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THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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ARTICLE I.

CALVIN AND CALVINISM

BY REV. GRANVILLE S. ABBOTT, WATERTOWN, MASS.

LOVE and hatred alike, usually adhere to positiveness of character. Hence it is an equivocal compliment to say of a man, "He has no enemies"; for such an one may have no friends, proved and true. Men, however, of thoroughly settled convictions; the men of one idea; the founders of philosophy, the Aristotles, the Bacons, the Hegels; the discoverers in science, the Jenners and Mesmers, the Newtons and Watts; the agitators in philanthropy, the Clarksons and Garrisons; the aggressors upon spiritual darkness, the Wesleys and Careys; the fathers of distinctive theologies, the Pelagiuses and Augustines, entitle themselves to a harvest of differing human judgment. But for men careless of immediate applause, positiveness of conviction would have been lost in time-serving. As a caution, therefore, against mere negativeness of character, of such neutral tints as to be neither friendly nor hostile to truth, Jesus said to his disciples, "Woe, when all men shall speak well of you."<sup>1</sup> He guarded them against that thought of great place in the world that could be secured only by a sacrifice of steadfastness in the faith. He was himself the object of the warmest affection, and of the bitterest malice. When the Magi laid

<sup>1</sup> Luke vi. 26. S. V. A. omit "unto you" of E. V.

their offerings at his infant feet, Herod was planning to number him among his slaughtered dead. When Roman soldiers watched his sepulchre, holy women, with love living on, went out early in the day to visit his place of burial. Unexceptionable honor, therefore, cannot be looked for by the followers of Jesus. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master."

Of all men since the day of Christ few, if any, have earned for themselves more praise and blame than John Calvin; born in Noyon, near Paris, July 10, 1509; died in Geneva, May 27th, 1564. It has ever been Calvin's fortune to stand between contraries held in antipathy. The blessings of Gerizim and the curses of Ebal flow in counter currents across his reputation. M. Guizot cites him with St. Louis, as one of the "Two great Christians of France." Montesquieu counsels Geneva to hold his coming to her in perpetual festival. Bishop Horsley holds his memory in veneration. Arminius differs from him in doctrine, but values his writings more highly than all the writings of the Christian Fathers. Bancroft speaks of him as more self-denying than Lycurgus, and as achieving an immortality of fame. Others regard him as a kind of theological Laocoon, deservedly exposed to the coils of hate and the fangs of calumny. Not a few of these are sons of Calvinistic ancestry; graduates of colleges that were founded by Calvinism; heirs of the civil and religious liberty Calvin largely bestowed on the world; sufficiently ungrateful and uncivil to file by their illustrious progenitor and benefactor, without so much as lifting their hat; rejoicing rather when all the dogs of monarchy and of unbelief — irony, satire, misrepresentation, and caricature — bay at his heels. Others, having no preference to bias their judgment, prescribe for themselves an even justice between hasty encomium and equally hasty censure; and this without being mere eclectics, or calculators. James Anthony Froude is of this class, sensitive even to keen criticism where Calvinism opposes the feelings, but philosophically frank in admitting that it lies nearer than Arminianism to facts,

“however harsh and forbidding those facts may seem.”<sup>1</sup> Rev. Joseph Jones of England, in a finely written work on “Human Responsibility” follows this *via media* also. By the greater number of opposers, however, Calvin and Calvinism are summarily dispatched. With much fine writing, seasoned with levity, they say: “Far, far hence, O ye profane.” Hardly allowing to Calvin a hearing, they hold him responsible for not being in every respect superior to his age; forgetting that the sun still shines, though with spots on his face. They accuse him of an intolerance and narrowness that at most are exceptional to his spirit and his power. They trace to him every unchristian theory of religion. They father upon him all the “Pharisaical stuff” of denominational restrictiveness. They assume that Arminianism in its crusade against error has commanded silence in Calvinistic pulpits, an assumption that is chiefly remarkable for being untrue; since, however much Calvinism has been modified in recent times, its essentials are to be found in the writings of Robert Hall and of Thomas Chalmers, of Andrew Fuller and of Samuel Hopkins.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the individuality and novelty of their doctrinal statement may be, our oldest Calvinistic theological schools teach most robust Calvinism still. Whatever smoothness and seeming accommodation of faith may characterize the utterances of a few commanding pulpits, Calvinism is far from having become a Niobe, voiceless in her woe. For the proclamation of its distinctive truths, against the old Pelagianism of a self-righteous world, that will hear nothing of God’s grace to impotent men, is both outspoken and earnest. The wish for Calvinistic silence is possibly interpreted as a fact. But to particulars.

