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## PREFACE

HENDRICKSON CHRISTIAN CLASSICS EDITION

*Abraham Kuyper*  
(1837–1920)

*The persuasion that the whole of a man's life is to be lived as in the divine Presence has become the fundamental thought of Calvinism. By this decisive idea, or rather by this mighty fact, it has allowed itself to be controlled in every department of its entire domain. It is from this mother-thought that the all-embracing life system of Calvinism sprang.*

—Abraham Kuyper  
*Lectures on Calvinism*

Nearly a century after his death, the eminent Dutch statesman and theologian Abraham Kuyper continues to profoundly influence evangelical faith and thought. A veritable whirlwind of accomplishment, Kuyper

is renowned for his unrelenting efforts to breathe fresh life into the teachings expounded three centuries earlier by Reformation theologian John Calvin.

In launching what came to be known as the Neo-Calvinism movement, Kuyper passionately promoted Reformed orthodoxy, not merely as a set of theological principles but as what he termed “a comprehensive life- and worldview” with vast implications for contemporary questions. In countless writings, sermons, and lectures, this visionary genius laid the groundwork for ongoing conversations about how faith should infuse and inform every aspect of life, from politics and education to industry and culture.

A man of less than average height and a heavyset build that belied his astonishing vitality, Abraham Kuyper was as notable for the diversity of his endeavors as for his intellect and zeal. His most oft-quoted declaration aptly reflects the keynote message of his life: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over *all*, does not cry, ‘Mine!’”<sup>1</sup> He actively lived out this conviction through spirited engagement in politics, religion, education, and journalism.

Yet the principles Kuyper so vigorously advocated through decades of public life mark an interesting contrast to the positions he held as a young pastor, and the path that led him to embrace Calvinism serves only to underscore his firm belief in God’s sovereign reign over the full scope of life.

From birth, Abraham Kuyper’s life was rooted in the church. His father, the Rev. Jan Frederick Kuyper, served as a minister within the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*). Rev. J. F. Kuyper embraced a theology that was orthodox but not radically so, and not fundamentally Calvinistic. When a dispute arose between confessional groups holding differing standards of orthodoxy, he did not join the secession of 1836 but remained with the state church.

Over the years Rev. Kuyper held pastorates in several towns, including Maasslius, Netherlands, where Abraham was born on October 29, 1837. Henriette Kuyper, Abraham’s mother, had been a governess and a teacher at a girls’ boarding school. She and Rev. Kuyper attended to Abraham’s early

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<sup>1</sup> James D. Bratt, ed., *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

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education at home, where he developed a lifelong love of words. In fact he became such an avid reader that at one point his father forbid him to read the newspapers, urging him to find material more suitable to his age. The determined young adolescent is said to have snuck off to the attic on numerous occasions with his contraband newspaper, an early harbinger not only of his decades-long involvement in journalism but of the tenacity with which he pursued all his interests.

When Abraham was twelve years old, the family moved to Leiden. There he received his secondary education before enrolling in Leiden University's college of liberal arts. A singularly ambitious scholar, he pursued studies in literature, philosophy, and theology. His wide-ranging interests reflected a hunger for knowledge that would continue through a lifetime of study. Planning to follow in his father's footsteps, Kuyper entered the divinity school of Leiden University at age twenty-one, ultimately earning his doctorate in theology in 1863.

During his university years, Kuyper was heavily influenced by the Modernist views of his professors, particularly Dr. J. H. Scholten, one of the foremost systematic theologians and vocal Modernists of the day. Elevating rationality at the expense of faith, the Modernist movement informed a liberal theology that jettisoned the supernatural in favor of Darwinism and honored Jesus solely as a good man and brilliant teacher rather than the Incarnation of God. Although scholars differ as to how fully Kuyper embraced the Modernist philosophy, he later described having joined the rest of his class in giving a standing ovation to a lecture in which Scholten denied the bodily resurrection of Christ.

Without question, throughout his time at Leiden and his first years in the pastorate, Kuyper held to a liberal theology that stands in contrast to the staunch Calvinism that marks most of his life. The shift in his thinking can be traced to several factors.

First, in crafting a prize-winning treatise on the differing perspectives of French Protestant theologian John Calvin and Polish reformer Johannes á Lasco, Kuyper developed an essential understanding of—if not an appreciation for—the depth and breadth of Calvin's work. While carrying a full

student load, Kuyper spent eight months crafting this paper, which became the basis for his doctoral dissertation. His intense drive and painstaking application to study eventually led to a physical breakdown and a required period of rest.

During his convalescence, Kuyper received from his future wife, Johanna Schaay, an English religious novel that served as a second catalyst propelling him toward Calvinism. In *The Heir of Redclyffe* by Charlotte M. Yonge, he found himself drawn into a story that highlighted the inadequacy of his faith and dealt a devastating blow of “judgment on my own ambitions and character.” His reading of this novel precipitated both a personal spiritual awakening for Kuyper and a fresh vision of the church’s role in the life of a believer. He was deeply affected by a scene following the death of the gentle hero of the novel, in which the church was characterized as “the mother who had guided each of his steps in his orphaned life.” The idea of the church as a reliable and constant guide for life fascinated Kuyper.

