



**Our Calvinistic Faith
the Religion for a
World Crisis**



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"And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14.

These words were spoken by Mordecai. They form a part of his notable address to Queen Esther. Both were Jews and lived during the perilous days of King Ahasuerus. In the drama before us, Haman was the villain. He was also the King's Secretary of State. Seeing that Mordecai did not bow to him as others did, Haman was very much grieved. In seeking the death of Mordecai on that account, Haman persuaded the king to sign a decree against all Jews. Ten thousands talents of silver was the price agreed upon for the slaughter. Hearing of this dastardly plot, Mordecai appealed to Queen Esther. It was a national calamity which had to be wisely handled. To the Queen, Mordecai said, "Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews." It is not likely that she wanted to escape. Had she any such thought, however, this remark of Mordecai's would tend to

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banish it. After further reasoning with her, he said, "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Mordecai felt that her presence at this time in the king's palace was providential. In the language of Paul, Augustine, and Calvin, we would say that it had been fore-ordained. It was a part of God's great plan for the saving of the Jews. From what is here said evidently Mordecai was a Calvinist. He was such in his faith although living two thousand years before the day of Calvin. Together with Queen Esther, he was called upon to face a national crisis in the life of his own people, deliverance from which was suggested to him by his Calvinistic faith.

Today we are facing a world crisis. Of this there can be little doubt. Thinking men of every nation freely admit it. It is evident at home as well as abroad. The waves of industrial and political unrest are seething beneath, ready at any moment to break forth. The question is, How shall this world disaster be averted? What is the proper solution for these world wide problems? Some are looking to a federated church. They see in a movement of this kind our only hope. Others are looking to a League of Nations. Like the builders of the tower of Babel, they expect great things of this League. Now instead of either, we would like to propose Mordecai's remedy. It worked well in his day. His Calvinistic faith put into operation served to ward off the vicious blow of Haman. We sincerely believe that it is the only remedy for this present hour

Let us take as our subject: "Our Calvinistic Faith the Religion for a World Crisis. It is the Religion for a World Crisis because:

1—It Espouses the Rights of the People.

Moved by this Calvinistic faith, Mordecai went to Queen Esther in behalf of their own people. Something had to be done and that quickly. As a nation, they were about to be cut off. Wishing to be avenged on Mordecai, Haman, the Autocrat, laid his wicked plot. The people were being cruelly dealt with. This Mordecai knew and on that account appealed to the Queen. Together they planned, fasted and prayed. They did everything in their power to set aside the wickedness of Haman. Their Calvinistic faith led them to disregard even their own welfare in seeking the highest interest of the people.

When properly understood, Calvinism is the religion of the people. In its government, it is Presbyterian which secures to the people their rights. A man can not be a Calvinist and an Autocrat at the same time. Like sickness and health, the two are set over against each other. Calvinism, like Mordecai, has respect to the people's rights. In its government it provides a place for the voice of the common folk. While Autocracy, like Haman, is the people's greatest enemy. It tramples them beneath its feet like the swine the pearls. Upon the other hand, Calvinism and Democracy are akin. Between them there is a common bond. Both recognize the rights of the people. Both are the avowed enemies of Autocracy.

This is true of Calvinism in the sphere of the church and of Democracy in the sphere of the State. In the recent overthrow of German Autocracy both Calvinism and Democracy made some gain. To use Lincoln's famous expression, Calvinism in its government is a religion "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

The world's greatest reformers have been Calvinists. In every age men and women of this particular faith have espoused the rights of the people. They have been the honored fighters both for civil and religious liberty. Being a Calvinist Moses fearlessly faced Pharaoh, the noted Autocrat, and in the name of Jehovah demanded the liberation of the Jews. What strong Calvinistic meat we find in Peter's address before the Jewish Council when insisting upon his right to teach the people. The greatest Autocrat in Paul's day was Nero before whom he finally fell when speaking for the common folk. Also in this connection let us mention that "Name which is above every name." In the strict sense of the term, Christ was both a Democrat and a Calvinist. It was the Autocratic party of the Jewish nation which so bitterly assailed Him and which brought from His lips the keenest denunciation ever recorded. Time would fail us to speak of a host of others equally as deserving. We stop only to mention their names, such as Zwingle, Melville, Henderson, Gillespie, Guthrie, Rutherford, Knox, Cargill, Renwick, Cameron all of a Calvinistic turn of mind and yet like Mordecai the fearless defenders of the rights of the people.

Our Calvinistic Faith is the Religion for a World Crisis, because:

2—It Involves Man's Co-operation.