The blame of John Calvin touches his spirit and his opinions.

I. *His spirit.* — He is accused of hardness and of severity; of vehemence and of impatience; of gloominess and of melancholy; of vindictiveness and of intolerance. Fortunately

<sup>1</sup> Address delivered at St. Andrews, March 17, 1871, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> The writings of the latter Dr. Channing enlorgined.

this many-headed Hydra is a creation of malice ; and still it is created ; for, " O sin," says one, " thou hast spent and emptied thyself in John Calvin."<sup>1</sup> To be sure Calvin had faults by right of natural weakness, serious faults too, when judged by the benign spirit of the Gospel. Luther had faults also. So have all the greatest and the best of men had faults, as a kind of necessity of greatness. Nevertheless we are the last to extenuate wrong-doing, and hold the burning of Servetus to be a crime against the sacredness of human life. This, however, appears to be all, or about all, that many know of Calvin. Let his name be mentioned, and the shade of Servetus, like Banquo's ghost, rises to their eyes. Ask them for their estimate of Calvin, and they will say, with expressive indignation, " He burnt Servetus." It is not at all to their purpose to know whether the act has any historic palliation. They fully understand the beliefs, the habits, the modes of thought, the motives to action, the principles of judgment, the limitations of vision, of the sixteenth century. They have the clearest sight into errors common to Catholics and Protestants alike in those days. The world would have had fewer Lady Macbeth fingers, with the smell of blood lingering still, had they but lived in the dyed-red past. Strange errors would then have been avoided ; not a single scale of blindness would then have hindered human vision ; not a single forefather would have forgotten his manners. Pity 'tis they could not have turned three centuries earlier in their cradles ! Thus, to Thomas De Quincey, there appears in Calvin's case with Servetus no oblivious antidote. He can give to Judas Iscariot a volunteered defence, but for Calvin, notwithstanding Melancthon's and Ecolampadius' and Bullinger's and Beza's and Bucer's approval of his act, he offers no apology. He ridicules Calvin's known clemency in desiring for Servetus decapitation, instead of the torture of slow fire, as though that little amputation were indispensable.<sup>2</sup> He alleges of Judas that his crime, though great, has probably been exaggerated. It was the crime of signal and earthly

<sup>1</sup> Llewellyn's Tracts, p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> Theological Essays, Vol. i. p. 65.

presumption; an attempt to forward the purpose of God.<sup>1</sup> "If Judas erred" he says, "all the disciples erred." Then appealing to that charity, "that unique charity which belongs to Christianity, which hopeth all things," he asks men to suspend their verdict. He forgets to make this plea of possible exaggeration and of common blindness in behalf of him who "amiably hunts," as he says, "Servetus to death."<sup>2</sup> His charity certainly is unique, but hardly consistent; a curiosity of literature for some D'Israeli to register; a charity too short for Calvin, but long enough for Judas! Happy Judas, thus to be recalled within the fold of Christian forgiveness! Unhappy Calvin, sequestered from human affection, tenanted a parish grave! There have been, however, quite respectable apologists for Calvin in his relation to Servetus. M. Guizot says of it, "It is my profound conviction that Calvin's cause was the good one, the cause of social order and of civilization. Calvin acted conscientiously toward what he believed to be truth and duty."<sup>3</sup> Andrew Fuller says of the matter in question, "It ought to be acknowledged that persecution for religious principle was not at that time peculiar to any party of Christians, but common to all, when they were invested with civil power. It was an error, and a detestable one, but it was the error of the age. They looked upon heresy in the same light as we look upon those crimes that are inimical to the state, and accordingly proceeded to punish heretics by the sword of the civil magistrate."<sup>4</sup> In proof of which he shows that Socinus himself was accessory to the imprisonment and death of one Francis Davides, in consequence of difference of religious opinion. This little item is often conveniently overlooked. But for the sake of fair play it should never be; for if it please any one to say, "How was it with Servetus?" the gratification should not be denied to another to say, "And how was it with Francis

<sup>1</sup> Theological Essays, Vol. i. p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> "During the period of the Reformation," says Hallam, "tolerance in religion was seldom considered practicable." — Constitutional History of England, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> St. Louis and Calvin, p. 326.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. ii. p. 165.