Although reading this novel served as a spiritual turning point, his transition out of the Modernist camp was still in process when he took his first pastorate in the village of Beesd at the age of twenty-five, shortly after marrying Johanna. Most parishioners in this country hamlet appreciated his well-crafted sermons delivered with sparkling oratorical skills, but a group of dissenters refused to attend services led by a man whose theology they saw as a betrayal of the Calvinist positions they held dear. Disregarding advice to ignore such troublemakers, he chose to include them in his parish visits and to listen to their heartfelt concerns. One parishioner in particular made a lasting impression. Pietje Baltus, a farmer’s daughter, initially refused even to shake Kuyper’s hand, but then reconsidered, taking seriously her obligation to point him back toward the central truths of Christianity and Reformed thought.

During his four years at Beesd, such ongoing encounters with people who actually lived out what he had only studied continually challenged Kuyper to reconsider his theological positions and search for a deeper, richer truth than he had yet discovered. Compelled to revisit the works of Calvin, he found what his heart and mind had been seeking: not simply a well-wrought doctrine for Reformed theology but a multi-dimensional approach to living, a system of thought that impacted politics, art, science, indeed

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which the church as mother could provide guidance for her children in every area of life. As he later declared, “In Calvinism my heart has found rest.”

This transformational shift set the course for the remainder of Kuyper’s lengthy and varied career. Following four years in Beesd, Kuyper held pastorates in Utrecht and Amsterdam, drawing large crowds with his dynamic and engaging oratory. During the next few years, he became increasingly vocal about what he viewed as the dangerous condition of the state church, which he believed had forsaken its Reformed tradition for a dangerously centralized governance and a relaxed stance on key principles of orthodoxy. In 1886, he led a breakaway group of churches that eventually joined with the secessionist congregations of fifty years earlier, forming a new communion of churches known as the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*).

In keeping with his conviction that no area of life is exempt from service to God, Kuyper’s efforts to apply Reformation principles extended far beyond the walls of the church. Through Calvinism, he observed, “the human heart . . . discovered its high and holy calling to consecrate every department of life and every energy at its disposal to the glory of God.” Kuyper dedicated himself to living out this calling with such fervor that his multifaceted accomplishments and endeavors nearly stagger the imagination. Along with his never-ending pursuit of scholarship, he served as editor of two newspapers; wrote a voluminous collection of articles, books, devotional meditations, and sermon compilations; maintained a brisk schedule as a lecturer; taught theology at the Free University, which he also founded; led the conservative Anti-Revolutionary political party for decades; stood as a member of parliament for several terms; and served his country as prime minister from 1901 to 1905. Although a zealous pursuit of his goals and an eagerness to engage in intellectual combat drew many enemies over the course of Kuyper’s public career, even those who opposed his ideals respected his intellect and eloquence. For nearly half a century—right up to his death on November 8, 1920—he influenced culture, religion, and politics in the Netherlands, Europe, and beyond.

*Lectures on Calvinism* comprises a series of talks presented at the peak of Kuyper’s public life during a visit to the United States in 1898 to accept an

## *Lectures on Calvinism*

honorary Doctorate of Laws degree from Princeton University. The faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary invited him to deliver the Stone Lectures, a series of annual public addresses featuring an internationally distinguished scholar.

These lectures serve as a sort of manifesto of Neo-Calvinism, a comprehensive summary of Kuyperian thought that encapsulates the very essence of his vision for an all-encompassing “life system” or “life- and worldview” that could successfully renovate contemporary perspectives and thereby counteract the ideologies that “imperilled” Christianity. In these six lectures he undertook to present Calvinism as a system uniquely structured to undergird not only a particular theology and church-order but also “a given form for political and social life, for the interpretation of the moral world-order, for the relation between nature and grace, between Christianity and the world, between church and state, and finally for art and science.”

Each of the six lectures carries a distinct focus, with the first establishing Calvinism’s credentials as an unparalleled life system and the remaining five addressing its unique role in the arenas of religion, politics, science, art, and the future development of human thought and culture. Through all are threaded the themes so effectively articulated by Kuyper, including the sovereignty of God, the antithesis between Christianity and other worldviews, and the doctrine of common grace, which holds that God, in his longsuffering mercy, not only restrains the destructive effects of sin on creation as a whole but also showers on both Christians and nonbelievers the undeserved blessings that lead to development of science, art, and culture.

Certain insensitive, even offensive, remarks and attitudes within this work will strike a harsh note to contemporary ears, but these are indicative of the political and racial climate of Kuyper’s era, making all the more notable his declaration that “all men or women, rich or poor, weak or strong . . . stand as equals before God.”

More than a century after Kuyper initially published them in book form, his *Lectures on Calvinism* continue to spur debate and dialogue among all who grapple with questions about the relationship between Christianity and culture. His progressive approach in applying classic Calvinism to the issues of his

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day offers valuable fodder for contemporary evangelical thought. As you read his penetrating insights, you may well be surprised by the similarities between the controversies of today and the cultural debates on which Abraham Kuyper unleashed his incisive intellect:

Are not the lines of battle drawn as follows: theism over against pantheism; sin over against imperfection; the divine Christ of God over against Jesus the mere man; the cross a sacrifice of reconciliation over against the cross as a symbol of martyrdom; the Bible as given by inspiration of God over against a purely human product; the Ten Commandments as ordained by God over against a mere archaeological document; the ordinances of God absolutely established over against an ever-changing law and morality spun out of man's subjective consciousness?



