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THE FRIENDSHIP OF CALVIN AND
MELANCHTHON

THE FRIENDSHIP OF CALVIN AND MELANCHTHON.

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When God has a great work to do in his kingdom on earth he trains and associates congenial agents of different gifts, but of one spirit and aim, to carry out his purposes. They supplement and encourage one another and accomplish much more in unison than they could in isolation. Moses and Aaron, David and Jonathan, in the history of Israel; Paul and Barnabas, Peter and Mark, in apostolic times; Pamphilius and Eusebius, Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, among the fathers; Luther and Melanchthon, Zwingli, Occolampadius and Bullinger, Calvin, Farel, Viret, and Beza, Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley, among the Reformers; the two Wesleys and Whitefield in the Methodist revival; Pusey, Newman and Keble in the Anglo-Catholic movement of our days, will readily occur to the memory as illustrious examples of co-operative friendship for the advancement of God's kingdom.

Such friendships, based upon mutual respect and affection, cemented by the love of Christ, the Lord and Saviour, and devoted to a holy cause, have left a deep impress upon the pages of history, and their memory is an inspiration to succeeding generations. They may be clouded for a time by human infirmity; even Paul and Barnabas fell out on the question of Mark; and Paul and Peter on the deeper question of circumcision and the recognition of Gentile converts. Luther and Melanchthon came near to a break

on the subject of the real presence. But the clouds pass away and the sun shines all the brighter.

In Calvin's life and works, friendship and fraternal co-operation form a prominent and fruitful part. He lived on the best terms with his older colleagues—Farel and Viret—as well as with his pupils—Knox and Beza,—he associated intimately with Grynæus at Basel and Bucer at Strassburg, with Melanchthon at Worms and Ratisbon, and kept up a familiar correspondence with Bullinger of Zurich, Myconius of Basel, and many others. He never lost the confidence and affection of any of his friends. This fact is most honorable to his character, and sufficient to refute the misrepresentation of his enemies.

The friendship between Calvin and Melanchthon has a special interest as they represent two distinct nationalities and Churches. It forms a significant episode in the great drama of the Reformation, and deserves more consideration than it has yet received. I propose to fill out this chapter chiefly from their private correspondence, in which they give us an insight into the interior recesses of their mind and heart. Not many letters are preserved—fourteen letters of Calvin to Melanchthon and eight letters of Melanchthon to Calvin, but they are characteristic and weighty.¹

Calvin never saw either Zwingli or Luther, who together with him form the trio of productive Reformers. Zwingli died (1531) in the prime of life when Calvin was a youth of twenty-one, pursuing the study of law and theology in the Universities of France. He was brought into indirect contact with Luther, through Bucer and Melanchthon, during his three years' residence in Strassburg, where he was pastor of a congregation of French refugees, and theological teacher

¹ The letters of Melanchthon are printed in Bretschneider's edition of his *Opera (Corpus Reformatorum)*, the letters of both in the admirable Strassburg-Braunschweig edition of Calvin's *Opera*, which has now reached the 46th volume (1891). The original editors—Baum, Cunitz, and Reuss—are dead, but the remaining volumes were prepared in copy by Reuss (as he informed me) and will be edited by Erichson. Herminjard's *Correspondance des Reformateurs* is invaluable, but goes only as far as 1542 (vol. vii., 1886). I have used also Constable's translation of Jules Bonnet's ed. of *Calvin's Letters*.

in the Academy, between 1539 and 1541. Luther was then in his declining years, weary of life and longing for rest. But what little he learned of Calvin impressed him very favorably. He read "with singular delight" his masterly Answer to Cardinal Sadolet, published at Strassburg in 1539, and thanked God that he had raised up such a scholar who was able to continue and finish the war with Antichrist which he had begun twenty-two years before. He sent respectful salutations to Calvin through Bucer,¹ and again through Melancthon, who informed him that he stood in high favor with Luther.² I can find no evidence that Luther read Calvin's *Institutes*, which appeared in a revised edition at Strassburg in 1539, or his irenic tract on the Lord's Supper, which was first published in the same city in 1541. But according to a reliable tradition he saw the latter tract in a bookstore at Wittenberg shortly before his death and expressed a favorable judgment on it, although it differed from his own view on the real presence.³ It is quite probable that the eucharistic controversy would have taken a more peaceful turn if Luther could have met Calvin instead of Zwingli, whose hand of fellowship offered with tears at Marburg, Luther coldly refused.

Calvin and Melancthon became personally and intimately acquainted with each other at the Colloquies of Frankfurt, Worms, and Ratisbon, which were held in 1539, '40, and '41, between the leading Protestant and Roman Catholic divines for the purpose of healing the division of the Church and bringing about at least a com-

¹ Oct. 14, 1539 (in De Wette's ed. of *Luther's Correspondence*, vol. v., 211; Herminjard, vi., 130): "*Salutabis Dr. Joannem Sturmium et Joannem Calvinum reverenter, quorum libellos cum singulari voluptate legi,*" etc. From what follows it is evident that he meant Calvin's Answer to Sadolet, which is a triumphant vindication of the Reformation and silenced the Cardinal and his scheme to recover Geneva to the Roman Catholic Church during the absence of Calvin, who had been expelled in 1538.

