate and unbiased conclusion? The Scripture gives a mere declaration of these things, but makes no application. The Scripture, instead of affirming a rule sufficient to give assurance, ascribes it wholly to the Spirit, as Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," I John 4:13, "Hereby knew we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

The Scriptures cannot be the only, principal, nor chief rule because not everyone has access to the Scriptures.¹

If it be then asked me, Whether I think hereby to render the scriptures altogether uncertain or useless?

I answer; Not at all. The proposition itself declare how much I esteem them; and provided that to the Spirit from which they came be but granted that place the scriptures themselves give it, I do freely concede to the scriptures the second place, even what-

¹Ibid., pp. 78-86.

soever they say of themselves . . . Romans 15:4 . . . II Timothy 3:15-17. . . .¹

God is teacher of His people Himself, yet it was a fruit of Christ's ascension to send teachers and pastors for perfecting of the saints. So that the same work is ascribed to the Scriptures as to teachers; the one to make the man of God perfect, the other for the perfection of the saints.

As then teachers are not to go before the teaching of God Himself under the New Covenant, but to follow after it; so neither is the Scripture to go before the teaching of the Spirit.

The great work of the Scriptures is to portray to us the conditions and experiences of the saints of old that we may behold their trials and deliverances that we might be instructed in righteousness.

Friends believe that God reveals Himself as far as man is able to understand and willing to obey. Since in the Old Testament times men could not understand as much about God and His will for men, as after the coming of the Lord, God's revelation of Himself could not be as full as in the New Testament. Thus the writers, although inspired by the Holy Spirit, were nevertheless men, they mixed up God's message with their own ideas.²

Therefore the Holy Scriptures, as managed in and by the Spirit, are to the Church of God, a secondary rule. Also they have been written

¹Ibid., p. 86-87.

²Elizabeth B. Emmott, The Story of Quakerism, p. 114.

by the dictates of the Holy Spirit and the errors which may be supposed to have slipped in are not such but that there is a sufficient clear testimony left to all the essentials of the Christian faith. They are looked upon as the only fit outward judge of controversies among Christians. Any doctrine contrary to their testimony, is to be rejected as false.

The inward testimony of the Spirit is the seal of Scripture promise. Because of this the Scriptures occupy the position of a secondary ruler.

THE TESTIMONY AND WITNESS OF EARLY FRIENDS MINISTERS

The Witness of George Fox.

The discovery that the world, and even the Church was full of wickedness crushed George Fox. He found that the priests were "empty hollow casks," and that religion, as far as any in England was concerned, was weak and ineffective, with no dynamic message which moved with the living power of God behind it. To him religion seemed to be reduced to a system of clever substitutes for God, while his own soul could not rest until it found the Life itself. The turning point came in his life when he discovered that Christ is not merely an historic person who once came to the world and then forever withdrew, but that He is the continuous Divine Presence. He had discovered within the deeps of his own personality a meeting place of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit. As did the Christians of his day, Fox believed about Christ, but his

search had not been to find out something about Christ, but instead to find Him.¹ Fox points out that every hunger of the heart, every dissatisfaction with self, every act of self-condemnation, every sense of shortcoming shows that the soul is not unvisited by the Divine Spirit.² The ability to appreciate the right, to discriminate light from darkness, the possibility of being anything more than a creature of sense, living for the moment, means that our personal life is in contact at some point with the Infinite Life, and that all things are possible to him who believes and obeys.³

Fox continually makes appeal to "that of God" within them. At other times he calls it the "Light," "Seed," or the "Principle" of God within the man. Frequently it is the "Christ within."⁴ In every instance he means that the Divine Being operates directly upon the human life, and the new birth, the real spiritual life, begins when the individual becomes aware of Him and sets himself to obey Him.

Fox could interpret his own inward experience in the light of the Scripture.

He believed that the Scriptures were inspired of God and used them extensively, quoting them for support of his doctrines. But, he

¹George Fox, An Autobiography, Editor and Introduction by Rufus Jones, p. 28.

²Ibid. p. 28.

³Ibid., p. 29.

⁴Ibid., p. 29.

felt that the Scriptures were subordinate to the Spirit because the Spirit is the author of the Scriptures, but at the same time they would never, at any time, disagree because the Spirit never disagrees with Himself.¹

The Testimony of George Whitehead.

George Whitehead, a minister and laborer in the early Friends church testifies to the inspiration and authority of Scripture and the working of the Spirit of God in the instruction and leading in the life of an individual. He was partly educated under a Presbyterian ministry but was not satisfied with the immorality and lack of true godly life on the part of the priests.

George sought out a Quaker meeting and felt that these people had the true Gospel when he saw the Quakers, who trembled at the Word of God, he believed that they were God's people. He became more convinced of this when in meetings he could feel the presence of God. He states that in the very first meeting he attended, Thomas Arey spoke and for a short while and a young lady went mourning out of the meeting. He followed her outside and found her sitting on the ground, with her face downward as if she neither saw nor knew anyone was around, and she mourned bitterly, crying out, "Lord, make me clean; O Lord, make me clean."

Whitehead was converted and became a Friends minister. The testimony of his ability was this:

¹Ibid., pp. 109-110.

"He was one," says the document referred to, "whom the Lord had fitly qualified and prepared by his divine power and Holy Spirit, one of the most able ministers of the gospel of our day . . . dividing the word aright."¹

His testimony as to the basis of authority for the Quakers is:

Those of our principles which have been chiefly opposed by our adversaries, and which I have been most obliged to vindicate and dispute for, are the light and perfection; the gospel urim and thummim; the kingdom of Christ, against the kingdom of Satan and Antichrist. Let God arise, and His enemies be scattered.²

The light shined in darkness, as in a dark place, and was often clouded, before it shone out of darkness. The spirit of the Lord moved upon the waters, even when darkness was upon the face of the great deep, before his works of old were wrought. And in order to bring forth his works in the new creation, to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus, his spirit moves upon people's hearts, even when unstable as waters, and his light shines in them before they know God or Jesus Christ, in order to give them the knowledge of the glory and power of God, and of his dear Son Jesus Christ.³

The Lord by his light and grace of his Holy Spirit, having fully persuaded me, that without being converted as well as convinced, and without being regenerated, sanctified, and born again, I could not enter into his kingdom, nor be an heir thereof; and that the godly sorrow unto true repentance, and a real amendment of life, must be wrought by his grace and good spirit in me; and, that without holiness none can see God.⁴

He then accepted Christ as Savior, followed Him in obedience, believed in and obeyed His light given to him and waited therein diligently to receive power from Him to become a true child of God. He says

¹Wm. and Thomas Evans, (ed.) "The Christian Progress of George Whitehead", from The Friends Library, VIII, 225-226.

²Ibid., p. 227.

³Ibid., p. 228.

⁴Ibid., p. 229.

concerning this:

I saw it was my place to retire inwardly to the light, to the grace of God, the immortal, incorruptable seed, the ingrafted Word, which is our divine principle, frequently testified of among the said people, according to Holy Scripture.¹

When a person fearing God, and loving our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, confesseth his or her real belief, faith or hope, in terms of Holy Scripture, it is sufficient.²

From this we may draw the conclusions that the Scriptures are a divine object or book, given under direction of God and are to be used as authority along with the "Inner Light," or the Holy Spirit directing us from within.

The Witness of Samuel Bownas.

Samuel Bownas, a minister of the Gospel in the Friends movement speaks to the authority of the Church being the Holy Scriptures and the leading of the Spirit of God. Samuel was a minister who had a clear, definite, and Divine call into the ministry.

He and Samuel Robinson were involved in a dispute with a group of religious men in Scotland and their first article of dispute was about "the rule of faith and practice." Samuel Bownas states about the dispute:

Our opponents would endeavour in their way, to make out the Scriptures to be the only rule of faith, and the Spirit we professed to be guided by, to be subordinate to the text . . . All

¹Ibid., p. 229.

²Ibid., p. 292.

were very willing to hear me; and I began to state the difference between us thus: "We all agree, the the Scriptures are a rule of faith and practice; do we not?" This was granted. "The difference lies here, if I take it right, we say it is a rule; you say it is the only rule; this is the point in dispute, is it not?" This was likewise granted. . . . "Allowing what you say to be true, it must be considered that all instrumental rules are made, whether they relate to spiritual or temporal affairs, and must be contrived and adapted to answer the end for which they are made." This was allowed also. "As the text is a rule made, contrived and adapted for spiritual affairs, who make it so? since the text could not make itself." . . . reply, "Holy men writ as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Here was a long pause again; "And," said I, "is this your mind?" "It is the plain words of the text," said another: "Granting this, then it must by your concession be allowed, that the Spirit gave forth or made the Scriptures, by the medium of holy men; therefore the Spirit gave forth the text; now judge you, whether a rule made, or the author who made the rule, be subordinate?" . . . "You are done, you are done," . . . "The Scriptures must be subordinate to the Spirit that gave them forth." I replied thus, "We believe concerning the text, that it is a rule, and the best external rule we have; but that the Spirit, which gave it us by the medium of holy men; is the principal rule of faith and practice."¹

Then also in Newberry Samuel Bownas defended the Friends' view of Scripture against a priest who said that Friends denied the Scriptures, baptism and the supper, and the resurrection of the body, and that they pretended to revelation now. He defended the Friends' doctrine in open debate and states the accuser "Could make nothing but noise and tumult."²

From Samuel Bownas we may safely conclude that he did believe that the Scriptures are a rule of faith for, but are subordinate to the

¹William and Thomas Evans, (ed) "Life of Samuel Bownas," The Friends Library, III, 16.

²Ibid., p. 52.

author who was the Holy Spirit. We therefore have not one rule of faith, but two: the Written Word and the Spirit of God, working within us.

The Witness of Thomas Shillitoe.

The attestation of Thomas Shillitoe as to the rule of faith is thus:

The Lord is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him: it is also declared, that a manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal; if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh: the primary means of immediate Divine help, the Holy Spirit, is freely administered unto all; the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all, teaching all. The Holy Scriptures are bountifully distributed; which are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. These Sacred Writings, although a secondary means were given forth by inspiration of God; designed, in condescending mercy, for the help of man; and they have the blessed tendency to direct our minds to the primary means even Christ Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending, the first and the last, the way, the truth, and the life, and the only way to God. . . .¹

Mr. Shillitoe leaves no doubt in the readers mind that the Scriptures are a rule of faith, a basis of authority but that the Holy Spirit also leads and instructs one in the way of righteousness. He speaks for the Friends movement with a great amount of authority for he was one of the early ministers in the movement and is spoken very highly of and his words are accepted by the early Friends.