## FIRST LECTURE

### *Calvinism as a Life System*

A traveler from the old European continent, disembarking on the shore of this New World, feels as the psalmist says, that “his thoughts crowd upon him like a multitude” [Ps 94:19]. Compared with the eddying waters of your new stream of life, the old stream in which he was moving seems almost frost bound and dull; and here, on American ground, for the first time, he realizes how so many divine potencies, which were hidden away in the bosom of mankind from our very creation, but which our Old World was incapable of developing, are now beginning to disclose their inward splendor, thus promising a still richer store of surprises for the future.

You would not, however, ask me to forget the superiority which, in many respects, the Old World may still claim, in your eyes, as well as in mine. Old Europe remains even now the bearer of a longer historical past, and therefore stands before us as a tree rooted more deeply, hiding between its leaves some more matured fruits of life. You are yet in your springtide; we are passing through our fall; and has not the harvest of autumn an enchantment of its own?

But, though, on the other hand, I fully acknowledge the advantage you possess in the fact that (to use another simile) the train of life travels with you so immeasurably faster than with us—leaving us miles and miles behind—still we both feel that the life in old Europe is not something separate from life here; it is one and the same current of human existence that flows through both continents.

By virtue of our common origin, you may call us bone of your bone—we feel that you are flesh of our flesh, and although you are outstripping us in the most discouraging way, you will never forget that the historic cradle of your wondrous youth stood in our old Europe, and was most gently rocked in my once mighty Fatherland.

Moreover, besides this common parentage, there is another factor which, in the face of even a wider difference, would continue to unite your interests and ours. Far more precious to us than even the development of human life is the crown which ennobles it, and this noble crown of life for you and for me rests in the Christian name. That crown is our common heritage. It was not from Greece or Rome that the regeneration of human life came forth—that mighty metamorphosis dates from Bethlehem and Golgotha; and if the Reformation, in a still more special sense, claims the love of our hearts, it is because it has dispelled the clouds of sacerdotalism, and has unveiled again to fullest view the glories of the cross. But, in deadly opposition to this Christian element, against the very Christian name, and against its salutiferous influence in every sphere of life, the storm of Modernism has now arisen with violent intensity.

In 1789 the turning point was reached.

Voltaire's mad cry, "Down with the scoundrel," was aimed at Christ himself, but this cry was merely the expression of the most hidden thought from which the French Revolution sprang. The fanatic outcry of another philosopher, "We no more need a God," and the odious shibboleth, "no God, no master," of the Convention—these were the sacrilegious watchwords which at that time heralded the liberation of man as an emancipation from all divine Authority. And if, in his impenetrable wisdom, God employed the Revolution as a means by which to overthrow the tyranny of the Bourbons, and to bring a judgment on the princes who abused his nations as their footstool, nevertheless the principle of that

## First Lecture: Calvinism as a Life System

Revolution remains thoroughly anti-Christian, and has since spread like a cancer, dissolving and undermining all that stood firm and consistent before our Christian faith.

There is no doubt then that Christianity is imperiled by great and serious dangers. Two life systems<sup>1</sup> are wrestling with one another, in mortal combat. Modernism is bound to build a world of its own from the data of the natural man, and to construct man himself from the data of nature; while, on the other hand, all those who reverently bend the knee to Christ and worship him as the Son of the living God, and God himself, are bent upon saving the “Christian heritage.” This is the struggle in Europe, this is the struggle in America, and this also is the struggle for principles in which my own country is engaged, and in which I myself have been spending all my energy for nearly forty years.

In this struggle apologetics have advanced us not one single step. Apologists have invariably begun by abandoning the assailed breastwork, in order to entrench themselves cowardly in a ravelin behind it.

From the first, therefore, I have always said to myself—If the battle is to be fought with honor and with a hope of victory, then principle must be arrayed against principle; then it must be felt that in Modernism the vast energy of an all-embracing life system assails us, then also it must be understood that we have to take our stand in a life system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power. And this powerful life system is not to be invented nor formulated by ourselves, but is to be taken and applied as it presents itself in history. When thus taken, I found and confessed, and I still hold, that this manifestation of the Christian principle is given us in Calvinism. In Calvinism my heart has found rest. From Calvinism have I drawn the inspiration firmly and resolutely

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<sup>1</sup> As Dr. James Orr (in his valuable lectures on *The Christian View of God and the World*: Edinburgh, 1897, p. 3) observes, the German technical term *weltanschauung* has no precise equivalent in English. He therefore used the literal translation *view of the world*, notwithstanding this phrase in English is limited by associations, which connect it predominately with *physical* nature. For this reason the more explicit phrase *life- and worldview* seems to be more preferable. My American friends, however, told me that the shorter phrase *life system*, on the other side of the ocean, is often used in the same sense. So lecturing before an American public, I took the shorter phrase, at least in the title of my first lecture, the shortest expression always having some preference for what is to be the general indication of your subject matter. In my lectures, on the contrary, I interchanged alternately both phrases of *life system* and *life- and worldview* in accordance with the special meaning predominating in my argumentation. See also Dr. Orr's note on p. 365.

to take my stand in the thick of this great conflict of principles. And therefore, when I was invited most honorably by your faculty to give the Stone Lectures here this year, I could not hesitate a moment as to my choice of subject. Calvinism, as the only decisive, lawful, and consistent defense for Protestant nations against encroaching and overwhelming Modernism—this of itself was bound to be my theme.

Allow me, therefore, in six lectures, to speak to you on Calvinism.