² *Lutherus et Pomeranus* [Bughenhagen], *Calvinum et Sturmium jusserunt salutari. Calvinus magnum gratiam iniit.* Quoted by Calvin in a letter to Farel, Nov. 20, 1539, from a lost letter of Melancthon. See Herminjard, vi., 131.

³ See Schaff's *Church History*, vi., 660.

promise, or *modus vivendi*, till the meeting of the long-promised and long-delayed General Council. The Emperor was very anxious, for political reasons, to secure that end. Melancthon was the spokesman of the Lutheran party; Calvin was one of the delegates of the city of Strassburg in company with Bucer and Sturm. Calvin had no confidence in a peaceful result and clearly foresaw the failure of the Colloquies. The controversy had gone too far to be stopped, and had to be fought out to its consequences. The opportunity for a reunion of Christendom was as yet far in the uncertainties of the future. Nevertheless Calvin took an active interest in the proceedings, as far as they were conducted in Latin (for he was not acquainted with German). He was frequently consulted, and showed such learning and ability in debate on the disputed questions, that he commanded the admiration of the Lutheran divines, and that Melancthon bestowed upon him the emphatic designation "THE THEOLOGIAN," which meant a great deal more in that theological age than it does now. He had in view no doubt the case of St. John and Gregory Nazianzen, who were called "Theologians" for their profound insight into the mystery of the incarnation, but he applied the word in a wider sense. He thought he could less spare Calvin than any other divine, and induced him to delay his return to Geneva, to which he was most urgently recalled by the united voice of the magistrates, clergy, and people.

Melancthon was twelve years older than Calvin, as Luther was thirteen years older than Melancthon. Calvin, therefore, might have sustained to Melancthon the relation of a pupil to a teacher. He sought his friendship, and he always treated him with reverential affection.¹ In the dedication of his commentary on Daniel, he describes Melancthon as "a man who, on account of his incomparable skill in the most

¹ In a letter of 11 Cal. Maii, 1544 (Calvin's *Opera*, xi., 698), he addresses him as "*ornatissime vir, fidelissime Christi minister, et amice mihi semper honorande. Dominus te semper spiritu suo regat, diuque nobis et ecclesia sua incolumem conservet.*"

excellent branches of knowledge, his piety, and other virtues, is worthy of the admiration of all ages." But while Melanchthon was under the overawing influence of the personality of Luther, the Reformer of Geneva was quite independent of Melanchthon, and so far could meet him on equal terms. Melanchthon, in sincere humility and utter freedom from jealousy, even acknowledged the superiority of his younger friend as a theologian and disciplinarian, and, as already stated, called him emphatically "The Theologian."

They had many points of contact. Both were men of uncommon precocity; both excelled, above their contemporaries, in humanistic culture and polished style; both devoted all their learning to the renovation of the Church; they were equally conscientious and unselfish; they agreed in the root of their piety, and in all essential doctrines; they deplored the divisions in the Protestant ranks, and heartily desired unity and harmony if consistent with truth.

But they were differently constituted. Melanchthon was modest, gentle, sensitive, feminine, irenic, elastic, temporizing, always open to new light; Calvin, though by nature as modest, bashful, and irritable, was in principle and conviction firm, unyielding, fearless of consequences, and opposed to all compromises. They differed also on minor points of doctrine and discipline. Melanchthon, from a conscientious love of truth and peace, and from regard for the demands of practical common-sense, independently changed his views on two important doctrines. He abandoned the Lutheran dogma of a corporal and ubiquitous presence of Christ's body and blood in the eucharist, and approached Calvin's theory of a spiritual real, or dynamic presence; and he substituted for his earlier fatalistic view of a divine foreordination of evil as well as good the synergistic scheme which ascribes conversion to the co-operation of three causes: the Spirit of God, the Word of God, and the will of man. He conceded to the will the freedom of either accepting or rejecting the gospel salvation, yet without giving any merit to man for accepting the free gift; and

on this point he dissented from Calvin's more rigorous and logical system.¹

The sincere and lasting friendship of these two great and good men is therefore all the more remarkable and valuable as a testimony that a deep spiritual union and harmony may co-exist with theological differences.²