Hearing of Haman's plot, Mordecai set out at once to defeat it. Among the Jews there was great lamentation. "In every province whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting and weeping and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes." Mordecai joined with them in this service. Putting on sackcloth and ashes, he went out into the midst of the city "and cried with a loud and bitter cry." His purpose in part, at least, was to secure the attention of the Queen. If any one could reach the King's ear it was the Queen. Instead of deterring him, Mordecai's Calvinistic faith simply stirred him up. It prompted him to definite and immediate action. Although conscious that every thing was fore-ordained, yet he knew that to get what he wanted, he had to be both active and faithful.

It is just at this point that Calvinism has been greatly misunderstood. Those who criticize, pretend just here to see a great weakness. They say, "If everything is fore-ordained why trouble ourselves? If this and that are fixed by an eternal decree, how can we ever hope to change it? In a world crisis the Calvinistic Faith is wholly inadequate. In it there is no place for prayer and effort. It encourages indolence and finally leads to despair."

But by such unjust criticism, we are in no way disturbed. One needs never to be afraid of the

arrow which falls far short of the mark. What such critics have in mind is not Calvinism at all. It is Fatalism. They take for granted that the two terms are interchangeable when they are not. Calvinism is as widely separated from Fatalism as light and darkness. It is true that all things are fore-ordained. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." This is the teaching of God's Word and we have no disposition to deny it. But fore-ordination is not to be considered apart from God's fore-knowledge. Fore-ordination includes the means as well as the end. "While the end is predetermined, the means are predestinated." Our critics' ideal man is a ship lost at sea. It is without chart, compass and rudder. It is left altogether at the mercy of the waves. While the Calvinist's ideal man, as Dr. Hodge says, "is a great steamship self propelled and self steered," having both chart and compass. When will the former reach the harbor? Nobody knows. That depends on the mercy of wind and wave. When will the latter reach the harbor? Everybody knows, because its actions are foreseen and predetermined.

Just here this question may be raised, How does Calvinism work out in life? In the presence of a world crisis, are Calvinists indolent, indifferent and given to despair? If our critics are right in their position, history should bear them out. But what are the facts? The very opposite is true. We have already said that Calvinists are great fighters. This is true inside or outside of a church court. But it may also be said that

they are great workers. In this respect they are seldom equalled and never surpassed. The most energetic churches today are Calvinistic. This is true in evangelistic work. Our Church is stirred as never before along this line. It is also true in mission work, both home and foreign. Like the woman at the well, the clearer our vision of Christ as the Messiah the deeper our interest in missions. And it is also true in reform work. Temperance, Sabbath, Anti-Secret and National Reforms find their staunchest supporters among Calvinists. As in the days of Mordecai, the Calvinistic faith in a world crisis stirs to action as no other kind of a faith does.

Our Calvinistic Faith is the Religion for a World Crisis, because:

3—It Maintains Supreme Faith in God.

Mordecai was a man of great faith. We make a good deal of the part played by Queen Esther. And it is right that we should. She did a very brave thing when unbidden she walked into the presence of the king. What an anxious moment it must have been in her life. But in this connection, let us not forget Mordecai. Think of his strong faith. To Esther he said, "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place." He felt that God would not allow this massacre. His Calvinistic faith led him to believe that if Queen Esther failed, deliverance would come from some other source.

Great faith is one of the things which Calvin-

ism inspires. Some speak of Calvinism as good enough for ordinary times. The inference is that it is not sufficient for times of great national stress. We wish to affirm that while it is good at all times it is especially so under extraordinary conditions.

In the life of Paul, we have a notable example. Paul and his companions were on their way to Rome when overtaken by a terrific storm. Speaking of this incident the sacred historian says, "And when neither sun, nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away." It was under such circumstances that Paul spoke. "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life, but of the ship." Evidently Paul was the only Calvinist on the ship. His faith was their only source of comfort. Was Paul simply guessing or boasting or making bold without ground? Certainly not. Further we read, "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar, and lo God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

