



# F.A.C.S. REPORT

"A Monthly Newsletter on the Relevance of the Christian Faith"

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**O**ur subject is the Reformation church. One of the great revolutions that overtook the medieval church — and which corrupted — it was the influx of Aristotelean thought. Now the writings of Aristotle were very seductive to Western thinkers — here was a great and a brilliant mind. The triumph of logic, the finely tuned rational arguments: all this had an appeal. But the key fact in Aristotle that became a corrupting influence in the West and which governed so much thinking to this day was, that for Aristotle politics has priority over ethics and religion.

## Priority of Politics

**F**irst, Aristotle wrote his *Politics* before he wrote his *Ethics*. His *Ethics* are based on the political order, and on the priority of politics, so that in effect politics became the new religion. With Aristotelianism going through Europe with a great rapidity and with the imprimatur of the church, in no time at all, the foundations of medieval culture were shifted, transformed, radically altered. And the world entered the church and took it captive. And this was the reason for the Reformation.

The Holy Roman Emperors and the kings of such powerful states as Spain and France controlled Rome to prevent it from being effective. Controlled Popes were elected who made the Vatican an arts centre rather than a religious force. If Cardinals refused to vote for the choice of the politicians, they were killed. So the Popes that were voted in were not men that the church loved or respected.

Out of this came the great movement of protest known as the Reformation. The Reformation was an intensely conservative as well as a radical movement. And these two impulses were also identical. In a profound sense, it was a call for the return to the roots of their faith. *Sola*

## The Reformation Church

by R.J. Rushdoony

*Scriptura*. "To your tents, O Israel," was in a new sense the cry of revolt. At the same time, this demand for a return to the roots of Christianity was a very radical demand for a change in all spheres so that everything might be conformed to the Word of God.

The main branches of the Reformation churches were first Lutheran and second Zwinglian. Some would list as a third the Anabaptists. These Anabaptist churches had deep roots in medieval pietism and some in the Reformation. And

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their relationship to the Reformation began in part out of a return to the pre-Reformation lay movements among the Catholics. But our concern is with a fourth branch, Calvinism and the Reformed churches. These held first to the premise of *Sola Scriptura*, the sole, unqualified authority of Scripture as the written revelation of God. And the Calvinistic churches held to this with a consistency lacking in the others.

The Word of God, Jesus Christ, God Incarnate is with the Father and the Spirit the source and authority for the written Word. While the universe was created

entirely good, the Fall had distorted its revelation of God. Man's mind is also warped by the Fall, so that it gives a warped and fallen testimony.

Dr. H. Henry Meeter wrote of this and I quote, "The Bible is not on a level with nature as a revelation of God, but it is rather a corrective of false impressions made by nature in its distorted condition. It pres-

ents to us views about God and the universe which nature today does not teach properly. As Calvin states it, we must look at nature through the spectacles of the Bible. So then, while God has indeed two revelations which He wants His creatures to study, the Bible after all becomes the ultimate basis for the whole view of life for the Christian, since he needs the Biblical outlook to interpret properly nature and life around him. However, the Bible does more than act as an interpreter of nature. Since it contains a special revelation of salvation for sinners, this important information nature cannot give us. We cannot have a proper view of God or the universe, of man or history without the Bible."

This premise was the true completion of the Reformation. As against the authority of man and the church, the Reformed faith set forth the sovereign authority of God and his enScriptured word. As against Rome and the Lutheran princes, no major civil ruler and his civil order supported Calvinism more than briefly, because its challenge to all human sovereignties made it anathema to state and to church. Power did not emanate from princes and churchmen, but from the sovereign and triune God and His Word. Calvinism in terms of Chalcedon allowed no confusion of the human and divine orders, nor between human and divine authority and power.

Cornelius Van Til said of Calvinism's premise, and I quote, "Calvinism seeks first and above all to take its system of truth from the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the self-

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authenticating revelation of God in Christ. If it is to be called a system at all, then this system must be seen to be open to the Scriptures. The doctrines of Calvinism are not deduced in *a priori* fashion from one major principle such as the sovereignty of God. And let me add, that is the weakness of some modern forms of Calvinism. On the contrary, whatever can, by sober exegesis be found to be taught in Scripture, that and only that constitutes part of the system of Calvinism. With true evangelical zeal Calvinism therefore presents the unrestricted universal offer of the Gospel. Human responsibility is a basic teaching of Scripture, but the meaning of human responsibility must be taken from Scripture itself, not deduced from a supposed experience of freedom taken from non-Scriptural philosophy. Accordingly, Calvinism relates human responsibility to the all-inclusive plan of God. Human responsibility does not take place within a vacuum, it takes place within history, which is under the ultimate disposition of God. Man is therefore responsible as the creature of God."