Calvin and Melanchthon met at Frankfurt, Worms, and Regensburg under trying circumstances. Melanchthon felt discouraged about the prospects of Protestantism. He deplored the confusion which followed the abolition of the episcopal supervision, the want of discipline, the rapacity of the princes, the bigotry of the theologians. He had allowed himself, with Luther and Bucer, to give his conditional assent to the scandalous bigamy of Philip of Hesse (May 1540), which was the darkest blot in the history of the German Reformation, and worse than the successive polygamy of Henry VIII. His conscience was so much troubled about his own weakness that, at Weimar, on his way to the Colloquies at Hagenau and Worms, he was brought to the brink of the grave, and would have died if Luther had not prayed him out of the jaws of the king of terrors. What a contrast between Melanchthon at Worms in 1540, and Luther at Worms in 1521! At the Diet of Regensburg, in 1541, he felt no better. His son was sick, and he dreamed that he had died. He read disaster and war in the stars. His letters to intimate friends are full of grief and anxious forebodings. "I am devoured by a desire for a better life," he wrote to one of them. He was oppressed by a sense of the responsibility that rested upon him as the spokesman and leader of the German Reformation in the declining years of Luther, who had been formerly his inspiration and strength. It is natural

¹ On these changes, see the biographies of Melanchthon by Galle, Carl Schmidt, and Herrlinger; Gieseler's *Church History*; Schweizer's *Central-dogmen*, i., 380-400; and Schaff's *Creeeds of Christendom*, i., 261 sqq.

² Merle d'Aubigné (in his *History of the Reformation in the Times of Calvin*, vol. vii., 19) thinks that "esteem was uppermost in Melanchthon, and affection in Calvin"; that "on the one side the friendship was founded more on reflection (*réfléchi*), on the other it was more spontaneous"; but "on both sides it was the product of their noble and beautiful qualities."

that in this condition of mind he looked for a new support, and this he found in Calvin. We thus can easily understand his wish to die in his arms. But Calvin himself, though more calm and composed in regard to public affairs, was deeply distressed at Regensburg by news of the ravages of the pestilence among his friends at Strassburg, besides being harassed by multiplying petitions to return to Geneva. These troubles and afflictions brought their hearts nearer to each other.

In their first personal interview at Frankfurt on the Main, in February, 1539, they at once became intimate, and freely discussed the burning questions of the day, relating to doctrine, discipline, and worship.¹

As to doctrine, Calvin had previously sent to Melanchthon a summary, in twelve articles, on the crucial topic of the real presence. To these Melanchthon assented without dispute,² but confessed that he had no hope of satisfying those who obstinately insisted on a more gross and palpable presence.³ Yet he was anxious that the present agreement, such as it was, might be cherished until at length the Lord shall lead both sides into the unity of his own truth. This is no doubt the reason why he himself refrained from such a full and unequivocal public expression of his own view as might lead to a rupture in the Lutheran Church. He went as far as he

¹ Calvin wrote to Farel, after his return to Strassburg, at the end of March, 1539 : "*Cum Philippo fuit mihi multis de rebus colloquium.*"

² "*Sine controversia ipse assentitur.*" Calvin adds : "*de ipso (Mel.) nihil dubita, quin penitus nobiscum sentiat.*" Herminjard, v., 269. In a previous letter to Farel, October, 1538 (in Herminjard, v., 146, and note 24), he informed Farel that he had sent twelve articles of agreement with a letter to Melanchthon from Strassburg. The articles are lost, but may yet be recovered.

³ "*Sed fatetur, esse in illa parte nonnullos qui crassius aliquid requirant : atque id tanta perveracitate, ne dicam tyrannide, ut diu in periculo fuerit, quod sum videbant a suo sensu nonnihil alienum.*"—Herminjard, v., 269. Those men, who outlathered Luther, were not satisfied with the words of institution, *simpliciter*, but demanded such scholastic terms as *substantialiter, essentialiter, corporaliter, quantitative, ubiquitaliter, carnaliter*. When Matthæus Zell, preacher in the Minster at Strassburg, told Melanchthon (in 1536) that he abhorred these terms as diabolical additions, Melanchthon assented. See Röhrich, *Mittheilungen aus der Geschichte der evang. Kirche des Elsasses*, iii., 133, as quoted by Stähelin in his *Johannes Calvin*, i., 169.

deemed prudent, by modifying, probably under the influence of Calvin, the tenth article of the Augsburg Confession, and omitting the anti-Zwinglian clause (1540). Calvin had no difficulty to subscribe this noble Confession as understood by its author.

As to ecclesiastical discipline, Calvin, who was a legislator and disciplinarian as well as a theologian, laid far greater stress on it than the German Reformers, and carried it out in his French congregation at Strassburg and afterwards in Geneva to an extent unknown since the days of the Apostles and the ante-Nicene age. Melanchthon sincerely deplored the want of discipline in Germany, but could see no prospect of improvement till the people would learn to distinguish the yoke of Christ from the papal tyranny.

As to worship, Calvin frankly expressed his objection to many ceremonies, which seemed to him to border too closely on Judaism.¹ He was opposed to chanting in Latin, to pictures and candles in churches, to exorcism in baptism, and the like. Melanchthon was reluctant to discuss this point, but admitted that too many trifling and unnecessary Roman Catholic rites were retained in deference to the judgment of the Canonists, and expressed the hope that some of them would be abandoned by degrees.

After the Colloquy at Regensburg the two Reformers saw each other no more, but continued to correspond as far as their time and multiplicity of duties and the great distance of Wittenberg and Geneva would permit.