Davides?" Upon a search for the sufferers by religious intolerance, it would violate honor to break so brotherly a fellowship.

We would be the last to exalt Calvin above his faults. He was human, and his unvarying humility, that leading grace of his character, shows how sensibly he was aware of his weaknesses. He was severe; but to none did he apply such rigor of discipline as he did to himself. He was sometimes hard, but he had to be, for there were men on all sides, anxious for a gird at him. "Hard men," says Froude, "for hard times, and intellects that can pierce to the roots where truth and lies part company." He was firm in principle; otherwise he would have lost persistence and power; often impatient in temper, while yet he held the wild beast in iron bars; sober and thoughtful, and how could he be otherwise, with great thoughts of God on his mind? For "Divinity," as Lord Bacon says, "is the Sabbath and port of all men's labors and peregrinations." He was a giant clad in mail; capable of untold powers of resistance; with neither effeminacy nor insipidity about him. He never indulged in poetry to the extent that Luther did, never analyzed the beautiful as did Burke, and yet he lived in the midst of surrounding Alps, encircled with stars. He did not have Luther's genial and sunny humor; and yet it does not follow that he lived like Epimenides, so long in a cave as to find something unnatural in daylight ever after. He was an iron man; of inflexible purpose; "able to inspire and sustain the bravest efforts ever made by man to break the yoke of unjust authority." He was second in the field, and for this reason the Reformation takes less account of his spiritual energy. He was, however, "a necessary antithesis to Luther in the Protestant system."<sup>1</sup> For deep spirituality and profound intellectuality he was greatly Luther's superior. None surpassed him, in unquestioned probity or in spotless moral integrity. He was never frolicsome, as was Luther, yet equally happy and impassioned in "the task of glory and of

<sup>1</sup> Henry's Life of Calvin, p. 319.

good." From his activity in the service of God and of man, no love of ease, nor promise of gain, nor Papal bribe, could turn him away. For fervid and enduring love of the myriads in Europe, who were either in blindness or groping to light, he was unexcelled. For personal interest and outlay in behalf of the imprisoned and the oppressed he will ever be honored as foremost in his time. In true benevolence he was the modern Solon. With all his severity of nature and intensity of labor he was loving and affectionate. "Many a time," Melancthon said, "he wished he could lay his weary head on Calvin's faithful heart, and die there."<sup>1</sup> Taken all in all we may safely say, that few men of Calvin's prominence have left such a record of purity of spirit as he.

II. *His opinions.* — Opposers have greatly questioned these, especially his secular and dogmatic ideas. His theories of church government, for example, have been sharply assailed. Dr. Robert South, with characteristic causticity, is unwilling to consider Geneva the mother church of the world;<sup>2</sup> does not regard Master Calvin and Master Beza fit correctors of antiquity or prescribers to posterity. He reads of Christ giving "some apostles and some evangelists," but he finds in this catalogue of ecclesiastical dignities, "no lay-elders, no church-aldermen, no spiritual furs." He does not know of a puritan or dissenter in England who would not march to Calvin's anti-monarchical assertions; nor a single traitorous design set on foot in Christendom, not traceable in corresponding virulence to his epistles.<sup>3</sup> Dr. South predicted that Puritanism, in time, would show its monstrosity to the world, but the sequel declares Saul not to be among the prophets; while the ideas for which Calvin contended, the independence of church and state and the authority of the Bible over traditional Rome, have been largely endorsed by the progressive nations. Not that Calvin always built on sure foundations; nor that all of his finished work is perfect and right, since this can be affirmed of God alone; but that in the main

<sup>1</sup> "Calvin." — American Cyclopaedia, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Sermons (Bohn's ed.), Vol. ii. p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Vol. i. pp. 470, 471.



he championed those ideas of civil and of religious freedom, which needed evolution only to be as they exist to-day.

As a teacher of theological dogmas Calvin is the victim of fierce sarcasm and contemptuous railery. He has been called the pope of Protestantism; but where an insult was intended he has been honored. He has been called the exponent of the horrible decrees; but the Genevan Doctor did not coin for human speech the word "predestinated." He found it minted and stamped in the Epistles of Paul. Renan concedes that the dark theology of Calvin, so called, is a shadow cast by the great apostle. "The writings of Paul," he says, "have been a dangerous and a hidden rock; the causes of the principal defects of Christian theology. Paul is the father of the subtle Augustine, of the unfruitful Thomas Aquinas, of the gloomy Calvinist, of the peevish Jansenist, of the fierce theology which damns and predestinates to damnation."<sup>1</sup> Now whatever service Renan proposed to render to unbelief in this measurement of Paul, he certainly has aided truth unwittingly in philosophically tracing the lineaments of Calvinism to Pauline parentage. We thank him for his genealogical table. If the Apostle to the Gentiles be allowed to speak and write as he is moved by the Holy Ghost, therefore, it is not Calvin who speaks in Calvinism, but God sending forth his lightnings and thunderings by Calvin's mouth. We have long believed this to be true, and feared lest men in heaping odium on the Genevan theology should ignorantly fight against God.

The opposition to Calvinism is an alliance of Socinian and of Arminian forces. With the former Calvinism has little, and with the latter much, in common. The result is, that strife between Calvinism and Arminianism is usually profitless, "ending in a drawn battle." For God's truth is a lyre of many strings, answering to both Calvinistic and Arminian touch; and certain types of mind play certain wires more sharply than others, when all should be played, if played at all, with trembling hand and agreeing chord. This is, however, a dif-

<sup>1</sup> Renan's Apostle Paul.

difficult task—to blend divine sovereignty with human volition, God's determinate counsel with the free offers of salvation. Between this Scylla and Charybdis it is difficult to steer.<sup>1</sup> Calvinism and Arminianism are, doubtless, under divine appointment, to subserve, each in its way, the interests of truth. If one passes judgment upon the other, the result will be a tangle; for, while "the advocate of free-will is appealing to conscience and instinct, to an *a priori* sense of what in equity ought to be, the necessitarian will fall back on the experienced reality of facts."<sup>2</sup> Thus Wesley and Whitefield fell out, and made up with each other at a time when the Arminianism of the one was successfully appealing to men to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Calvinism of the other was magnifying the sovereignty of the Spirit of God in his gift of a simultaneous revival to two hemispheres—to martyr-like Moravia in Germany, to the slumbering Kirk of Scotland, to England under Wesley, to Wales under Howell Harris, and to America under Jonathan Edwards and Whitefield. The biographer deservedly honors the founder of Arminian Methodism, while yet his volumes are not wanting in facts supporting Calvinism.<sup>3</sup> It is thus that God's purpose and man's accountability, seen at different angles of light, become the golden and silver faces of the same heraldic shield. Difficult as is the task of reconciling each to each, it is quite evident that most men attend to personal religion on one or the other of these two sides. On whichever side, it ought to matter little to us, so that Christ the atoning Saviour is received by faith. What if there be an unbridged chasm between the two theologies? What if there are mysteries in God's truth? They are not greater mysteries than the union of body and of soul, or than the action of thought and will. The Bible would not commend itself as it now does, had it no hard things to be understood. Were there no difficulties in our divine Christianity, "the heart," as Vinet says,<sup>4</sup> "would leave all to be done by the

<sup>1</sup> Robert Hall, Vol. iv. p. 456.

<sup>2</sup> Froude's Address on Calvinism, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Tyerman's Wesley, Vol. i. p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> Outlines of Theology, p. 512.

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mind." Let us not forget, therefore, that the Bible will not submit itself to any system, however real it may be. It will not be made to go on all fours. Calvinism and Arminianism cannot exclude each other, on speculative grounds, from from the word of God. Both are in it, in close association, as in the words of Jesus to Judas, "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." He swings the pendulum between the extremes of Calvinism and of Arminianism, but is silent at the point of mean distance ;

"This lesson teaching, which our souls may strike,  
That harmonies may be in things unlike." — Coleridge.

Calvinism has been called a fear theology, and not wholly without reason ; for there is a place for fear in the eternal framework of things, a place for the well-poised balance of passionless justice, a place for the "beautiful, bold brow" of law, but for which everything would be mutinous in divine and human government. Calvinism is a proclamation of a loving, as also of a just God ; but we will take no exception to the charge. It proclaims a righteousness which is not of the law, and ever reminds the world that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Calvinism has been called a letter theology, paying undue honors to Bibliolatry, as the Pontificii do to Mariolatry ; opposed to the deductions of geology and astronomy, because the letter says of the one, "In six days God made heaven and earth," and of the other, "Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth." Had we not heard this charge made with our own ears, we should have doubted it. As we have, we call it frivolous. We have never understood that the Bible is to be regarded as a scientific text-book ; a perfect scientific text-book does not exist. Nor did Calvin assume to have adjusted his theology to all the changing generalizations of scientific progress. Possibly some over-anxious Calvinists have been slow in admitting science as a harbinger of good. Possibly they have been tenacious of traditional interpretations, when nothing was to be lost by concession. If they have carried

their reverence too far for tables and texts, they certainly have never been guilty of vandalism and of sacrilege. Their deference to every "Thus saith the Lord" has been their glory, and continues to be. Calvinism has been called an innovator, unknown to the spirit of Christianity. Dr. William Ellery Channing thus impeached it. Were Calvinism, said he, judged by the spirit of Christianity, and by such a modification of texts as that spirit warrants, it would have no more place in Christianity than popery and heathenism.<sup>1</sup> Channing was a believer in the supernatural. He held the Gospels to be true records, and Jesus to be a character wholly remote from human conception. He confidently expected to see the glorified Saviour, face to face.<sup>2</sup> He was one of earth's canonized philanthropists. He knew the joy of doing good.

" And thus the common tongue and pen,  
Which world-wide echo Channing's fame  
As one of Heaven's anointed men,  
Have sanctified his name." — Whittier.

But Channing's logic was not always the soundest; for, given the truth of his premise, namely, that the spirit of Christianity is opposed to Calvinism, and his "modification of texts" might be demanded. But, supposing his assumption to be false, what then? Why, his modification of texts becomes the worst kind of exegetical jugglery; reminding one of the student of divinity, who, when asked in his examination how he would reconcile such a text to his theory, replied: "Oh, that is easily got round." We are thinking now of a text that will have to be "got round," and of many others like it, before Calvinism is proved to be an interloper: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?"<sup>3</sup>

There is much to be said in Calvin's praise.

I. *As a Theologian.* — Luther in Germany, and Zwingle in Switzerland, had preceded him; but he was the greatest

<sup>1</sup> Channing's Works, Vol. i. p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Vol. iv. pp. 1-29.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. ix. 21 sq

of the trio. He distanced Luther by many lengths in the unfolding of a purely spiritual church. He was a more perfect freeman in Christ. He broke more completely from the pope and the prelacy. Augustine had given to the world a true theology in the mass, but not until Calvin's time was it reduced to a science. "He brought the *disjecta membra* of the reformed opinions into one body of divinity, which at once commanded the attention and shook the thrones of Europe."<sup>1</sup> Scaliger called him "Solus Calvinus Theologicus." Hooker disliked his ecclesiastical discipline, but admitted that "the skilfullest and perfectest divines of his time were of Genevan instruction." All conceded Calvin to be a grand Colossus of Rhodes, standing head and shoulders above all other theologians of his age, stretching over many men who gladly passed beneath his form. Had it been his life-work to have perfected the Institutes only, he would still have been called the master spirit of the Reformation. For simplicity of method, for closeness and exhaustiveness of argument, for perspicuity of interpretation, for purity and solid Latinity of style, these Institutes are deserving of a homage to greatness, to which few uninspired books can ever be entitled. The sovereignty of God is their ruling idea, and about this all other ideas crystallize. There can be no loftier conception than this by the human mind. Its altitudes who can scale; its depths who can fathom; its lengths and breadths who can estimate? The theology of Calvin was Bible-born. If asked for explanation, he would lay his hand upon the text, and add: "That is my authority." With Neander, and all devout souls, he accepted truths he did not fully apprehend. A reasonable religion to everybody would never have been a true religion to him. He wanted a God who would hide himself. He submitted to the necessity of ignorance. Knowing only in part, he lived in expectancy of knowing as he was known. His theology may have been over-freighted on the side of God's eternal purposes, treating too lightly the responsibility of every soul before God; but it was just

<sup>1</sup> Article on "Calvin," by Dr. Henry B. Smith, in *American Cyclopaedia*, p. 288.