## The Importance of Calvinism

**S**econd, this means that Calvinism cannot be a reductionist philosophy. It does believe emphatically in God's sovereignty, in predestination, in the five points of Calvinism and more. But to define it in terms of any of these is to warp and limit it. The Sola Scriptura premise means the affirmation in full of all that Scripture teaches. So Calvinists are not people simply who believe in the sover-

eignty of God or predestination but the whole word of God. Sola Scriptura in the Calvinist tradition, until recently, has meant precisely that. It is not an option for us to pick and choose what we would believe or what we would like to stress. Even in its limited or inconsistent applications, this premise has been far-reaching in its importance. It is very much in line with the Chalcedon premise of 451: the divine and the human natures cannot be confused, even in Christ, and certainly not in men nor in institutions. This imposes a like barrier to all human thinking and speculation. We can only think God's thoughts after him. Contrary to Hegel, what is rational for us cannot be real because we do not create, nor do we define, reality. God alone does, and therefore it is the whole word of God which must govern us, so that we can define things as God would have them to be defined. We give heed to Isaiah's words, "This is the way. Walk ye in it when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

The amazing strength of Calvinism in its early generations, was due to an unswerving commitment to this premise. It placed fixed boundaries on what man could and could not do. As the Confession of Basle, Article 10, states in part, "We confess that as no man can command those things which Christ hath not commanded, so likewise no man can forbid those things which He hath not forbidden." Go through the Reformed confession of the first, second, and third generation. They all stressed the whole word of God. All of it, and nothing more.

Now this premise, when believed, has placed a powerful roadblock in the way of unwarranted powers by any person or institution by church, state, or anything else. It has been a charter of liberty in lands where the Calvinistic faith has flourished. Man's legislative power is denied. Only a ministerial power exists. Only God can make laws. Man cannot. Man's ministerial duty in every sphere is simply to administer God's law, and God by his law severely limits man to a limited area of jurisdiction.

## Christ as King

**T**hird, Calvinism affirms the crown rights of Christ the King over every sphere of life and thought. Calvin stressed this in his Commentary on Ephesians 1:20-23, "Christ by his resurrection is now far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this

## The Rhythm of Life

A popular song in the 1970's was entitled "The Rhythm of Life." A line from that song said, "For the rhythm of life is a powerful beat." This fact has been known to mankind since earliest times. This is why it is possible to analyse the music of a particular culture and gain some idea of their view on life.

Music is a language. It allows men and women to express themselves in non-verbal ways. When words are added to music, it becomes a very, very powerful tool for communication, for it now combines the power of words with the communication abilities of music. (We can also add non-verbal communication that goes along with music, such as in music theatre, or even in concert performance, where performers will endeavour to enhance their audible communication with visible gestures.)

Music itself consists of four elements. These elements are melody, harmony, rhythm, and sound colour. This last element refers to the various types of music instruments available to express musical ideas as well as the capacities of the various instruments themselves to change the nature and colour of the sound to enhance communication. Thus, tubas are used for some kinds of music, whereas flutes used for another; music representative of elephants will utilise the tuba or double bass and not the flute or the piccolo.

Music has been used since earliest times for various purposes. In the Bible, David played skilfully to soothe Saul. In more recent times, "Music played an important role in the Christianization of heathens and in the subduing of occasional pagan uprisings." (Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1942, p. 58).

Our purpose here is to think about these elements of music and ask ourselves what kind of music might be used for various occasions. A march and a waltz both use all the elements of music. But it is the rhythm that sets it apart. A waltz in France is different to one in Vienna, and again it is the rhythm that sets them apart from each other. A Polish mazurka has the same number of beats in the bar as a polonaise or a waltz, but what makes it a mazurka is the way the rhythm is structured.

Since music is found in all cultures it is worth asking what is it that distinguishes Western music from that of other cultures. Ultimately, it is the way that the four elements are combined in musical composition. For purposes of this essay, I am concentrating on the use of rhythm in Western music, since it is evident that rhythm has found a newfound importance in music.

As the breakdown of Christian morality since the turn of the century has continued unfettered, it is curious to note the changes in music style that have occurred along with it. Christian culture, with its emphasis on the harmony of creation under God, gave us

world but also in that which is to come." Calvin said in part of Ephesians 1:22, and I quote, "He was made the head of the church, on the condition that he should have the administration of all things. The apostle shows that it was not a mere honorary title, but was accompanied by the entire government and command of the universe. The metaphor 'the head' denotes the highest authority."

Again, Calvin said of 1 Timothy 6:15 which declares Jesus Christ to be the only potentate and King over all Kings and Lord over all Lords, and I quote, "The sum of it is, that all the governments of the world are subject to His dominion, depend upon Him, and stand or fall at His bidding. But that the authority of God is beyond all comparison, because all the rest are nothing as compared with his glory, and while they fade and perish quickly, his authority will endure forever."

We cannot fully appreciate at this distance the venomous hatred Calvin incurred in his day and after, because he supplanted all authorities and powers claiming independence of God and Christ with the sole authority of the Triune God, *Sola Scriptura*. This was an aspect of his *Sola Scriptura* stand. For Calvin and true Calvinism all authorities have legitimate power only as the ministers of the Triune God. The universe is God's creation. It is totally under His government, and no sphere has any jurisdiction in independence of Him. And every sphere must serve His purpose.

Dr. Meeter wrote with respect to the authority of rulers, and I quote, "This authority is received of God. It always remains the authority of God. It is never relinquished by him to the rulers. They remain his ministers. Their authority is restricted to their own domain of government and does not extend to the entire life of the citizen. The home, the church, the school, and other spheres of society have each their own province, given them by God, which the authority of the government does not extend, and upon which it may not encroach."

## The Historical Faith

**T**hen, fourth, we cannot do justice to the Reformation wrought by Calvin without seeing as he did: in continuity with Chalcedon. Calvin in his dedication of his commentaries of Jeremiah to Prince Frederic, Lord Palatine of the Rhine, expressed his strong opposition to the ancient error of Eutyches who taught as Calvin said, that "the two na-

tures become so blended, that when Christ became man the attributes of deity were communicated to his human nature."

This was also the heresy of Servetus, and it meant the divinisation of man and of the state. The evidence is now missing as to which men in Geneva invited Servetus in the hopes of using him to overthrow Calvin and the reformation he had brought in.

Calvin, always respecting Luther, did not name him when he wrote against consubstantiation as a violation of Scripture and Chalcedon, and I quote, "I speak not of the Romanists whose doctrine is more tolerable or at least more modest, but some are so carried away with the heat of contention as to affirm that on account of the union of the two natures in Christ wherever His divinity is, His flesh which cannot be separated from it, is there also. As if that union had mingled the two natures so as to form some intermediate kind of being which is neither god nor man. This notion was maintained by (Eutyches) and since his time by Servetus, but it is clearly ascertained from the Scriptures that in the one person of Christ, the two natures are united in such a manner that each retains its peculiar properties undiminished." Calvin condemned and I quote again, "the stupid notion of the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament."

Christ as the last Adam is our covenant head. He has created us to be His new humanity by His atonement and resurrection, and he communicates to us the status of a new and free people in Himself. This Chalcedonian emphasis of Calvin's led in Calvinism to a strong stress on covenantalism, a Biblical note lacking in the other branches of the church. Moreover, Calvin's stand here separated him from the other reformers. Despite his respect for them, he knew they were undermining the Reformation.

In a sermon on 2 Timothy 2:19 Calvin said, and I quote, "Let us mark well what this word Christianity meaneth. Its meaning is to be members of the Son of God." And he went on to explain that it is to be members of the new human race, created by God the Son with His atonement and by His regenerating power. Our union is with Christ's flesh, His new humanity.

## Ongoing Reformation

**F**ifth, it is no accident that presuppositionalism is a development within Calvinism. It has found its strongest expression in the works of Cornelius Van Til

a certain kind of music. Man, in his revolt against the Christian God, has done whatever is necessary to have music state the obvious: no God, no order, no harmony. This was also reflected in an abandonment of melody and its imposed rules for composition.

These abandoned elements placed a priority on the intellect. Polyphonic (many voices) music requires a mastery of the rules of harmony and melodic writing in order to be successful. It is the priority of the intellect, however, that sets early Western music apart. For Christianity, of all the religions, emphasises the intellect and its priority over other aspects of man's nature, such as emotion. It is not so much a matter of intellect versus psychology but rather the emotional and psychological aspects of man's nature were to be controlled by the intellect.

Thus, as man untied himself from a belief in God, so too, he untied himself from the rational and linked himself with the emotions. Now he would be ruled by what he "felt" was right, not what his intellect, after serious study and reflection dictated to him. "If it feels good, do it." became a slogan of the 1960s and is the logical result of the establishment of the priority of the psychological aspects of man's nature over the mind.

In music these things were well understood. In the baroque era, for example, the chromatic scale was associated with emotion. But in Western music emotion was subordinated to the intellect: it became, in other words, organised. The Western World, Christendom, was dead by the time of Napoleon. And since that time, music has taken a downward spiral emphasising the emotions rather than the intellect, emphasising man and the created order, rather than a higher order that might inspire man to bigger and better things.

To state these things, however, is to make no great statement about music. Most people understand these things. That is why, for example, the music that is to be found in the local club, hotel, or disco, is music that emphasises rhythm. Imagine, if you can, a disco playing the great cantatas of Bach. Is this the kind of music that accompanies the activities associated with discos? Strip bars would highlight this issue more, which is why strip bars and discos play the kind of music they do: it is the kind of music that lends itself to the other activities that go on in these places.

These are not state secrets. These facts are known to anyone who takes a few minutes to ask themselves what goes on, and why it is that particular things are always found together.

What is surprising, however, is the propensity of so many churches to introduce the kind of music that is found in strip bars and discos. While it may be maintained that the music has religious words attached to it, and sometimes it is even the words of Scripture themselves, this does not properly address the issue. We still need to ask ourselves the question: Which is the better

and its immediate source is Calvin's Institutes. Calvin had no use for attempts to prove God. Such efforts were to him at best, vain and futile, because no thinking, no proof, can exist without God. He declared, "Wherefore the Scripture will then only be effectual to produce the saving knowledge of God when the certainty of it shall be founded on the internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit. Thus those human testimonies which contribute to its confirmation will not be useless if they follow that first and principal proof as secondary aids to our imbecility. But those persons betray great folly who wish it to be demonstrated to infidels that the Scripture is the Word of God which cannot be known without faith."

Augustine therefore justly observes that piety and peace of mind ought to

precede in order that a man might understand somewhat of such great subjects.

Calvin was very much a thinker, not after Aquinas, but Anselm, who said, "I do not understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order that I might understand."

## Conclusion

**A**s against Calvinism, Arminianism which has overtaken Protestantism to a great extent is simply a theological Thomism. It is Thomism minus its doctrine of the church. Implicitly, the non-Calvinists of the Reformation never made a clean break and their stands are thus crumbling ones.

Only a consistent Calvinism can meet the challenges of our time with the power of God and His providential protection and victory. Anything else will be judged by the Lord. The Reformation erected a standard, *Sola Scriptura*. The church will only conquer, will only triumph, when it returns unequivocally to that faith.

### *Rhythm of Life (continued) . . .*

way for the Christian mind to utilise the elements of music?

Even many churches that decry Christian "rock" music have succumbed to the acceptance of the modern form of church music, reflected in the use of music that has a reliance on rhythm as the strongest ingredient of all the elements. This is why when the band gets rolling and the people start hand-clapping, the bodies begin to sway — just as they do down the road in the discos and the strip joints. Swaying bodies and strong rhythm go hand in hand. So, too, do swaying male and female bodies and an unhealthy sexuality.

Making the local church relevant to our times is the argument used to adopt the kind of music of popular culture. And popular culture surely cannot be called Christian in many aspects. To attempt to baptise pop culture with religious words is either an act of ignorance, or a tacit acceptance of pop culture itself. Which is why they don't want to change the music. It is not as if the music of pop culture *has* to be used. No one is forcing people to use it. But there is hardly a church in existence that is seeking alternatives in music style.

To return to the hymns of the previous generation is not the answer. While this music had less rhythm than the music of

contemporary culture being used in the church, it also reflected an abandonment of the intellect with its simple melodies and boring harmony. An over use of the tonic, sub-dominant, and dominant harmonies — again another sign of contemporary music — is not the mark of an overly intelligent music. These are the harmonies that are learnt in the early grades, and most of the churches contemporary hymns, harmonically speaking, have not got past junior school.

Music in the church has adopted the familiar. In its efforts to make church music easily sung it has adopted familiar music structures and ideas, just as is happening with the adoption of the contemporary music styles into the church. But it is the familiarity of the style that gives the point away: music does not obtain familiarity once a week in church. Music is familiar because it is heard all the time. Familiarity comes listening to the radio, watching television, listening to the CD or tape player.

Mankind needs a music that will take him beyond himself and his narrow, self-centred view of life. It is the church's task to provide this music, something it is not doing at the moment. To achieve this, it is not necessary to tell the Sunday night drummer to pick up his drum and beat it! But it is necessary to tell the drummers of this world that rhythm isn't everything — and, if necessary, replace his drumsticks with a

feather! But it will be necessary for the Christian church to develop its own kind of music. A music that will stir the minds *and* the hearts of the people. To do this, it will be, by definition, unpopular music. This does not mean it should be bad music. But since it will be the church's efforts to change culture, it will not be familiar to those outside the church.

What contemporary church music needs is not to copy the style of the pagan culture surrounding it: rather it needs to be stimulated by the use of imagination that reflects a Christian culture — even though that culture does not exist at present. For it will be development of a new wave of Christian music (amongst other things) that will bring about a new culture. If music can be used to assist in the suppression of pagan riots as it has in the past, then it can be used in the subjugation of the pagan to Christ.

May God raise up Christian musicians who can see past the contemporary culture of today and, with real imagination, provide us with music that, first of all, will not be associated in style with the disco and strip joint, but will raise man's vision above and beyond this world so that he may truly capture a vision of the Kingdom of God.