The first letter of Calvin after that Colloquy is dated Feb. 16, 1543, and is a lengthy answer to a message from Melanchthon.²

“You see,” he writes, “to what a lazy fellow you have intrusted your letter. It was full four months before he delivered it to me, and then crushed and rumbled with much

¹ Letter to Farel, April, 1539 (Herminjard, v., 292): “*Nuper Philippo in faciem non dissimulavi quin mihi admodum illa ceremoniarum copia displiceret. Videri enim mihi formam quam tenent non procul esse a Judaismo.*”

² In Calvin's *Opera*, xi., 515. Bonnet-Constable, i., 349. The original copy is in Simler's Collection in the City Library of Zurich.

rough usage. But although it has reached me somewhat late, I set a great value upon the acquisition. . . . Would, indeed, as you observe, that we could oftener converse together, were it only by letters. To you that would be no advantage; but to me, nothing in this world could be more desirable than to take solace in the mild and gentle spirit of your correspondence. You can scarce believe with what a load of business I am here burdened and incessantly hurried along; but in the midst of these distractions there are two things which most of all annoy me. My chief regret is, that there does not appear to be the amount of fruit that one may reasonably expect from the labor bestowed; the other is, because I am so far removed from yourself and a few others, and therefore am deprived of that sort of comfort and consolation which would prove a special help to me.

"But since we cannot have even so much at our own choice, that each at his own discretion might pick out the corner of the vineyard where he might serve Christ, we must remain at that post which He himself has allotted to each. This comfort we have at least, of which no far distant separation can deprive us,—I mean, that resting content with this fellowship which Christ has consecrated with his own blood, and has also confirmed and sealed by his blessed Spirit in our hearts,—while we live on the earth, we may cheer each other with that blessed hope to which your letter calls us that in heaven above we shall dwell for ever where we shall rejoice in love and in continuance of our friendship."¹

There can be no nobler expression of Christian friendship.

In the same letter Calvin informs Melancthon that he had dedicated to him his *Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine on the Slavery and Deliverance of the Human Will Against the Calumnies of Albert Pighius*, which he himself had urged Calvin to write, and which appeared in February, 1543.² After some modest account of his labors in Geneva,

¹ "*Hoc saltem nobis nulla regionum longinquitas eripiet, quin hac conjunctione, quam Christus sanguine suo consecratam Spiritu quoque suo in cordibus nostris sanxit, contenti, dum vivimus in terra sustineamur beata illa spe, ad quam nos litera tua revocant: in calis nos simul perpetuo victuros, ubi amore amicitiaque nostra fruemur.*"

² "*Defensio sana et orthodoxa doctrina de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnias Alberti Pighii Campensis.*" *Opera*, vi., 225-404.

and judicious reflections on the condition of the Church in Germany, he thus concludes :

“ Adieu, O man of most eminent accomplishments, and ever to be remembered by me and honored in the Lord ! May the Lord long preserve you in safety to the glory of his name and the edification of the Church. I wonder what can be the reason why you keep your *Daniel* a sealed book at home.¹ Neither can I suffer myself quietly, without remonstrance, to be deprived of the benefit of its perusal. I beg you to salute Dr. Martin reverently in my name. We have here with us at present Bernardino of Siena, an eminent and excellent man, who has occasioned no little stir in Italy by his secession. He has requested me that I would greet you in his name. Once more adieu, along with your family, whom may the Lord continually preserve.”

On the 11th of May following, Melancthon thanked Calvin for the dedication, saying²: “ I am much affected by your kindness, and I thank you that you have been pleased to give evidence of your love for me to all the world, by placing my name at the beginning of your remarkable book, where all the world will see it.” He gives due praise to the force and eloquence with which he refuted Pighius, and, confessing his own inferiority as a writer, encourages him to continue to exercise his splendid talents for the edification and encouragement of the Church. Yet, while inferior as a logician and polemic, he, after all, had a deeper insight into the mystery of predestination and free-will, although unable to solve it. He gently hints to his friend that he looked too much to one side of the problem of divine sovereignty and human liberty, and says in substance :

“ As regards the question treated in your book, the question of predestination, I had in Tübingen a learned friend, Franciscus Stadianus, who used to say, I hold both to be true that all things happen according to divine foreordination, and yet according to their own laws, although he could not harmonize the two. I maintain the proposition that God is not the author of sin, and therefore cannot will it.

¹ Melancthon's Commentary on Daniel appeared in the same year at Wittenberg and Leipzig.

² *Opera*, vol. xi., 539-542. Also in *Corp. Reform.*, v., 107.

David was by his own will carried into transgression.¹ He might have retained the Holy Spirit. In this conflict there is some margin for free-will . . . Let us accuse our own will if we fall, and not find the cause in God. He will help and aid those who fight in earnest. *Μόνον θέλησον*, says Basilius, *καὶ θεὸς προαπαντᾷ*. God promises and gives help to those who are willing to receive it. So says the Word of God, and in this let us abide. I am far from prescribing to you, the most learned and experienced man in all things that belong to piety. I know that in general you agree with my view. I only suggest that this mode of expression is better adapted for practical use."²

In a letter to Camerarius, 1552, Melancthon expresses his dissatisfaction with the manner in which Calvin emphasized the doctrine of predestination, and attempted to force the Swiss Churches to accept it in the *Consensus Genevensis*.³

Calvin made another attempt in 1554 to gain him to his view, but in vain.⁴ On one point, however, he could agree to a certain modification; for he laid stress on the spontaneity of the will, and rejected Luther's paradoxes, and his comparison of the natural man to a dead statue.

It is greatly to the credit of Calvin that, notwithstanding his sensitiveness and intolerance against the opponents of his favorite dogma, he respected the judgment of the most eminent Lutheran divine, and gave signal proof of it by publishing a French translation of the improved edition of Melancthon's *Theological Commonplaces* in 1546, with a commendatory preface of his own,⁵ in which he says that the book was a brief summary of all things necessary for a Christian to know on the way of salvation, stated in the

¹ This is a direct contradiction to the assertion in the first edition of his *Loci* (1521), and his commentary on the Romans (1524), that God does all things not *permissive*, but *potenter*, and that he foreordained and wrought the adultery of David, and the treason of Judas, as well as the vocation of Paul. He so understood the epistle to the Romans. In December, 1525, Luther expressed the same views in his book against Erasmus, which he never recalled, but pronounced one of his best books (1537).

² "*Ad usum accommodata.*"

³ Mel., *Opera*, in the *Corpus Reformatorum*, vii., 390.

⁴ *Opera*, xv., 215-217. Dated 6 Calendas Septembris.

⁵ The preface is reprinted in his *Opera*, vol. ix., 847-850.

simplest manner by the profoundly learned author. He does not conceal the difference of views on the subject of free-will, and says that Melancthon seems to concede to man some share in his salvation ; yet in such a manner that God's grace is not in any way diminished, and no ground is left to us for boasting.

This is the only example of a Reformer republishing and recommending the work of another Reformer, which was the only formidable rival of his own chief work on the same subject (the *Institutes*), and differed from it in several points.¹

The revival of the unfortunate eucharistic controversy by Luther in 1545, and the equally unfortunate controversy caused by the imperial *Interim* in 1548, tried the friendship of the Reformers to the uttermost. Calvin respectfully, yet frankly, expressed his regret at the indecision and want of courage displayed by Melancthon from fear of Luther and a love of peace.

When Luther came out a year before his death with his most violent and abusive book against the "Sacramentarians,"² which deeply grieved Melancthon and roused the just indignation of the Zwinglians, Calvin wrote to Melancthon (June 28, 1545)³ :

"Would that the fellow-feeling which enables me to condole with you, and to sympathize in your heaviness, might also impart the power, in some degree at least, to lighten your sorrow. If the matter stands as the Zürichers say it does, then they have just occasion for their writing. . . . Your Pericles allows himself to be carried beyond all bounds with his love of thunder, especially seeing that his own cause is by no means the better of the two. . . . We all of us acknowledge that we are much indebted to him. But in the Church we always must be upon our guard, lest

¹ Henry justly remarks (in his *Life of Calvin*, i., 376) : "So free were these rare men of ambition, love of glory, and littleness of spirit, that they thought of nothing but the salvation of the world. Calvin wanted France to love Melancthon as much as he did, and to be converted to Christ through him." Comp. Stähelin's *John Calvin*, i., 244.

² His *Short Confession on the Lord's Supper*. See Schaff, *Church History*, vol. vi., 654 sqq.

³ *Opera*, xii., 98-100 ; Bonnet-Constable, i., 442-444.

we pay too great a deference to men. It is all over with her when a single individual has more authority than all the rest. . . . Where there is so much division and separation as we now see, it is indeed no easy matter to still the troubled waters, and bring about composure. . . . You will say he (Luther) has a vehement disposition and ungovernable impetuosity; as if that very vehemence did not break forth with all the greater violence when all show themselves alike indulgent to him, and allow him to have his way unquestioned. If this specimen of overbearing tyranny has sprung forth already as the early blossom in the spring-tide of a reviving Church, what must we expect in a short time, when affairs have fallen into a far worse condition? Let us, therefore, bewail the calamity of the Church and not devour our grief in silence, but venture boldly to groan for freedom. . . . You have studiously endeavored, by your kindly method of instruction, to recall the minds of men from strife and contention. I applaud your prudence and moderation. But while you dread, as you would some hidden rock, to meddle with this question from fear of giving offence, you are leaving in perplexity and suspense very many persons who require from you somewhat of a more certain sound, on which they can repose. . . . Perhaps it is now the will of God to open the way for a full and satisfactory declaration of your own mind, that those who look up to your authority may not be brought to a stand, and kept in a state of perpetual doubt and hesitation. . . .

“In the meantime let us run the race set before us with deliberate courage. I return you very many thanks for your reply, and for the extraordinary kindness which Claude assures me had been shown to him by you.¹ I can form a conjecture what you would have been to myself, from your having given so kind and courteous a reception to my friend. I do not cease to offer my chief thanks to God, who has vouchsafed to us that agreement in opinion upon the whole of that question [on the real presence]; for although there is a slight difference in certain particulars, we are very well agreed upon the general question itself.”

When after the defeat of the Protestants in the Smalkaldian War, Melanchthon accepted the Leipzig *Interim* with

¹ Claude de Senarclaus, a friend of Calvin, returned from Wittenberg with an album full of pious inscriptions of leading Lutheran divines, which is preserved in the Town Library of Geneva. Bonnet, *l.c.*, i., 444.

the humiliating condition of conformity to the Roman ritual, which the German Emperor imposed upon them, Calvin was still more dissatisfied with his old friend. He sided, in this case, with the Lutheran non-conformists who, under the lead of Matthias Flacius, resisted the *Interim*, and were put under the ban of the empire. He wrote to Melancthon, June 18, 1550, the following letter of remonstrance¹:

“The ancient satirist [Juvenal, i., 79] once said—

‘Si natura negat, facit indignatio versum.’

“It is at present far otherwise with me. So little does my present grief aid me in speaking, that it rather renders me almost entirely speechless. . . . I would have you suppose me to be groaning rather than speaking. It is too well known, from their mocking and jests, how much the enemies of Christ were rejoicing over your contests with the theologians of Magdeburg.² . . . If no blame attaches to you in this matter, my dear Philip, it would be but the dictate of prudence and justice to devise means of curing, or at least mitigating, the evil. Yet, forgive me if I do not consider you altogether free from blame. . . . In openly admonishing you, I am discharging the duty of a true friend; and if I employ a little more severity than usual, do not think that it is owing to any diminution of my old affection and esteem for you. . . . I know that nothing gives you greater pleasure than open candor. . . . This is the sum of your defence: that, provided purity of doctrine be retained, externals should not be pertinaciously contended for. . . . But you extend the distinction of non-essentials too far. You are aware that the Papists have corrupted the worship of God in a thousand ways. Several of those things which you consider indifferent are obviously repugnant to the Word of God. . . . You ought not to have made such large concessions to the Papists. . . . At the time when circumcision was yet lawful, do you not see that Paul, because crafty and malicious fowlers were laying snares for the liberty of believers, pertinaciously refused to concede to them a ceremony at the first instituted by God? He boasts that he did not yield to them,—no, not for an hour,—that the truth of God might remain intact among the

¹ *Opera*, xiii., 593 sqq.

² The zealous Lutherans at Magdeburg which stood out a long siege by the army of the Elector Maurice.

Gentiles (Gal. ii., 5). . . . I remind you of what I once said to you, that we consider our ink too precious if we hesitate to bear testimony in writing to those things which so many of the flock are daily sealing with their blood. . . . The trepidation of a general is more dishonorable than the flight of a whole herd of private soldiers. . . . You alone, by only giving way a little, will cause more complaints and sighs than would a hundred ordinary individuals by open desertion. And, although I am fully persuaded that the fear of death never compelled you in the very least to swerve from the right path, yet I am apprehensive that it is just possible that another species of fear may have proved too much for your courage. For I know how much you are horrified at the charge of rude severity. But we should remember that reputation must not be accounted by the servants of Christ as of more value than life. We are no better than Paul was, who remained fearlessly on his way through 'evil and good report.' . . . You know why I am so vehement. I had rather die with you a hundred times than see you survive the doctrines surrendered by you. . . .

"Pardon me for loading your breast with these miserable though ineffectual groans. Adieu, most illustrious sir, and ever worthy of my hearty regard. May the Lord continue to guide you by his Spirit, and sustain you by his might. May his protection guard you. Amen."

We have here a repetition of the scene between Paul and Peter at Antioch, concerning the rite of circumcision; and while we admire the frankness and boldness of Paul and Calvin in rebuking an elder brother, and standing up for principle, we must also admire the meekness and humility of Peter and Melanchthon in bearing the censure.

Melanchthon himself reopened the correspondence in the old friendly spirit, after a brief interruption, during the disturbances of war between Elector Maurice and the Emperor Charles, which made an end of the controversy about the *Adiaphora*.

"How often," wrote Melanchthon, Oct. 1, 1552,¹ "would I have written to you, reverend sir and dearest brother, if I could find more trustworthy letter-carriers. For I would

¹ *Opera*, xiv., 368; *Corp. Ref.*, vii., 1085.

like to converse with you about many most important matters, because I esteem your judgment very highly and know the candor and purity of your soul.¹ I am now living as in a wasp's nest²; but perhaps I shall soon be called from this mortal life to a brighter companionship in heaven. If I live longer, I have to expect new exiles; if so, I am determined to turn to you. The studies are now broken up by pestilence and war. How often do I mourn and sigh over the causes of this fury among princes."

In a lengthy and interesting answer Calvin says³: "Nothing could have come to me more seasonably at this time than your letter, which I received two months after its despatch."⁴ He assures him that it was no little consolation to him in his sore trials at Geneva to be assured of the continuance of his affection, which, he was told, had been interrupted by the letter of remonstrance above referred to. "I have learned the more gladly that our friendship remains safe, which assuredly, as it grew out of a heartfelt love of piety, ought to remain forever sacred and inviolable."

In the unfortunate affair of Servetus, Melanchthon fully justified Calvin's conduct (1554), as did all the surviving Reformers, who were yet deeply steeped in the intolerance of the Mediæval Church and the abhorrence of heresy as the worst of sins. The only advocates of toleration in that age were Anabaptists and Unitarians, who were themselves persecuted. Calvin's error was the error of the times, but it will always be a reproach to him, and a spot on his fair name. Melanchthon wrote to him the following clear and distinct letter of approval, which is all the more remarkable as he was the gentlest, mildest, and most conciliatory among the Reformers.

"Reverend and dear brother, I have read your book, in which you have clearly refuted the horrid blasphemies of

¹ "Quia et judicium tuum magni facio, et scio integritatem animi et candorem in te summum esse."

² ὡς περ ὄνος ἐν σφηκίαις.

³ Bonnet-Constable, ii., 360-366; *Opera*, xiv., 415-418.

⁴ Nowadays a letter from Wittenberg will reach Geneva in less than two days.

Servetus; and I give thanks to the Son of God, who was the *βραβευτής* (*the awardee of your crown of victory*), in this your combat. To you also the church owes gratitude at the present moment, and will owe it to the latest posterity. I perfectly assent to your opinion. I affirm also that your magistrates did right in punishing, after a regular trial, this blasphemous man.—Oct. 14, 1554.”

In the same year Melanchthon wrote to Bullinger:

“ Reverend and dear brother, I have read your answer to the blasphemies of Servetus, and I approve of your piety and opinions. I judge also that the Genevese senate did perfectly right, to put an end to this obstinate man, who could never cease blaspheming. And I wonder at those who disapprove of this severity.—August 20.”

During the eucharistic controversy, excited by Westphal, Melanchthon kept an ominous silence, which produced a coolness between him and Calvin. In a letter of Aug. 3, 1557, Calvin complains that for three years he had not heard from him, but expresses satisfaction that he still entertained the same affection, and closes with the wish that he may be permitted “to enjoy on earth a most delightful interview with you, and feel some alleviation of my grief by deploring along with you the evils which we cannot remedy.”¹

That wish was not granted. In a letter of Nov. 19, 1558,² he gives him, while still suffering from a quartan ague, a minute account of his malady, of the remedies of the doctors, of the formidable coalition of the kings of France and Spain against Geneva, and concludes with these words:

“ Let us cultivate with sincerity a fraternal affection towards each other, the ties of which no wiles of the devil shall ever burst asunder. . . . By no slight shall my mind ever be alienated from that holy friendship and respect which I have vowed to you. . . . Farewell, most illustrious light and distinguished doctor of the Church. May the Lord always govern you by his Spirit, preserve you long

¹ Letter by Bonnet, *l.c.*, iii., 335-338; *Opera*, xvi., 556-558.

² Bonnet, iii., 481-485; *Opera*, xvii., 384-386.

in safety, increase your store of blessings. In your turn, diligently commend us to the protection of God, as you see us exposed to the jaws of the wolf. My colleagues and an innumerable crowd of pious men salute you."

On the 19th of April, 1560, Melanchthon was delivered from "the fury of the theologians," and all his troubles. A year after his death Calvin, who had to fight the battle of faith four years longer, during the renewed fury of the eucharistic controversy with the fanatical Hesshusius, addressed this touching appeal to his sainted friend in heaven :

"O Philip Melanchthon! I appeal to thee who now livest with Christ in the bosom of God, and there art waiting for us till we shall be gathered with thee to that blessed rest. A hundred times when worn out with labors and oppressed with so many troubles, didst thou repose thy head familiarly on my breast and say: 'Would that I could die in this bosom!' Since then I have a thousand times wished that it had been granted to us to live together; for certainly thou wouldst thus have had more courage for the inevitable contest, and been stronger to despise envy, and to count as nothing all accusations. In this manner, also, the malice of many would have been restrained who, from thy gentleness which they call weakness, gathered audacity for their attacks."

This friendship, which was stronger than death, is a noble monument of the two Reformers.

It conclusively refutes the false, though often-repeated, opinion that Calvin was a cold and unfeeling stoic. Under a marble cover, he had a heart full of deep and tender sympathy. He commanded, and kept to the last, the respect and affection of some of the best men and women of his generation, such as Farel, Viret, Bucer, Grynæus, Bullinger, Beza, Queen Marguerite, and the Duchess of Ferrara. Nothing can be more touching than his letters to Viret and Farel on the loss of his wife, and the letter of comfort to the father of Charles de Richebourg, one of his students, who died in his house at Strassburg.¹ Those who know

¹ See the section of Calvin's Home Life in Schaff's *Church History*, vol. vii., 413-424 (nearly ready for publication).

and judge him from the *decretum horribile* and the execution of Servetus, see the spots in the sun, and not the sun itself.

But the friendship between the author of the Augsburg Confession and the author of the Institutes of the Christian Religion has a general interest for the relationship of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, which they represent. These churches, after a long and bitter alienation during the scholastic and polemical age of Lutheranism and Calvinism, have at last come to understand and appreciate each other. Some large sections have even been organically united in the Evangelical Churches of Prussia, Württemberg, and Baden. Melancthon, the mediator between the two Confessions, never lost his place in the respect and affection of the Reformed Churches, and has recovered it in the Lutheran Church, which once disowned him. Calvin, who was once hated as a dangerous heretic in Saxony and other Lutheran countries, is now recognized by leading Lutheran divines of all schools and parties, and by the Strassburg editors of his works, as the greatest commentator of the Scriptures, and one of the greatest divines and purest men of all ages. "He is beyond all question," says Dr. Reuss, "the greatest exegete of the sixteenth century." "He displays," says Winer, the author of the best grammar of the New Testament, "a truly wonderful sagacity in perceiving, and perspicuity in expounding, the meaning of the Apostles."

Kahnis, a whole-souled Lutheran divine and Church historian, thus admirably characterizes Calvin:¹

"The fear of God was the soul of his piety, the rock-like certainty of his election before the foundation of the world was his power, and the doing of the will of God his single aim, which he pursued with trembling and fear. . . . No other Reformer has so well demonstrated the truth of Christ's word, that in the kingdom of God, dominion is service. No other had such an energy of self-sacrifice, such an irrefragable conscientiousness in the greatest as well as the

¹ *Lutherische Dogmatik*, vol. ii., 490 sq.

smallest things, such a disciplined power. This man, whose dying body was only held together by the will flaming from his eyes, had a majesty of character which commanded the veneration of his contemporaries."

Dorner, who combined with profound learning a rare sense of justice and discrimination, says ¹ :

"Calvin was equally great in intellect and character, lovely in social life, full of tender sympathy and faithfulness to friends, yielding and forgiving towards personal offences, but inexorably severe when he saw the honor of God obstinately and malignantly attacked. He combined French fire and practical good sense with German depth and soberness. He moved as freely in the world of ideas as in the business of Church government. He was an architectonic genius in science and practical life, always with an eye to the holiness and majesty of God."

Karl Hase, in his posthumous lectures on Church History, calls Calvin "a dogmatic Dante," with the same awful adoration of the majesty and justice of God, and a theologian whose great life-thought was to realize Christianity in society.²

But what is most remarkable is the tribute which a Roman Catholic historian, Kampschulte of Bonn, paid to his purity and greatness, in the first volume of his critical biography of Calvin, which was, unfortunately, interrupted by his death. His judgment of Calvin is a parallel to Döllinger's judgment of Luther, and all the more weighty, as they dissent from the doctrines of the Reformers. Kampschulte says of Calvin's *Institutes* :³

¹ *Geschichte des Protest. Theologie*, pp. 374 sq.

² *Kirchengeschichte auf der Grundlage akademischer Vorlesungen*, Leipzig, 1891, pp. 196 and 197 : "Sein grosser Gedanke war, das Christenthum zur Lebensordnung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft zu machen. . . . Durch ihn und Beza ist Genf die heilige Stadt, die neue Roma der reformatorischen Kirche geworden."

³ *Johann Calvin. Seine Kirche und sein Staat in Genf*, Leipzig, 1869, i., 274 sq. Professor Reusch of Bonn informed me that Professor Cornelius of Munich, a friend of Döllinger, was entrusted with the material for vols. ii. and iii., but he has not yet completed the work. Kampschulte died in 1872 an Old Catholic, like Döllinger.

“Calvin’s manual of the Christian religion is beyond question the most prominent and most important work of the reformation literature in the department of dogmatic theology. Even a superficial comparison shows how vast a progress it marks over preceding works of the kind. . . . It is a work of perfect art. The author has with full justice been called the Aristotle of the Reformation. The extraordinary familiarity with the Bible and patristic literature fills us with astonishment. The method is luminous, the progress of thought strict, logical and transparent, the division and arrangement suited to the matter and the leading idea. The *Institutes* contain passages which are not surpassed by the most beautiful passages that Pascal or Bossuet ever wrote. Several sections will never fail to make a profound impression upon the reader. Even Catholic opponents cannot help to acknowledge this, and have even used many sections. We can fully understand that he looked upon this work with a sense of satisfaction and pride.”

The growing appreciation of the leaders of the Reformation is a hopeful sign of the times. The more the different sections of evangelical Protestantism come to know each other, the more will they esteem and love each other. And we may go further and say, the more Roman Catholic historians will do justice to the Reformation, and the more Protestant historians will do justice to the Catholic Church, the sooner will the great controversies of Christendom be settled on the immovable basis of Him who is the divine concord of human discords.