But why go as far back as the days of the Apostle for suitable illustrations? We have them nearer home and some we may take from our own national history. As a country, we have been called upon to endure seasons of trial. Such

a period was the time of the Revolution. Those most hopeful at that time were Calvinists. Bancroft says, "The first public voice for dissolving all connection with Great Britain came not from the Puritans of New England, not from the Dutch of New York, not from the planters of Virginia, but from the Scotch Presbyterians." Also such a period was the day of our Civil War. When the night was the darkest, it was a Calvinistic message which gave any assurance. We now have in mind that notable gathering in New York City in the morning after the assassination of Lincoln. A mob had gathered before the World's office shouting "Raid the office." From the balcony of a nearby hotel, certain men tried to quiet the people. Horace Greeley spoke but could get no attention. Another tried and failed. Then James A. Garfield, stepping forward and holding aloft a yellow piece of paper shouted, "A telegram from Washington." When there was silence he read the 93 Psalm adding "God reigns and the Government at Washington still stands." Speaking of this incident, Dr. Emerson, President of Emerson School of Oratory, Boston, likens it to Webster's famous remark to the people at the dedication of Bunker Hill Monument. He speaks of both as "great oratorical triumphs," and that is true. But what made Garfield's so, was its strong Calvinistic sentiment. Like Jonah's message to Ninevah, it was short but it had the desired effect. It immediately quieted the people when all other means had failed. Calvinism is good at all times but especially during a crisis.

Our Calvinistic Faith is the Religion for a World Crisis, because:

4—It Views All Providences as a Part of God's Great Plan.

This was the way in which Mordecai looked upon Queen Esther's position. Speaking to her he said, "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" From this it is evident that Mordecai was a Calvinist. He attempted to see everything as a part of God's great plan. Whether favorable or adverse, he looked on all providences in the same light. Esther's presence at this time in the king's palace was providential. This Mordecai firmly believed and sought to impress upon her.

What a happy way in which to view present world conditions. Such a conception of every providence is Calvinistic. Chance is a word which an orthodox Calvinist does not use. In viewing world conditions some people grow sick at heart. They become despondent over the present outlook. They say that the world is getting worse, that the church has signally failed, and that civilization has utterly collapsed. But such people are mistaken. They are not Calvinists or they would not talk that way. How can the world become any worse than it is? Ere the church becomes, as predicted of her, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," she must fail in some things. It will be a great day when she does. And the only kind of a civilization which has collapsed is a Christless one. And why shouldn't it collapse?

Who ever expected it to stand? With such results, a sound Calvinist throws his arms into the air and shouts. "Thank God. Let us take courage. At last things are beginning to move." We look for a "new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." We are more than glad to see "the removing of these things that are shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

"And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" How appropriate these words when thinking of our Beloved Zion. We are living in strange times. What tremendous national and international upheavals already have taken place. Whole kingdoms upset, entire nations changed, boastful empires toppled over in a night. Many kings, queens and emperors have lost their crowns in the shuffle and a few of them their heads. The question arises, Why has the little Covenanter Church been hitherto preserved? What particular day has God had in mind in our continued preservation? May not this be the day, God's day, not man's, forward to which He has been patiently looking? A national recognition of Christ's kingdom is the imperative need of the hour. Our Beloved Zion has held this doctrine so firmly from its infancy, and in such a practical way, that we can now say as a church, "To this end were we born and for this purpose came we into the world."

In conclusion, we have much to encourage us. Never was the Christian Amendment more pop-

ular than just now. When presented to the ministers of other churches, many of them receive it cordially. Not a few of them have already promised to present it to their own people. The Rev. Dr. David Burrell, of New York City, a noted divine of the Reformed Church, is behind this movement. Dr. Chas. M. Sheldon, the popular writer and preacher of Topeka, is also deeply interested. Recently he said. "The first thing to do is for nations to acknowledge God and place Him at the head of the peace table." In an editorial, the "Sunday School Times" says, "Every nation which does not recognize Christ as Supreme Lord is thereby habitually at war with God." Who can tell the real significance of this present hour! May it not be the Thermopylae of the little Covenanter Church? "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!" How dare we be indifferent or unfaithful? "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise * * * from another place."

It was the voice of a Calvinist which shook the throne of Pharaoh and finally forced him to release three million Jewish slaves. It was the voice of a Calvinist along the fords of the Jordan that stirred the people in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. It was the voice of a Calvinist that finally awakened all Europe to the deadly evils of Romanism and which secured for all the world the blessings of the First Reformation. It was the voice of a Calvinist, in the person of John Knox, which aroused all Scot-

land to the dangers of Prelacy and which led the Church of that little kingdom to so successfully resist as to call forth the world's admiration. Today, the crushed and torn and bleeding world awaits the voice of another Calvinist to turn its attention to Christ, the crucified and enthroned Redeemer, as the Nations' only Saviour and King. Ye honored sons of John Knox, ye noble descendants of John Calvin, we appeal unto you, to arise and furnish to the world that voice. Let us do it unitedly and with enthusiasm. Let us do it in the fear of God and in the spirit of those who fought and died at Airmoss, Rullion Green, Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge. "I will go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish I perish." With the same spirit of self sacrifice, let us go out for the King and with renewed energy work on until "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever."