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Mr. Green's ministry. At one time the week-ending prayer meetings held at farm-houses attracted large numbers and were thought worthy of mention in a leading religious paper.

Amidst the difficulties of present-day rural causes, with the help of lay preachers and the gracious perseverance of some earnest adherents, the light is kept burning and the holy fire still maintained.

The grave yard surrounding the chapel, skirted by the beautiful common, has been in use for near ninety years and its tomb stones and wooden grave rails—the latter much decayed, record the names of the departed, young and old; some with pathetic verse or incident. The graves of its ministers and their kindred are on the east side. The headstone of one of the former reads: "In memory of the Revd. John Westcott, Minister of this Chapel for thirteen years, who after a course of eminent usefulness departed this life Octr. 7, 1848 in the forty-second year of his age.

Also Hannah (his wife) Jan. 27, 1892 aged 86 years."
Inside the Chapel is a tablet to Revd. T. Green.

T. R. HOOPER.

A Modern Estimate of Calvinism

IT is impossible to read Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* without acquiring a deep admiration for the author. There is a majestic quality about this massive work which wins approval even where it does not carry conviction. In its primary form the work was comparatively small in bulk—514 octavo pages containing six chapters dealing briefly with the themes of the Apostles' Creed—but Calvin continued to expand, elaborate and reconstruct his work until within a few years of his death. The argument reveals a rich mind, almost as familiar with Patristic as with Biblical writers, moving with certainty among the ultimate problems of religion. It is the work of a logician, an intellectualist, although there are not wanting illustrations which suggest that now and then Calvin's heart "escaped from the control of his head." The systematic theologian occasionally gave place to the preacher, concerned less with consistency than with the earnest appeal of Divine truth. Calvin reared a noble edifice of thought: the dominating unity of his theology was projected, so to speak, into his presentation of it, and the result is a marvel of system and order.

Probably no modern survey of theological truth has exercised so powerful an influence. Whether men have accepted or rejected the Calvinistic position they have done it with enthusiasm. Historians have not been stinting in their praise of Calvin's influence. Morley declared "to omit Calvin from the forces of Western evolution is to read history with one eye shut." Mark Pattison went even further, "Calvinism saved Europe." Enthusiastic eulogies of the system have in recent times been given by Hastie (*Theology of the Reformed Church*) and especially Kuyper (*Calvinism*)—this latter a fascinating book which relates Calvinism to religion, politics, science and art, and ventures a prophecy on "Calvinism and the future." There is ground for Froude's question: "How came it to pass, if Calvinism is the hard and unreasoning creed which modern enlightenment declares it to be, it has possessed such singular attraction in times past for some of the greatest men that ever lived?" Whatever be our verdict upon Calvinism in relation to the theological approach of to-day, we cannot withhold our tribute of praise for its effect in strong and virile Christianity when strength and virility were so greatly needed in Europe.

The most ardent Calvinist would not claim for Calvin great originality of view. It would be possible to trace his ideas of the Trinity and the Person of Christ in the great Œcumenical Councils of the Church, to find his conception of the Evangelical doctrines in the common heritage of Protestantism, while Calvin himself was careful to acknowledge his indebtedness to Augustine on the idea of predestination (although he went beyond the African bishop in his presentation of the doctrine). His greatness, as Orr points out, lay in the unity of view which he imparted to these doctrines, "moulding them into a logically articulated system under the guidance of the determining idea of God's sovereignty." The strength of Calvin's presentation is shown in the fact that historically it has undergone considerable modification without sacrificing its essential principle. It is easier to seize upon isolated aspects of the system and criticise them than to understand the real genius of Calvin's position, and a certain sympathy with his experience (as with Augustine's) is necessary before we can rightly understand his doctrines. There is so much that rings true to Christian experience of to-day, and yet, as we shall see, the position in which Calvin ultimately found himself is not satisfactory to those whose Christian belief is founded on the sublime principle that God is Love. Beginning with Calvin's fundamental conception of God as Will, we shall illustrate his application of this principle in typical doctrines, and enquire whether such an approach is adequate for to-day.

A preliminary point may be mentioned as interesting to Baptist readers, viz, Calvin's idea of the Sacraments and especially Baptism. The Sacraments are "outward signs by which the Lord seals in our consciences the promises of His good will towards us, to support the weakness of our faith, or a testimony of His grace towards us, with a reciprocal attestation of our piety towards Him." The office of the Sacrament is the same as the Word of God: both offer Christ and His heavenly grace to us, but they confer no benefit without the medium of faith. Without the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit they can produce no effect on the recipient, and, characteristically, Calvin declares that they produce an effect only in the elect. Baptism is a sign of initiation by which we are admitted into the society of the Church, in order that, being incorporated into Christ, we may be numbered among the children of God. Faith derives three benefits from Baptism:—the assurance of cancelled sin, the experience of the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection power, and the assurance of such unity with Christ that we are partakers of all His benefits. The unworthiness of the minister does not affect the validity of the baptism; we are baptised in the name of God, and not in any human name . . . a point Calvin had to uphold against the Anabaptists as Augustine had previously upheld it against the Donatists. As we should expect from a man of his great scholarship, Calvin recognised the force of the philological and historical arguments for immersion, but regarded pouring and sprinkling as equally valid, and left it a matter of liberty according to habit and custom. His loyalty to what he regarded as Church practice impelled him to accept infancy as the proper period for the administration of baptism. Paedobaptism, he held, conferred a double benefit: it ratified to pious parents the promise of Christ's mercy to their children, and engrafted them into the body of the Church, acting afterwards as a powerful stimulus to them to be true to their vows. It is clear that Calvin was in difficulties on this point. On his own view of the Sacraments, they demanded faith as their essential medium: he went boldly to the logical conclusion that elect infants must in some way possess faith: exactly how, like Luther, he had to confess that he did not know. All of which indicates how Calvin was both near to and far from that position which is central in Baptist teaching. Both Calvin and Baptists agree that faith is necessary in the ordinance of Baptists: Baptists say, "obviously, infants have not this necessary faith, therefore postpone Baptism until it can properly be believers' baptism, and have real validity"; Calvin said, "infants must have this faith, but I do not understand how." His refuge is revealed in the sentence "if we cannot comprehend this, yet let us recollect

how glorious are all the works of God and how secret is His counsel."

The central idea of Calvinism is its conception of the absolute sovereignty of God. As Hastie says, the theology of the Reformed Church is characterised by the resoluteness with which it carries back religious faith to its ultimate basis in God, and by the directness with which it connects the idea of God with every relation and activity of human life. The world is the outcarrying in time of one Divine plan, conceived in the eternal reason of the Godhead, and realised by creative power, wisdom and love. All things live, move and have their being in God. The chief end of God is the manifestation in time of His eternal plan, the manifestation of His glory in all spheres of creation. This is a very majestic view which includes all life, science, art and political progress, as well as religion, in the workings of God's will. It is essentially theistic and spiritual, as all is traced back to God at once transcendent and immanent: and it leads to an optimism, for all that happens is to be conceived as an expression of God's glory. So much may readily be conceded in regard to Calvinism. It is when Calvin proceeded to apply his central principle that difficulties arose, and of these we select three as fundamental.

1. To what extent can we say Calvin allowed for the freedom of the human will? This point has been a matter of acute controversy, and its importance is suggested by the attention which Calvin gave to it in the Institutes. His view has often been misunderstood. It is a mistake to suppose that Calvin completely obliterated the notion of human freedom. In one of the early controversies of the Reformed Theology Pighius attacked Calvinism on the ground that it was inconsistent with the liberty of man. What did Calvin really teach? The soul he regarded as possessing two faculties, one the intellect, which enabled it to distinguish between objects for approval or disapproval; the other the will, which enabled it to choose what the intellect declared to be good, and to reject what was declared to be evil. In the primitive state before the Fall man possessed freedom of will: there was soundness of mind and freedom to choose the good. But Adam fell, and his depravation was communicated by propagation. In this fallen state the intellect is so clouded by darkness that it cannot shine forth to any good effect, while the will is so enslaved by depraved lusts as to be incapable of one righteous desire. Sin therefore has not destroyed the will, but only its soundness. When man in his state of corruption sins, the sin is not forced by something external to himself, but is rather the result of the movement of his own passion. The only hope lies in the Grace of God which can turn the will from evil

to good. Calvin's indebtedness to Augustine is very marked here, and we shall probably find the roots of his doctrine in his own experience (as revealed in his preface to the Commentary on the Psalms). He was of the opinion that it would be helpful to remove the term "free will" from the discussion altogether, and in the many difficulties on this subject there is no doubt that much confusion arises from the varied meanings we attach to the word "freedom." Calvin held that the exercise of any will invariably follows its disposition. The natural man sins of necessity, because his nature is what it is. He sins voluntarily, because his action is the exercise of his will. But there is nothing here of arbitrary and unmotived willing. In the language of modern psychology we should probably speak of this as self-determination, and Calvin held that the self can never rightly determine, never will the good, without the aid of divine grace. He was concerned more with *right* will than with *free* will. Right will is the result of divine restoration: thus restored, it chooses the good. As Augustine had put it, the human will attains freedom by grace. It is clear that Calvin's main purpose was not the obliteration of freedom, but rather the filling of the notion with true content.

2. A difficulty emerges in his conception of the Atonement. In Christ alone, he held, we must seek redemption. Christ purchased our redemption, abolished sin and removed the enmity between God and man. This He effected by the whole course of His obedience, extending to the whole course of His life, and not to the Death only. Anselm had argued that the Death of Christ must be regarded as a meritorious satisfaction accepted by God as a substitute for punishment, but Calvin went far beyond this in regarding Christ's work as the vicarious endurance of the punishment itself. We may note here that Calvin anticipated an important modern note when he regarded the Death as part of the whole obedience, but in later Calvinistic theology this point was not always retained. There was a tendency to separate the death from the life, and also emphasise the substitutionary and penal aspects of the Atonement. Calvin used various phrases to express his view. Christ was a substitute, was offered to God as a propitiatory victim, bore the curse, by His death purchased life, and so on. He paid our ransom, experiencing all the expressions of an angry and avenging God. His descent to Hell involved a literal bearing of the tortures of condemned and ruined men.

More recent theology has moved far from this position, feeling that Calvin's view fits in better with the conception of an avenging oriental potentate than with the Heavenly Father of Whom Jesus spoke. It is not difficult to understand why critics

should regard this idea of penal and vicarious atonement as too external, too legalistic, and not sufficiently emphasising the fundamental truth that *God was in Christ* in the work of redemption. But there is a further difficulty, viz., that it is open to doubt whether Calvin allowed for universal atonement. It is true that (perhaps with one exception) we do not find in Calvin any explicit statement as to the limitation of the effect of Christ's Atonement, but there is no doubt that the general trend of his teaching does support such limitation. Augustine taught that the effect of the Atonement is not universal, and Calvin continually quotes him with approval. Moreover, Beza, who was Calvin's coadjutor and successor, held the view of particular redemption, and this view came to prevail in the stricter Calvinistic circles. It would appear to follow from his doctrine of election, and is very hard to reconcile with the universalism of the appeal of Christ which has always been one of the strongest points in effective evangelism. This point really leads us to a further important difficulty :—

3. Calvin's theory of predestination. His view in many points reminds us of Augustine's, but there are important differences. For Augustine redemption was effected through baptism; for Calvin it was effected through the agency of the Word and the Spirit of God. Augustine held the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, but believed that the regenerate might fall away and be lost: Calvin believed that the spiritual work of regeneration was wrought in the souls of the elect only, who had the seed of perseverance planted in them. The most important divergence from Augustine, however, is Calvin's double aspect of election. God's justice would have been displayed if He had condemned the entire human race—they deserved it—but in His mercy and of His good pleasure God resolved to restore a number to a state of righteousness: the rest, apparently, are left to perish. This issues in a final dualism, and, according to Hastie, all the theologies of the sixteenth century made the process of the world and the consummation of human history end in a final dualism and an eternal endless Hell. Perhaps we can see a reluctance to face this issue in the fact that three early national creeds (the Heidelberg Catechism, John Knox's Confession of 1560, and the revised XXXIX Articles of the Church of England) were silent on the doctrine of eternal reprobation, and there is no doubt that in Calvinism generally the stress has been placed on election to salvation.

This difficulty at the end is matched by one at the beginning. Calvin seems to separate too rigidly between the eternal decree of God and its expression in time. Critics have not been slow to seize upon this point. The idea of God, august and mighty,

moving all things in accord with an immutable decree, hardly possesses the warmth and attractiveness of the idea which Jesus so genially expounded. Ritschl is prominent among those who have argued that Calvin's idea of the sovereignty of God should be replaced by the doctrine of Divine Fatherhood. And while the supporters of Calvin can make the dialectic point that God's love is only the crown and consummation of His sovereignty, and is not in any way abrogated by it, yet who can deny that there is a hardness about Calvinism as a system which does not accord with the warmth and charm of the Gospel? Fairbairn described Calvinism as Stoicism baptised into Christianity, but renewed and exalted by its baptism. We can be grateful for its strength and fortitude, its fine ethical temper, its profound scorn of vice, its ideal of obedience and submission to the Divine will: and yet with all this, we miss something. There is an external, almost mechanical, conception of deep truths—such as the legalistic conception of the Atonement, while the final dualism of Calvin's system can never be satisfactory even to a God who is Will, much less to a God who is Love. The influence of Calvin has performed, and will still perform, a great service to the Church in deepening her thinking, keeping her away from those shallow systems to which an easy-going age is so prone: in keeping her face to face with the stern moral issues of life: in building up her conception of life around the notion of God, transcendent and immanent; yet is it not significant that when we make our appeals for Christian decision, we do so in such a manner as to base everything on a real power of response to a Love which is deeper than the measures of man's mind? It may be doubted whether there can be any effective evangelism based on the idea of predestination as Calvin conceived it. It is true that Calvinists have been always in the vanguard of evangelical preaching, but it is noteworthy that the doctrine of predestination to damnation, if held at all, has been kept in the background. We need not fear contradiction when we say that not by the preaching of such ideas has the Church won her way. To-day the trend of thought appears to be away from the speculative and the transcendent, and towards the moral and spiritual experience, and the high values to which that experience points. The facts of sin are real enough, and, thanks to the revelation in Christ, the fact of Divine Love is equally real. It is the purpose of all Christian teaching and preaching to bring these two facts together: around them the whole of the Gospel revolves: but we may doubt whether, in these days, an emphasis on the sovereign and predestinating will of God (with all that involves) coherent and intellectually majestic though it may be, will really be found to be of help. We turn rather to the New Testament idea that

the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth: the power because the Love, illimitable and boundless —something within the attainment of all who seek it through Christ.

F. TOWNLEY LORD.

An Experiment in Christian Education.

DURING the past eighteen months an Association Commission has been busily at work in Yorkshire on Christian Education. The plan of campaign has been as follows: After the subject had been introduced to the seven District Councils, entry was sought to the Deacons' Meeting of each particular church. The aim was not to hold large general meetings but to interest the responsible leaders of the church and to win their support. The Commission is in hearty agreement with the dictum that "No church can rise above the level of its diaconate." Already it can be reported that over seventy churches have been visited, and in every case, the visitor was received with conspicuous goodwill, and his words heard with evident interest.

The point of view the Commission has tried to communicate is that Christian Education is a matter for the whole church and not simply for any one of its societies. "The Church a School" might very well have been the slogan, provided only that the school closely approaches the New Testament picture of our Lord with His disciples. A scheme was drawn up entitled *A Five-Point Programme of Christian Education* (Kingsgate Press 1d.), in which an attempt was made to state the function of the church in educational terms, and to set forth the vital aims of every Christian society. The five-fold scheme was presented to the deacons (and the minister) at their meeting and it was suggested that they recommend to their church the holding of *an Enquiry* into the whole of their life and work in every society. (In no case would a post mortem have been a better suggestion.) The old tag about an unexamined life comes to mind of course, and it is unfortunately true that all churches would do well to review their activities in the light of those aims which alone entitle a society to be called a church. It is astonishing how the passage of time blurs aims which once were clear-cut, and it is disquieting to know how