1. On Calvinism as a Life System
2. On Calvinism and Religion
3. On Calvinism and Politics
4. On Calvinism and Science
5. On Calvinism and Art
6. On Calvinism and the Future



Clearness of presentation demands that in this first lecture I begin by fixing the conception of Calvinism historically. To prevent misunderstanding we must first know what we should not, and what we should, understand by it. Starting therefore from the current use of the term, I find that this is by no means the same in different countries and in different spheres of life. The name *Calvinist* is used in our times first as a sectarian name. This is not the case in Protestant, but in Roman Catholic, countries, especially in Hungary and France. In Hungary the Reformed churches have a membership of some two and a half million, and in both the Romish and Jewish press of that country her members are constantly stigmatized by the nonofficial name of “Calvinists,” a derisive name applied even to those who have divested themselves of all traces of sympathy with the faith of their fathers. The same phenomenon presents itself in France, especially in the southern parts, where *Calviniste* is equally, and even more emphatically, a sectarian stigma, which does not refer to the faith or confession of the stigmatized person, but is simply put upon every member of the Reformed churches, even though he be an atheist. George Thiébaud, known for his anti-Semitic propaganda, has at the same time revived the

anti-Calvinistic spirit in France, and even in the Dreyfus case, “Jews and Calvinists” were arraigned by him as the two antinational forces, prejudicial to the *esprit gaulois*.

Directly opposed to this is the second use of the word *Calvinism*, and this I call the confessional one. In this sense, a Calvinist is represented exclusively as the out-spoken subscriber to the dogma of fore-ordination. They who disapprove of this strong attachment to the doctrine of predestination cooperate with the Romish polemist, in that by calling you “Calvinist,” they represent you as a victim of dogmatic narrowness; and what is worse still, as being dangerous to the real seriousness of moral life. This is a stigma so conspicuously offensive that theologians like Hodge, who from fullness of conviction were open defenders of predestination, and counted it an honor to be Calvinists, were nevertheless so deeply impressed with the disfavor attached to the “Calvinistic name,” that for the sake of commending their conviction, they preferred to speak rather of Augustinianism than of Calvinism.

The denominational title of some Baptists and Methodists indicates a third use of the name Calvinist. No less a man than Spurgeon belonged to a class of Baptists who in England call themselves “Calvinistic Baptists,” and the Whitefield<sup>2</sup> Methodists in Wales to this day bear the name of “Calvinistic Methodists.” Thus here also it indicates in some way a confessional difference, but is applied as the name for special church denominations. Without doubt this practice would have been most severely criticized by Calvin himself. During his lifetime, no Reformed church ever dreamed of naming the church of Christ after any man. The Lutherans have done this, the Reformed churches never.

But beyond this sectarian, confessional, and denominational use of the name Calvinist, it serves moreover, in the fourth place, as a scientific name, either in a historical, philosophical, or political sense. Historically, the name of Calvinism indicates the channel in which the Reformation moved, so far as it was neither Lutheran nor Anabaptist nor Socinian. In the philosophical sense, we understand by it that system of conceptions which, under the influence of the mastermind of Calvin, raised itself to dominance in the several spheres of

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<sup>2</sup> Editor's note: George Whitefield, born in 1714, in Gloucester, England; died in 1770, in America. Preacher of unusual eloquence.

life. And as a political name, Calvinism indicates that political movement which has guaranteed the liberty of nations in constitutional statesmanship; first in Holland, then in England, and since the close of the last century in the United States. In this scientific sense, the name of Calvinism is especially current among German scholars. And the fact that this not only is the opinion of those who are themselves of Calvinistic sympathies, but that also scholars who have abandoned every confessional standard of Christianity, nevertheless assign this profound significance to Calvinism. This appears from the testimony borne by three of our best men of science, the first of whom, Dr. Robert Fruin, declares that: "Calvinism came into the Netherlands consisting of a logical system of divinity, of a democratic church order of its own, impelled by a severely moral sense, and as enthusiastic for the moral as for the religious reformation of mankind."<sup>3</sup> Another historian, who was even more outspoken in his rationalistic sympathies, writes: "Calvinism is the highest form of development reached by the religious and political principle in the sixteenth century."<sup>4</sup> And a third authority acknowledges that Calvinism has liberated Switzerland, the Netherlands, and England, and in the Pilgrim fathers has provided the impulse to the prosperity of the United States.<sup>5</sup> Similarly Bancroft, among you, acknowledged that Calvinism "has a theory of ontology, of ethics, of social happiness, and of human liberty, all derived from God."<sup>6</sup> Only in this last-named, strictly scientific sense do I desire to speak to you on Calvinism as

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<sup>3</sup> R. Fruin, *Tien Jaren uit den Tachtig-jarigen Oorlog*, p. 151.

<sup>4</sup> R. C. Bakhuizen Van den Brink, *Het Huwelijk van Willem van Orange met Anna van Saxon*; 1853, p. 123: "Zoo al de laatste in tijdsorde, zoo was het Calvinisme de hoogste ontwikkelingsvorm van het Godsdiensstig-staatkundig beginsel der zestiende eeuw. Zelfs de rechtzinnige staatkundigen dier eeuw, zagen met niet minder verachting en afschuw neder op den Geneefschen regeeringsvorm—als men het in onze dagen zou kunnen doen, wanneer een Staat het socialisme tot beginsel mocht aannemen. Een hervormingskamp, die zoo laat na het ontstaan der Hervorming kwam als dat bij ons, in Frankrijk en in Schotland plaats had, kon niet anders dan Calvinistisch en ten voordeele van het Calvinisme zijn."

<sup>5</sup> Cd. Busken Huet, *Het Land van Rembrandt*; 2de druk, II, p. 223.  
p. 159: "Was uit den aard der zaak de religie eene der hoofdzenuwen van den Kalvinistischen Staat," enz. (om andere redenen de negotie):

en p. 10, noot 3: "De geschiedenis van onze vrijwording is voor een groot gedeelte geschiedenis van onze hervorming, en de geschiedenis van onze hervorming is grootendeels geschiedenis van de uitbreiding van het Calvinisme." Bakhuizen Van den Brink, *Studien en Schetsen*, IV, 68, v. g.

<sup>6</sup> *History of the United States of America*; Ed. New York, II, p. 405. Cf. Von Polenz, *Geschichte des Französischen Protestantismus*; 1857, I, p. viii: "Eine Geschichte . . . in welcher der Geist, den Luther in Frankreich geweckt, dieses mit Eigenem und Fremden genährt und gefordert, Calvin aber gereinigt, geregelt, gehütet, gestarkt, fixirt und als ein bewegendes Ferment über die Schranken des Raums und der Verhältnisse weiter getrieben hat, der in seinen mannigfachen Strahlen alle geschichtlichen Mo-

an independent general tendency, which from a mother-principle of its own has developed an independent form both for our life and for our thought among the nations of western Europe and North America, and at present even in South Africa.

The domain of Calvinism is indeed far broader than the narrow confessional interpretation would lead us to suppose. The aversion to naming the church after a man gave rise to the fact that though in France the Protestants were called "Huguenots," in the Netherlands "Beggars," in Great Britain "Puritans" and "Presbyterians," and in North America "Pilgrim fathers," yet all these products of the Reformation which on your continent and ours bore the special Reformed type, were of Calvinistic origin. But the extent of the Calvinistic domain should not be limited to these purer revelations. Nobody applies such an exclusive rule to Christianity. Within its boundaries we embrace not only western Europe, but also Russia, the Balkan states, the Armenians, and even Menelik's empire in Abyssinia. Therefore it is but just that in the same way we should include in the Calvinistic fold those churches also which have diverged more or less from its purer forms. In her Thirty-Nine Articles, the Church of England is strictly Calvinistic, even though in her hierarchy and liturgy she has abandoned the straight paths, and has met with the serious results of this departure in Puseyism and ritualism. The

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ment mehr oder weniger beruhenden Brenn- und Lichtpunkt bildet. Nennen wir diesen Geist, uneigentlich und anachronistisch zwar, aber, da er ohne Calvin sich verflüchtigt haben würde, nicht unwahr, Calvinismus; so ist meine Geschichte, ausser der de franzoischen Calvinismus im engeren und eigentlichen Sinne, die seiner einwirkung auf Religion, Kirche, Sitte, Gesellschaft und sonstige Verhältnissen Frankreichs."

C. G. McCrie, *The Public Worship of Presbyterians Scotland*; 1892, p. 95: "It may lead some to attach value to these sentiments of Calvin if they know in what light the system which bears his stamp and his name is regarded by an Anglican Churchman of learning and insight, which give him a right to be heard in such a matter, 'The Protestant movement,' wrote Mark Pattison, 'was saved from being sunk in the quicksands of doctrinal dispute chiefly by the new moral direction given to it in Geneva. 'Calvinism saved Europe.'"

P. Hume Brown, *John Knox*; 1895, p. 252: "Of all the developments of Christianity, Calvinism and the Church of Rome alone bear the stamp of an absolute religion."

p. 257: "The difference between Calvin and Castalio, and between Knox and the Anabaptist, was not merely one of doctrine and dogma: their essential difference lay in the spirit with which they respectively regarded human society itself."

R. Willis, *Servetus and Calvin*; 1877, p. 514, 5: "There can be little question, in fact, that Calvinism, or some modification of its essential principles, is the form of religious faith that has been professed in the modern world by the most intelligent, moral, industrious, and freest of mankind."

Chambers, *Encyclopaedia*; Philadelphia, 1888, *in voce* Calvinism: "With the revival of the evangelical party in the end of the century Calvinism revived, and it still maintains, if not an absolute sway, yet a powerful influence over many minds in the Anglican establishment. It is one of the most living and powerful among the creeds of the Reformation."

Confession of the Independents was equally Calvinistic, even though in their conception of the church the organic structure was broken by individualism. And if under the leadership of Wesley most Methodists became opposed to the theological interpretation of Calvinism, it is nevertheless the Calvinistic spirit itself that created this spiritual reaction against the petrifying church life of the times. In a given sense, therefore, it may be said that the entire field which in the end was covered by the Reformation, so far as it was not Lutheran and not Socinian, was dominated in principle by Calvinism. Even the Baptists applied for shelter at the tents of the Calvinists. It is the free character of Calvinism that accounts for the rise of these several shades and differences, and of the reactions against their excesses. By its hierarchy, Romanism is and remains uniform. Lutheranism owes its similar unity and uniformity to the ascendancy of the prince, whose relation to the church is that of *summus episcopus* and to its *ecclesia docens*. Calvinism, on the other hand, which sanctions no ecclesiastical hierarchy, and no magisterial interference, could not develop itself except in many and varied forms and deviations, thereby of course incurring the danger of degeneration, provoking in its turn all kinds of one-sided reactions. With the free development of life, such as was intended by Calvinism, the distinction could not fail to appear between a center, with its fullness and purity of vitality and strength, and the broad circumference with its threatening declensions. But in that very conflict between a purer center and a less pure circumference the steady working of its spirit was guaranteed to Calvinism.