We may say in conclusion then that the basis for authority in

¹William and Thomas Evans, "Life of Thomas Shillitoe," The Friends Library, p. 325.

the early Friends movement was both the Bible and the Holy Spirit working in harmony, but with the Bible in subordination to the Spirit.

The Spirit that inspired the Bible is more important than the Bible itself because without the Spirit no one can rightly understand the Bible - but the Spirit can speak to hearts without the Bible; however, the Spirit never speaks contrary to the Bible because the Spirit was the inspiration for the Bible.¹

¹Elizabeth B. Emmott, The Story of Quakerism, p. 114-115.

CHAPTER VII

THE FRIENDS' VIEW OF THE SACRAMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

In a previous chapter was discussed the Sacraments as Signs and Seals from God. This investigation indicated that John Calvin and his followers placed great emphasis upon the Sacraments as an essential part of the Christian religion. Specifically, the sacraments are elevated to the superior position of being a part or a phase of the Word of God.

This concept of the sacraments and others are put forth by other religious groups also. Since there are many good people of all denominations of Christians, who use the rites of baptism and the Lord's supper and believe that Christ has commanded them to do so, the Friends ought to consider the subject carefully, and be able to give reasons for doing without them.

That which first comes under observation is the name "sacrament." It is a word which was borrowed from the military oaths among the heathen, from them the Christians borrowed the term and many others when they began to apostasize and desired to more easily gain the heathen to their religion.¹ The Papists contend for seven sacraments and Protestants contend for two.

A controversy arises from the definition of sacraments as well

¹George Fox, The Works of George Fox., I, 42.

as the name. Regardless of whatever way their definition is taken, whether it be an outward visible sign in which an inward grace is conferred, or only signified, this definition will agree to many things which neither Papist nor Protestants will acknowledge to be sacraments. If they be expressed under the name of sealing ordinances, Barclay says he could never see by reason nor Scripture how this title could be appropriate to them more than to any other Christian religious performance, for it must properly be a sealing ordinance, which makes the person receiving it infallibly certain of the promise or thing sealed to them.

Elizabeth Emmott discusses the Friends' view in regard to baptism and communion in her book The Story of Quakerism. Some of her main points are: (1) Christ came to teach a religion of the heart and life, quite apart from any outward form or ceremony. His purpose was to bring man into personal touch with Himself as our Savior and Friend and to make him understand the Love of God the Heavenly Father. It seems contrary to the whole spirit of His teaching to believe that outward things as sprinkling or immersing in water, or eating bread and drinking wine can have any effect on our hearts. (2) All of the many Old Testament rites and ceremonies which were commanded by God also were most carefully described with full directions as to how each was to be done. Though the various parties of Jews differed about many of their beliefs, the mode of sacrificial offering and who was to offer them was uniform throughout.

In the New Testament, Christ gave no directions about the cere-

monies of baptism and the supper and yet nothing has caused more discord among His followers than their differing opinions about these rites. In some instances this has gone to a greater extremity than merely bitter feelings and has even caused persecution and bloodshed. If Christ had meant to institute these rites as a blessing to His Church, is it not plausible He would have given clear directions, so as to avoid all this disagreement?

(3) In Acts 15:6-29, is recorded an account of a meeting held by "apostles, elders, and brethren" at Jerusalem, on purpose to consider how far it was necessary to insist on any outward rites as binding on the Gentile converts. A letter was written directing them to observe certain "necessary" things, but neither water baptism nor the Lord's supper are mentioned, as certainly would have been if the "apostles and elders" had considered these things important to a Christian life.¹

BAPTISM

The early Friends did not practice the act of water baptism because they felt the Baptism of Christ superseded all other baptism. This baptism was not a physical baptism but rather in inward or spiritual baptism which could not be relegated to the physical above the position of an outward sign of an inward work which had already been accomplished. Therefore there was neither advantage nor disadvantage in water baptism.

¹Elizabeth B. Emmott, The Story of Quakerism, pp. 90-91.

At the beginning of each of the four Gospels (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33) and also in Acts 1:5 it states very explicitly that Christ's baptism is not with water but "with the Holy Ghost." Matthew and Luke add the words, "and with fire," which "have always been understood by all Christians as symbolical."¹ Therefore, whenever afterwards in the New Testament when Christ's baptism is spoken of it should be understood to mean baptism with the Holy Spirit, unless water baptism is clearly referred to. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus (John 3:5), "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," the "water" is understood figuratively as is the "fire" in the passages in Matthew and Luke. "Fire" and "water" lend understanding to the purifying effect which the Holy Spirit has on the heart, as water washes away and fire burns up chaff.²

Christ's great commission to His disciples, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," (Matt. 28:19), is taken figuratively also for three reasons.

(1) Because the disciples are so clearly told to wait till they themselves have received this Holy Ghost baptism, before they entered on their work (Acts 1:4,5), and after they had received it, we find they did "receive power" to go forth and bring men to the same baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38; 4:31; 8:14-17; 10:44, 45; etc.).

¹Ibid., p. 91.

²Ibid., p. 91.

(2) Because, although water-baptism is spoken of in several places in the Acts (e.g., Acts 8:12; 16, 36-38; 10:47, 48), it seems to have been used merely as a well understood mode of admission into the Church, and not as conferring any special grace. In Acts 8: 12-17, the converts at Samaria were first baptized with water, and afterwards received the baptism of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 10:44-48, Cornelius and his household are first baptized with the Holy Spirit, and thus, the fact of their acceptance in the sight of God being so evident, the Jews who had come down to Caesarea with Peter cannot refuse the water-baptism; but in both cases the two things are quite separate, and there is no hint of any grace conferred by the water-baptism.

(3) The rite of water-baptism was the common way among the Jews of receiving converts. John the Baptist used it with this well understood meaning; and Christ submitted Himself to it as a "fulfilling of righteousness," according to the ideas of the time in which He lived. The early Church simply continued what was a well understood, and therefore convenient way for those who joined them to make a confession of faith. When, however, disputes began to arise about the rite, as when the Christians at Corinth disagreed about who was the proper person to baptize them, Paul said: "I thank God that I baptized none of you, save . . ." (I Cor. 1:14); and again, "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel" (I Cor. 1:17), and he certainly would not have said this, if the baptism with water had been really important or necessary to Christian life.¹

Barclay's Testimony on Baptism.

As there is one Lord, and one faith, so there is one baptism; which is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience before God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And this baptism is a pure and spiritual thing, to wit, the baptism of the Spirit and fire, by which we are buried with him, that being washed and purged from our sins, we may walk in newness of life: of which the baptism of John was a figure, which was commanded for a time, and not to continue forever. As to the baptism of infants, it is a mere human tradition, for which neither precept nor practice is to be found in all the scripture.²

¹Ibid., p. 91-92.

²Robert Barclay, An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, pp. 391-92.

There is but one baptism. There need be no other proof than the words found in Ephesians 4:5 - "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Here Paul positively states that as there is but one body, one Spirit, one faith, one God . . . there is but "one baptism." This text is usually interpreted as meaning that both water and Spirit baptism constitute this "one baptism," by virtue of the sacramental union. Barclay says that this exposition takes place not because it is grounded on the testimony of the Scripture but because they twist the Scripture to make it suit their principle of water baptism. Another group may say the baptism is but one, with the water as the sign, and the Spirit as the seal.¹

Barclay says that Peter observed a distinction between the baptism of John and that of the Spirit. In Acts 11:16, Peter said, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." The apostle makes the application of the Holy Ghost falling upon them, whence he infers that they were then baptized with the baptism of the Spirit. John's baptism was a figure of Christ's baptism. John's was a being baptized with water whereas Christ's is a baptizing with the Spirit, therefore John's baptism must have been a figure of Christ's. Also, we know that water baptism was John's baptism, and we have seen that Christ's baptism is not with water but the Spirit.

Therefore, there is no baptism to continue now, but the one bap-

¹Ibid., p. 389-95.

tism of Christ. Thus, water baptism is not to continue now because it is not the baptism of Christ. Also, if water baptism had been to continue a perpetual ordinance of Christ in His Church, He would have either practiced it Himself or commanded His apostles to do so.

Concerning infant baptism, if water baptism be ceased, then surely baptizing of infants is not warrantable.¹

George Fox's Testimony on Baptism.

Fox looked at the baptism of John, with the element of water, which must decrease, as a forerunner of Christ's baptism, "which doth increase." Christ baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost, who thoroughly purges the floor of the heart from sin and corruption and burns up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Every man and woman must come to this baptism of Christ before they know the wheat or the seed of God come into God's garner. John, who says he must decrease, his baptism with outward elementary water, does not bring the wheat (seed of God), into God's garner.

The apostle Paul thanked God that he (Paul) had baptized but a handful of people, for he said Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

John the Baptist testified to the difference between his baptism and that of Christ. "There is one coming who is mightier than I: he

¹Ibid., pp. 395-422.

shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire;" "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, he must increase, but I must decrease," "He that is from above, is above all," "He that cometh from heaven, is above all." So John confesses that Christ was greater than he, and came after him, who must increase, and was mightier than he, preferred before him, for He was before him.

And when Christ came to be baptized of John, John forbade Him saying that he (John) had need of being baptized by Christ, so why did Christ come to baptized of John. Jesus said to him "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

Here you may see John's testimony along with that of Paul, who was sent to preach. And he tells the Corinthians (who were Gentiles), "By one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

This was the spiritual baptism of Christ that the apostle brought both Jews and Gentiles into. Then Paul surely must have seen the diminishing of John's baptism and who brought them to the spiritual baptism. Paul exhorts the Ephesians to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and then went on to state there is one body, one spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism and one God and Father of all. So God was in them all, by His spirit.¹

¹George Fox, The Works of George Fox, p. 289-290.

Paul said in Acts how the baptism of repentance first was preached by John before the coming of Christ. This was preached to all the people of Israel but he does not say to all the Gentiles.

And Christ commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father. Why? Jesus went on to say "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." . . . and they were.

The apostle Paul came to Ephesus, where he found certain disciples and asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost since they had believed. They said that they had not even heard there was a Holy Ghost. Paul asked them "Unto what then were ye baptized?" They said, "Unto John's baptism." Paul said to them, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him that should come after him; (that is, on Christ Jesus, etc.) and when Paul had laid his hand on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them."

Here one may see the baptism of John, with his elementary water, was not the baptism of Christ with the Holy Ghost; for they did not even know there existed a Holy Ghost. Then they were not likely to know the baptism of Christ with the Holy Ghost. But they knew it before Paul left.¹

Also, while Peter spoke to the household of Cornelius, the Holy Ghost fell upon those which heard the word that he preached. So the Holy Ghost was given through the preaching of the word Christ, and the Holy Ghost doth baptize them; through which baptism the wheat or seed of

¹Ibid., p. 191-192.

God is gathered into God's garner.¹

So it is clear the apostle brought people off the doctrine of many baptisms, to the one faith and one spiritual baptism, as in Ephesians 4:5. By this one spirit were all to be baptized into one body, and so to drink all into one spirit, and in that they have unity and fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ, and one with another. I Corinthians 12:13; I John 1:3. The Lord bring all people into this spiritual baptism, and into this fellowship. Amen.²

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Many people will say that even though Christ may not have placed a specific corollation between the Lord's supper and salvation, this does not excuse us from the obedience to the command of Christ. We ought not to do what we think best. Christ said plainly, "This do in remembrance of Me," and our part is to obey His command, which will bring a blessing. Elizabeth Emmott feels people who say this are mistaken in believing that Christ commanded any outward rite for the following reasons:

(1) Although all the evangelists tell us about the last supper of our Lord with His disciples, and three of them (Matthew, Mark and Luke) tell us that he spoke of the bread and wine as His body and blood, yet it is only Luke (and he was not present) who mentions the command, "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19); and these words are omitted in some of the best ancient manuscripts and versions, and two great Biblical scholars, Doctors Westcott and Hort, now tell us that they were not in the original text at all, but were added later. John, the disciple who of all others seemed to catch the most of his Master's spirit, does not refer at all to the bread and wine in his account of the last supper, but he relates at some length the washing of the disciples' feet by Christ, and tells us that He said, "I have given you an example that ye should

¹Ibid., p. 292.

²Ibid., p. 294.

do as I have done to you," but whilst Christians generally take the eating of the bread and drinking of wine by Christ as establishing an outward rite, most are agreed in thinking that this action of feet washing was meant symbolically, to teach us a lesson of humble and loving service. We think both actions were equally intended to be understood in their spiritual meaning.

(2) But, suppose that these words, "This do in remembrance of Me," were spoken by Christ, and were intended to be taken literally, we still cannot see that they establish a new rite. Christ and his disciples were eating together the passover supper - a solemn religious feast, in which once a year the Jews celebrated their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. The Jewish Christians continued to celebrate this feast for many years to come, and it seems to us that, in eating it with them, Christ wanted to teach them that, from this time onward, the thought of their deliverance from Egypt was to be swallowed up in the thought of the greater deliverance from the bondage of sin, which He had come to give, and of which that was only a type. The passover lamb, which was slain to remind them of the sprinkled blood which saved their homes from the destroying angel, was a type of Himself; and, in future, as long as they continued to keep that feast, His death for them and the deliverance which He brought was to be the foremost subject in their thoughts. "This do in remembrance of Me." "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

(3) And, inasmuch as it was not over the lamb itself that Christ is said to have spoken these words, but over the bread and wine, those simplest (in those days) articles of food and drink, which formed part of every meal, many have thought that the words did not specially refer even to the passover meal, but had a still wider meaning, being in fact parallel to those passages in John 6, where Christ speaks of Himself as the "bread of life," and says, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life" (John 6:54). The Jews misunderstood these words, and said, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Again, when Jesus said to His disciples (Matt. 16:6-11), "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," they, "reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have taken no bread'." In both these instances we see clearly that the Listeners were wrong in taking the words of Christ in their outward and literal meaning; and why should we suppose that His words were meant to be taken literally at this last supper?¹

The Friends believed generally, then, that Jesus was not insti-

¹Emmott, op. cit., p. 93-95.

tuting a new rite or ceremony, but was using a means he often used to tell them a spiritual truth. Other Friends words convey the same meaning.

Barclay's Testimony on Communion.

The communion of the body and blood of Christ is inward and spiritual, which is the participation of his flesh and blood, by which the inward man is daily nourished in the hearts of those in whom Christ dwells. Of which things the breaking of bread by Christ with his disciples was a figure, which even they who had received the substance used in the church for a time, for the sake of the weak; even as abstaining from things strangled, and from blood, the washing one another's feet, and the anointing of the sick with oil: all which are commanded with no less authority and solemnity than the former; yet seeing they are but shadows of better things, they cease in such as have obtained the substance.¹

The communion of the body and blood of Christ is a mystery hid from all natural men. In their fallen state they cannot understand, reach to, nor understand that so long as they remain in their sinful state can they be partakers of this communion. And the Christian world, so called, for the most part has been still labouring, working, conceiving and imagining, in their own natural and unrenewed minds about the things of God. Therefore, says Barclay, this mystery has been much hid and sealed up from them, while they have been contending, quarrelling and fighting one another about the mere shadow, outside form, but strangers to the substance, life and virtue.

The body of Christ, which believers partake of is spiritual, and not carnal; and His blood which they drink is pure and heavenly, and

¹Barclay, op. cit., p. 422.

and not human or elementary, as Augustine affirms.¹

As to how and after what manner man comes to partake of it, and be fed by it Barclay replies by the words of Christ:

"I am the bread of life," saith he; "he that cometh to me shall never hunger; he that believeth in me shall never thirst." And again, "For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed." So whosoever thou art that askest this question, or readest these lines, whether thou accountest thyself a believer, or really feelist, by a certain and sad experience, that thou art yet in the unbelief, and findest that the outward body and flesh of Christ is so far from thee, . . . (though they may have believed and partaken of physical elements for salvation and yet feel the need of more) -- And as the outward birth cannot subsist without some outward body to feed upon, some outward flesh and some outward drink, so neither can this inward birth, unless it be fed by this inward flesh and blood of Christ, . . . So it is this inward participation of this inward man, of this inward and spiritual body, by which man is united to God, and has fellowship and communion with him. . . . This cannot be understood of outward eating of outward bread; and as by this the soul must have fellowship with God, so also, as far as all the saints are partakers of this one body and one blood, they come also to have a joint communion.²

Paul said to the Corinthians in this respect, that they "being many, are one bread, and one body;" and to the wise among the Corinthians he said, "The bread which we break is not the communion of the body of Christ?"

This to Barclay is the true and spiritual supper of the Lord, which men come to partake of, by hearing the voice of Christ and opening the door of their hearts, and so letting Him in, in the above manner. So, the supper of the Lord and the partaking of His flesh and blood,

¹Ibid., p. 422-23.

²Ibid., p. 427-29.

is no ways limited to the ceremony of breaking of bread and drinking wine at particular times, but is truly and really enjoyed as often as the soul turns to the light of the Lord, feels and partakes of that heavenly life by which the inward man is nourished. This may be and is often witnessed by the faithful at all times, though more particularly when they are assembled together to wait upon the Lord.¹

George Fox's Testimony on Communion.

And Christ said to the Church of Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man will hear my voice, and will open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and he with me," and this was the supper that Christ preached to John, and to the Church, after he was ascended; for John had taken the supper of the elements of bread and wine in the same night that Christ was betrayed, before Christ was crucified; but now John writes to the Church, and tells them of another supper, than taking the elements of bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's death, which Christ gave to his disciples before he was crucified, and said, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, do it in remembrance of me, and to show forth his death until he come."²

Fox felt, in the former statement of Scripture, that the door which was to be opened by those hearing Christ's knock was the door of his heart, mind and soul, by joining to the light, grace, and truth of Jesus. Then when Jesus comes in to sup, this is the marriage supper of the Lamb. "And is not this supper beyond, and a further supper, than taking the elements of bread and wine in remembrance of His death, to wit, to sup with Christ in his resurrection and ascension?"³

¹Ibid., p. 429.

²Fox, The Works of George Fox, p. 243.

³Ibid.

They hear His voice, and so Christ is in them, then they are no reprobates. He that hath the Son hath life; for may not reprobates take bread in remembrance of Christ's death, and not hear His voice after His resurrection and ascension?

Can any that do not hear the voice of Christ, nor open the door of their hearts to let Christ in, sup with Him, and He with them, at the heavenly marriage supper of the Lamb, which is the last supper that Christ calls people to after His resurrection and ascension? Only those who hear the voice and open their hearts door are the ones that come to the marriage supper of the Lamb and sup with Him.¹

And the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, after he had baptized some of them with water, and had given them the cup and the bread, "if that Jesus was not in them they were reprobates; though they had all these outward elementary things. . . . for Christ took the bread and wine and gave ti to his disciples, when he was with them, before he was crucified; but now he is risen and ascended, and stands at the doors of your hearts and knocks..."²

In Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and I Corinthians 11: "In the same night that Christ was betrayed, he took the bread and the cup, and said, As often as ye do eat this bread, and drink this cup, do it in remembrance of me; and he do show forth the Lord's death until he come." And Christ saith, "I say unto you, I will drink henceforth no more of this fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And Christ said, when he was at his last supper, when he was betrayed before he was crucified, "I say unto you, (namely, his disciples) I will not any more eat thereof, (namely, of the bread of the passover,) until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."³

¹Ibid., p. 241-243.

²Ibid., p. 251.

³Ibid., p. 282.

This fruit of the vine and bread which Christ broke at his last supper and gave to the disciples, Fox says, would not be eaten by Christ again until it was fulfilled in the Kingdom of God, nor drunk any more until the day that He drank it new in the Kingdom of God. This was said by Christ, to the disciples at His last supper, before He was crucified. But after Christ was crucified, buried, and rose again, He did eat and drink again with them as is recorded in the Scriptures. In Luke 24:30 we find that after the resurrection Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke and gave it to the disciples. By this act they knew that the Lord had come. Also, in Luke 24:41-43 Jesus asked for food and ate before the disciples and said "these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled.

Fox refers to the statement of Christ when He said, "There are some standing here, which shall not taste of death until they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom and power." (Matthew 16:28) This was fulfilled after His resurrection when He said "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me." It was then that He came in power and the disciples saw Him in His kingdom after His resurrection.¹

John was one who partook of the supper the night Jesus was betrayed and he saw Christ come in the kingdom of His Father, with power. Christ sent John, after He was ascended, to call the Church to another supper, and said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man

¹Ibid., p. 283.

will hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and will sup with him and he with me; he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Now they that come to this inward and heavenly supper, and to sup with Christ, the heavenly and spiritual man, the second Adam, since He is risen and ascended to heaven, they must have their spiritual ear to hear the spiritual voice of Christ, and His spiritual knocking at the door of their immortal souls and hearts. To this heavenly, Spiritual supper did Christ send John to call the churches after He had risen and ascended into heaven.

John had already partaken of the supper with the elements of bread and wine when this call came to him.

And may not reprobates take the elements of bread and wine in remembrance of Christ's death? Such will not open the door when Christ knocks and will not open their spiritual ear to hear what the Spirit says to the Church of Christ. They hate His light and do not come to the heavenly supper of Christ, but their dark spirit leads them to live in weak elements, outward things which perish with the using and which keep them in bondage.¹

According to the Friends the early Christians seem to have understood the words of Christ in the wider sense of applying to all eating and drinking, and therefore their view of every meal being a communion feast. It seemed natural that for those who had been with Christ, there

¹Ibid., p. 282-288.

would be a solemnity whenever there was the breaking of bread for they would remember His teaching. It would be almost as if He were present at every meal; thus whenever they ate together it was the Lord's supper and was to be eaten with gladness and unity of heart.

But, as new converts were added to the Church, many of them from heathenism, this simple faith became changed. Both Emmott¹ and Clarkson² express the idea that the new Christians missed their old sacrifices and the idea took root of some mystery attaching to the bread and wine over which Christ spoke. They came to believe that by priestly consecration a wonderful change could take place and the body and blood of Christ really be present. And in this way much of form and ceremony was mixed up with this simple feast, and as with baptism, there were many disputes over the right way of taking it.

In conclusion, many things are interpreted in a spiritual sense rather than literal. The Friends do not want to judge others, in regard to either of these ordinances, who feel it right to make use of them, and believe they receive blessing in so doing, but desire to emphasize the importance of the spiritual realities. Friends do believe in both spiritual baptism and spiritual communion; they are so real that they cannot be lowered to the level of mere outward ceremonies, nor are they to be enjoyed only occasionally and at stated times.

¹Emmott, op. cit., p. 95.

²Clarkson, op. cit., p. 292-294.

The the Friends, baptism consists of the Holy Spirit's power, so known and yielded to in hearts, that there is a continual dependence upon His help and guidance. The believer is brought into such a conscious fellowship with God and Christ that he can truly say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Communion is opening the heart's door to the Lord Jesus and finding His promise fulfilled, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Those who set aside the outward ought to make sure that they know the inward realities. Without these, the outward rites can never help anyone, and, if these are truly known, nothing more can be needed.

1.

A COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

CHAPTER VIII

A COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to analyze and compare the early Friends view of the Word of God with that of John Calvin in an attempt to discover the reason why two groups could arrive at such widely divergent views when they have begun at approximately the same place. The early Quakers brought no system of theology, this was left to learned men of the next generation like Penn and Barclay. They were of Calvinistic theological background on the one hand and on the other were influenced greatly by the new Independent movement which was of a great mystical tradition.

The split with the Calvinistic churches of the day was an attempt on the part of the early Friends to return to Apostolic Christianity.¹ The apostles had been commanded to not quench the Spirit, but to wait for the Spirit, speak by the Spirit, pray by the Spirit and walk in the Spirit.²

It is seen at the very start that there is a differentiation from the two views of revelation. Calvin believed in and organized a very logical, systematic religious theology from the beginning, whereas the early Friends desired a human, experiential type. Calvin starts by

¹Rachel King, George Fox and the Light Within, p. 167.

²William Penn, The Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers, p. 10.

immediately taking everything out of the hands of man and places him in the position where he must accept any and every thing which God says and desires. God reveals Himself to man in two ways: (1) natural revelation through which God convinces sinful man of His existence through nature; and (2) special revelation which is given to guide men properly. The natural revelation cannot lead men into a true knowledge of God as either Creator or Redeemer. This is accomplished only by the Word of God. Special revelation is the Word of God embodied in Scripture, the preached Word, and the Sacraments. Though this special revelation comes to all men, only the elect of God benefit by it while the reprobates are condemned the more.

Calvin gives great place to the Word of God and the Sacraments as means of revelation. They are the forms or symbols by which Christ confronts finite man with His grace and challenge. It is to these symbols and forms, according to Calvin, we must turn if we wish to enter communion with God. We no longer need to expect to have revelations through angels and visions, for God has put in the place of Christ a man like ourselves, a minister of the Gospel who speaks that "He might draw us unto Himself." In other words, by the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments, we may be united to God, for Calvin calls the preaching of the Gospel the "Kingdom of Heaven" and the Sacraments he calls the "fate of Heaven" because they admit us to the presence of God.

Thus the Word and Sacraments become to us what Jesus, His Word and works were to those who received His grace during the days of His

flesh. As a result, the Word and Sacrament are the chief treasure of the Church. They are the signs of the presence of Jesus in the midst of His people.

The early Friends made a distinction in revelation too, but in a different way. They distinguished between the certain knowledge of God and the uncertain; the saving heart knowledge and the soaring airy head knowledge; the spiritual and the literal. The literal knowledge may be obtained in many ways, but the spiritual or certain knowledge of God may be had by no other way than the immediate inward manifestation and revelation of God's Spirit, enlightening the heart and opening the understanding. This true and effectual knowledge which brings eternal life cannot be attained through any other source other than by the revelation of God's Spirit. It witnesses to and verifies God in the hearts of men. This Spirit was the agent used by God to inspire the writers of the Bible, and the Bible contains what God desired that man should write.

Since the Spirit inspired the Scriptures, they must be subservient to their author. As a result, the rule of faith for the early Friends was not the Scriptures but rather the Spirit of God witnessing inwardly to every man. The principal fountain of truth must be Truth itself and authority depends not on another. The writings and sayings of men must be brought to the Word of God - the Eternal Word - and see if they agree. This Word always proceeds from God. The Scriptural authority and certainty depend upon the Spirit by which they were dictated and the reason they were revealed as truth is because they proceeded from the Spirit.

If by the Spirit we can only come to the true knowledge of God; if by the Spirit we are to be led into all truth, and so be taught of all things; therefore, the Spirit not the Scriptures is the primary rule of faith and manners. The very nature of the Gospel declares that the Scriptures cannot be the only and chief rule of Christians, else there should be no difference between the law and the Gospel. The law and Gospel differ in that the law, being outwardly written, brings under condemnation, but has not life in it to save; whereas the Gospel, as it declares and makes the evil so, being an inward powerful thing; it gives power also to obey and delivers from evil. The law or letter, which is without us kills, but the Gospel, which is the inward spiritual law, gives life; for it consists not so much in words as in virtues. The letter of the Scripture is outward, a mere declaration of good things, but not the things themselves; therefore it not nor can be the chief or principal rule of Christians. The Scripture makes declaration of things but makes no specific applications. These are left to the Spirit.

Calvin placed the Scriptures on a much higher plane than did the early Friends. For him the Scriptures were the sure and infallible record, the unerring standard, the pure word of God, the infallible rule of his faith. In every detail the words written down by the prophets were written by God. Since God did not speak directly to the Children of Israel but rather spoke through the medium of a prophet, God in so doing, so closely identified the prophet's speech with His own Word that it may be said that the mouth of the prophet was the mouth of God Him-

self. Thus, the speech of man can really become God's Word if it is spoken to those who are intended to hear it. As a result, any spoken word of God must be obtained from the written Word, the Scriptures. These Scriptures in their early forms were oracles which God gave to the patriarchs which were carefully preserved in their oral transmission. To this nucleus was added the law and later the oracles of the prophets, who were interpreters of the law, adding nothing to it except prophecies. Lastly came the writings of the Apostles. If we are to know and bear witness of God, we must turn to this record. The Scriptures are for Calvin the only authoritative witness to Christ, and we must trust them as reliable sources. Thus the Bible is the sole source of Church proclamation and the sole authority that must rule the life of the Church. The Spirit works in conjunction with the Word, but is subservient to the Word. The Word of God, rightly interpreted and applied is the absolute rule of life. It provides salvation for men if accepted in true heart faith. If not accepted in true heart faith it only serves to condemn man more.

Calvin incorporates into the Word of God the Sacraments. He contended for two, the Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and placed the efficacy of them entirely upon the Holy Spirit. He felt that Baptism gives the full assurance of salvation and possesses a dormant power when given to infants. In the Lord's Supper, the body of Christ is received by faith and for Calvin this is eating of the fruit of faith. Through the Supper there comes to the individual righteousness, forgiveness, sanctification and all the blessings that are the fruit of His death.

The early Friends did not practice these Sacraments because they felt that these were intended in a spiritual way rather than physical. Reprobates could partake in the physical elements and yet remain reprobates, and God would not limit the bestowing of His blessings and grace upon men to certain times when physical elements were consumed. They therefore could not relegate the physical participation in the sacraments to a position any higher than an outward sign of an inward work which had been already accomplished. If it had been already accomplished inwardly, there was no advantage nor disadvantage in the outward work.

It is the opinion of this writer that the approach of the early Friends was much nearer that to the true apostolic catholic church. Christ used the humanistic materialistic illustrations to provide for better understanding on the part of man, but His application was always spiritual. But where He could have the people understand Him, He never bothered with the physical, but referred directly to the spiritual. Likewise the early Friends saw no necessity for the physical but relied instead on the spiritual application.

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