Thus understood, Calvinism is rooted in a form of religion which was peculiarly its own, and from this specific religious consciousness there was developed first a peculiar theology, then a special church-order, and then a given form for political and social life, for the interpretation of the moral world-order, for the relation between nature and grace, between Christianity and the world, between church and state, and finally for art and science; and amid all these life utterances it remained always the self-same Calvinism, insofar as simultaneously and spontaneously all these developments sprang from its deepest life principle. Hence to this extent it stands in line with those other great complexes of human life, known as paganism, Islamism, and Romanism, by which we distinguish four entirely different worlds in the one collective world of human life. And if, speaking precisely, you should coordinate Christianity and not Calvinism with paganism and Islamism, it is nevertheless better to

place Calvinism in line with them, because Calvinism claims to embody the Christian idea more purely and accurately than could Romanism and Lutheranism. In the Greek world of Russia and the Balkan states, the national element is still dominant, and therefore the Christian faith in these countries has not yet been able to produce a form of life of its own from the root of its mystical orthodoxy. In Lutheran countries, the interference of the magistrate has prevented the free working of the spiritual principle. Hence of Romanism only can it be said that it has embodied its life-thought in a world of conceptions and utterances entirely its own. But by the side of Romanism, and in opposition to it, Calvinism made its appearance, not merely to create a different church form, but an entirely different form for human life, to furnish human society with a different method of existence, and to populate the world of the human heart with different ideals and conceptions.

That this had not been realized until our time, and is now acknowledged by friend and enemy in consequence of a better study of history, should not surprise us. This would not have been the case, if Calvinism had entered life as a well-constructed system, and had presented itself as an outcome of study. But its origin came about in an entirely different way. In the order of existence, life is first. And to Calvinism life itself was ever the first object of its endeavors. There was too much to do and to suffer to devote much time to study. What was dominant was Calvinistic practice at the stake and in the field of battle. Moreover the nations among whom Calvinism gained the day—such as the Swiss, the Dutch, the English, and the Scotch—were by nature not very philosophically predisposed. Especially at that time, life among those nations was spontaneous and void of calculation; and only later on has Calvinism in its parts become a subject of that special study by which historians and theologians have traced the relation between Calvinistic phenomena and the all-embracing unity of its principle. It can even be said that the need of a theoretical and systematical study of so incisive and comprehensive a phenomenon of life only arises when its first vitality has been exhausted, and when for the sake of maintaining itself in the future, it is compelled to greater accuracy in the drawing of its boundary lines. And if to this you add the fact that the stress of reflecting our existence as a unity in the mirror of our consciousness is far stronger in our philosophical age than it ever was before, it is readily seen that both the needs of the present, and the care for the future, compel us to a

deeper study of Calvinism. In the Roman Catholic Church everybody knows what he lives for, because with clear consciousness he enjoys the fruits of Rome's unity of life system. Even in Islam you find the same power of a conviction of life dominated by one principle. Protestantism alone wanders about in the wilderness without aim or direction, moving hither and thither, without making any progress. This accounts for the fact that among Protestant nations pantheism, born from the new German philosophy and owing its concrete evolution-form to Darwin, claims for itself more and more the supremacy in every sphere of human life, even in that of theology, and under all sorts of names tries to overthrow our Christian traditions, and is bent even upon exchanging the heritage of our fathers for a hopeless modern Buddhism. The leading thoughts that had their rise in the French Revolution at the close of the last, and in German philosophy in the course of the present century, form together a life system which is diametrically opposed to that of our fathers. Their struggles were for the sake of the glory of God and a purified Christianity; the present movement wages war for the sake of the glory of man, being inspired not by the humble mind of Golgotha but by the pride of hero-worship. And why did we, Christians, stand so weak, in the face of this Modernism? Why did we constantly lose ground? Simply because we were devoid of an equal unity of life-conception, such as alone could enable us with irresistible energy to repel the enemy at the frontier. This unity of life-conception, however, is never to be found in a vague conception of Protestantism winding itself as it does in all kind of tortuosities, but you do find it in that mighty historic process, which as Calvinism dug a channel of its own for the powerful stream of its life. By this unity of conception alone as given in Calvinism, you in America and we in Europe might be enabled once more to take our stand, by the side of Romanism, in opposition to modern pantheism. Without this unity of starting point and life system we must lose the power to maintain our independent position, and our strength for resistance must ebb away.



The supreme interest here at stake, however, forbids our accepting without more positive proof the fact that Calvinism really provides us with such a unity of life-system and we demand proofs of the assertion that Calvinism is

*First Lecture: Calvinism as a Life System*

not a partial, nor was a merely temporary, phenomenon, but is such an all-embracing system of principles, as, rooted in the past, is able to strengthen us in the present and to fill us with confidence for the future. Hence we must first ask what are the required conditions for such general systems of life, as paganism, Islamism, Romanism, and Modernism, and then show that Calvinism really fulfills these conditions.

These conditions demand in the first place, that from a special principle a peculiar insight be obtained into the three fundamental relations of all human life: viz., (1) our relation to God, (2) our relation to man, and (3) our relation to the world.

Hence the first claim demands that such a life system shall find its starting point in a special interpretation of our relation to God. This is not accidental, but imperative. If such an action is to put its stamp upon our entire life, it must start from that point in our consciousness in which our life is still undivided and lies comprehended in its unity—not in the spreading vines but in the root from which the vines spring. This point, of course, lies in the antithesis between all that is finite in our human life and the infinite that lies beyond it. Here alone we find the common source from which the different streams of our human life spring and separate themselves. Personally it is our repeated experience that in the depths of our hearts, at the point where we disclose ourselves to the eternal One, all the rays of our life converge as in one focus, and there alone regain that harmony which we so often and so painfully lose in the stress of daily duty. In prayer lies not only our unity with God, but also the unity of our personal life. Movements in history, therefore, which do not spring from this deepest source are always partial and transient, and only those historical acts which arose from these lowest depths of man's personal existence embrace the whole of life and possess the required permanence.

This was the case with paganism, which in its most general form is known by the fact that it surmises, assumes, and worships God in the creature. This applies to the lowest animism, as well as to the highest Buddhism. Paganism does not rise to the conception of the independent existence of a God beyond and above the creature. But even in this imperfect form it has for its starting point a definite interpretation of the relation of the infinite to the finite, and to this it owed its power to produce a finished form for human society. Simply

because it possessed this significant starting point was it able to produce a form of its own for the whole of human life. It is the same with Islamism, which is characterized by its purely antipagan ideal, cutting off all contact between the creature and God. Mohammed and the Koran are the historic names, but in its nature the Crescent is the only absolute antithesis to paganism. Islam isolates God from the creature, in order to avoid all commingling with the creature. As antipode, Islam was possessed of an equally far reaching tendency, and was also able to originate an entirely peculiar world of human life. The same is the case with Romanism. Here also the papal tiara,<sup>7</sup> the hierarchy, the mass, etc., are but the outcome of one fundamental thought: viz., that God enters into fellowship with the creature by means of a mystic middle-link, which is the church—not taken as a mystic organism, but as a visible, palpable, and tangible institution. Here the church stands between God and the world, and so far as it was able to adopt the world and to inspire it, Romanism also created a form of its own for human society.

And now, by the side of and opposite to these three, Calvinism takes its stand with a fundamental thought which is equally profound. It does not seek God in the creature, as paganism; it does not isolate God from the creature, as Islamism; it posits no mediate communion between God and the creature, as does Romanism; but proclaims the exalted thought that, although standing in high majesty above the creature, God enters into immediate fellowship with the creature, as God the Holy Spirit. This is even the heart and kernel of the Calvinistic confession of predestination. There is communion with God, but only in entire accord with his counsel of peace from all eternity. Thus there is no grace but such as comes to us immediately from God. At every moment of our existence, our entire spiritual life rests in God himself. The *Deo Soli Gloria* was not the starting point but the result, and predestination was inexorably maintained, not for the sake of separating man from man, nor in the interest of personal pride, but in order to guarantee from eternity to eternity, to our inner self, a direct and immediate communion with the living God. The opposition against Rome aimed therefore with the Calvinist first of all at the dismissal of a church which placed itself between the soul and God. The church consisted not in an office, nor in an

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<sup>7</sup> Editor's note: Originally a Persian headdress. The tiara of papacy denotes its triple power; temporal, spiritual, purgatorial.

independent institute, the believers themselves were the church, inasmuch as by faith they stood in touch with the Almighty. Thus, as in paganism, Islamism, and Romanism, so also in Calvinism is found that proper, definite interpretation of the fundamental relation of man to God, which is required as the first condition of a real life-system.



Meanwhile I anticipate two objections. In the first place, it may be asked whether I do not claim honors for Calvinism which belong to Protestantism in general. To this I reply in the negative. When I claim for Calvinism the honor of having re-established the direct fellowship with God, I do not undervalue the general significance of Protestantism. In the Protestant domain, taken in the historic sense, Lutheranism alone stands by the side of Calvinism. Now I wish to be second to none in my praises of Luther's heroic initiative. In his heart, rather than in the heart of Calvin, was the bitter conflict fought which led to the world-historic breach. Luther can be interpreted without Calvin, but not Calvin without Luther. To a great extent Calvin entered upon the harvest of what the hero of Wittenberg had sown in and outside Germany. But when the question is put, "Who had the clearest insight into the reformatory principle, worked it out most fully, and applied it most broadly?" history points to the thinker of Geneva and not to the hero of Wittenberg. Luther as well as Calvin contended for a direct fellowship with God, but Luther took it up from its subjective, anthropological side, and not from its objective, cosmological side as Calvin did. Luther's starting point was the special soteriological principle of a justifying faith; while Calvin's, extending far wider, lay in the general cosmological principle of the sovereignty of God. As a natural result of this, Luther also continued to consider the church as the representative and authoritative "teacher," standing between God and the believer, while Calvin was the first to seek the church in the believers themselves. As far as he was able, Luther still leaned upon the Romish view of the sacraments, and upon the Romish cultus, while Calvin was the first in both to draw the line which extended immediately from God to man and from man to God. Moreover, in all Lutheran countries the Reformation originated from the princes rather than from the people, and thereby

passed under the power of the magistrate, who took his stand in the church officially as her highest bishop, and therefore was unable to change either the social or the political life in accordance with its principle. Lutheranism restricted itself to an exclusively ecclesiastical and theological character, while Calvinism put its impress in and outside the church upon every department of human life. Hence Lutheranism is nowhere spoken of as the creator of a peculiar life-form; even the name of "Lutheranism" is hardly ever mentioned; while the students of history with increasing unanimity recognize Calvinism as the creator of a world of human life entirely its own.

The second objection we have to meet is this: if it is true that every general development form of life must find its starting point in a peculiar interpretation of our relation to God—how then do you explain the fact that Modernism also has led to such a general conception, notwithstanding it sprang from the French Revolution, which on principle broke with all religion? The question answers itself. If you exclude from your conceptions all reckoning with the living God just as is implied in the cry, "no God, no master," you certainly bring to the front a sharply defined interpretation of your own for our relation to God. A government, as you yourselves experienced of late in the case of Spain, that recalls its ambassador and breaks every regular intercourse with another power, declares thereby that its relation to the government of that country is a strained relation which generally ends in war. This is the case here. The leaders of the French Revolution, not being acquainted with any relation to God except that which existed through the mediation of the Romish Church, annihilated all relation to God, because they wished to annihilate the power of the church; and as a result of this they declared war against every religious confession. But this of course very really implied a fundamental and special interpretation of our relation to God. It was the declaration that henceforth God was to be considered as a hostile power, yea even as dead, if not yet to the heart, at least to the state, to society, and to science. To be sure, in passing from French into German hands, Modernism could not rest content with such a bare negation; but the result shows how from that moment it clothed itself in either pantheism or agnosticism, and under each disguise it maintained the expulsion of God from practical and theoretical life, and the enmity against the triune God had its full course.

Thus I maintain that it is the interpretation of our relation to God which dominates every general life system, and that for us this conception is given in Calvinism, thanks to its fundamental interpretation of an immediate fellowship of God with man and of man with God. To this I add that Calvinism has neither invented nor conceived this fundamental interpretation, but that God himself implanted it in the hearts of its heroes and its heralds. We face here no product of a clever intellectualism, but the fruit of a work of God in the heart, or, if you like, an inspiration of history. This point should be emphasized! Calvinism has never burned its incense upon the altar of genius; it has erected no monument for its heroes, it scarcely calls them by name. One stone only in a wall at Geneva remains to remind one of Calvin. His very grave has been forgotten. Was this ingratitude? By no means. But if Calvin was appreciated, even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the impression was vivid that it was One greater than Calvin, even God himself, who had wrought here his work. Hence, no general movement in life is so devoid of deliberate compact, none so unconventional in which it spread as this. Simultaneously, Calvinism had its rise in all the countries of western Europe, and it did not appear, among those nations, because the university was in its van, or because scholars led the people, or because a magistrate placed himself at their head: but it sprang from the hearts of the people themselves, with weavers and farmers, with tradesmen and servants, with women and young maidens; and in every instance it exhibited the same characteristic: viz., strong assurance of eternal salvation, not only without the intervention of the church, but even in opposition to the church. The human heart had attained unto eternal peace with its God: strengthened by this divine fellowship, it discovered its high and holy calling to consecrate every department of life and every energy at its disposal to the glory of God: and therefore, when those men or women, who had become partakers of this divine life, were forced to abandon their faith, it proved impossible, that they *could* deny their Lord; and thousands and tens of thousands burned at the stake, not complaining but exulting, with thanksgiving in their hearts and psalms upon their lips. Calvin was not the author of this, but God who through his Holy Spirit had wrought in Calvin that which he had wrought in them. Calvin stood not above them, but as a brother by their side, a sharer with them of God's blessing. In this way, Calvinism came to its fundamental interpretation of an immediate fellowship with God, not because Calvin

invented it, but because in this immediate fellowship God himself had granted to our fathers a privilege of which Calvin was only the first to become clearly conscious. This is the great work of the Holy Spirit in history, by which Calvinism has been consecrated, and which interprets to us its wondrous energy.

There are times in history when the pulse of religious life beats faintly; but there are times when its beat is pounding, and the latter was the case in the sixteenth century among the nations of western Europe. The question of faith at that time dominated every activity in public life. New history starts out from this faith, even as the history of our times starts from the unbelief of the French Revolution. What law this pulse-like movement of religious life obeys, we cannot tell, but it is evident that there is such a law, and that in times of high religious tension the inworking of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is irresistible; and this mighty inworking of God was the experience of our Calvinists, Puritans and Pilgrim fathers. It was not in all individuals to the same degree, for this never happens in any great movement; but they who formed the center of life in those times, who were the promoters of that mighty change, they experienced this higher power to the fullest: and they were the men and women of every class of society and nationality who by God himself were admitted into communion with the majesty of his eternal Being. Thanks to this work of God in the heart, the persuasion that the whole of a man's life is to be lived as in the divine Presence has become the fundamental thought of Calvinism. By this decisive idea, or rather by this mighty fact, it has allowed itself to be controlled in every department of its entire domain. It is from this mother-thought that the all-embracing life system of Calvinism sprang.



This brings us of itself to the second condition, with which, for the sake of creating a life system every profound movement has to comply: viz., a fundamental interpretation of its own touching the relation of man to man. How we stand toward God is the first, and how we stand toward man is the second principal question which decides the tendency and the construction of our life. There is no uniformity among men, but endless multiformity. In creation itself the difference has been established between woman and man. Physical and