the theology to get behind the papal supremacy and the divine right of kings; to lead forth priest-ridden millions from the house of bondage with songs of freedom on their lips; to overthrow sacraments and rituals and monastic vows, and, in fine, the whole system of ecclesiastical charlatanry; to shame corruption, and hurl wicked men from high places; to inspire revolt against all illusion and mendacity; and to flash upon the conscience sincerity, integrity, and truth. It was a theology that attracted to its ranks almost every man, as Froude says, that "hated a lie." It put God before man, and the word of God before tradition. It put personal regeneration before sacraments. Because of Sin ravaging human life more terribly than the desperate hordes of Attila or Timour, it cried, "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth," and because of Redemption following in the track of Ruin, it cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." The effect of this theology was wonderful. It made a pious and heroic life its uniform fruit, as will fully appear in considering Calvin's claim to praise,

II. *As a Moralist.*—We speak of this here, because we have so often heard Calvinism accused of immoral tendencies. From insinuations dropped, one would suppose Calvin to be quite as destitute of practical goodness as Shakspeare's male tiger was of milk. We believe, however, that the theology of John Calvin, when truthfully interpreted, will be seen to have flowered into the most healthful public and private moralities of modern times. We take decided issue with those who regard it as impoverished of sin-restraining power. For, account for it as we may, Geneva became under it, in its best periods, the most moral town in Europe; and for three centuries it has been producing, in the nations that have welcomed it, transformations in moral character unknown to former times. So far from being a bird of ill-omen, it has been a dove, bearing the olive-branch of social and domestic peace everywhere. It has been a mighty propagandism of truth, morality, and civilization. The theology of hope is said to be a better lever to society than it, because hope

appeals to the conviction of the reason and the encouragement of the heart. But the facts look the other way. The moral outlook of reigning Socinianism was never so attractive and ennobling as the outlook of Calvinism. The water-lines of morality were never so high as where Calvinism had truest expression. For robust and sterling morality Switzerland and Holland and Scotland and early New England were never surpassed. Calvinism never tended to human degradation. Huguenots, Puritans, Dissenters, and Covenanters are not to be classified as vicious men. Socinianism talks much of its practical moralities; but where are its anointed kings and priests? Where are its Halls, its Franks, its Eliots, and Brainerds; its Thorntons and Howards; its Saurins, Edwardses, and Chalmers; its Owens and Claudes and Whitefields? Where are the trophies of ungovernable Augustines, of blasphemous Bunyans, of slave-trading Newtons, among its converts? Where are the Sandwich Islands and Karen districts, redeemed and civilized by the coming of its beautiful feet? Where are the sign-boards and figure-heads, pointing to dark places enlightened by its presence? *Where has it shown power in levelling up from beneath itself?* Where has it stiffened, and not relaxed, scriptural authority and religious obligation? Where has its vaunted liberalism been as sweet and unlimited on the side of faith, as it has been on the side of doubt? In what sporadic and occasional benevolence has it shown the kindness of Calvinism to humanity, whose yearly contributions take the girth of the globe? Calvinism of immoral tendencies? compared with whose generosity of substance and of life Socinianism hardly ever paid a feather's dip of oil in the running expenses of evangelical Christendom? Never! The inaccuracy of this representation of Calvinistic immorality is seen in the results of the life-work of great Calvinistic preachers and theologians.

“In the church of the wilderness Edwards wrought,  
 Shaping his creed at the forge of thought, . . . .  
 Yet faithful still, in his daily round,  
 To the weak and the poor and the sin-sick found.”

Men still living have served our colored people nobly ; but, as a matter of fact, Samuel Hopkins started the whole system of charity to the slave.<sup>1</sup> Chalmers was not only the preacher of astronomical discourses rivalling the Waverley Novels in popularity, but the inspirer of ecclesiastical and social reforms that are felt to this day. Dr. Saunderson was chaplain to Charles I. Of him King Charles was wont to say that he carried his ears to other preachers, but his conscience to Dr. Saunderson's Calvinism.<sup>2</sup> These, and other testimonies like them, confirm us in the belief that Calvinism is intrusted the power of successful appeal to the hearts and consciences of men. We add to this point one other confirmation : " If we look at those nations," says Rev. Andrew Fuller, " where Calvinism has been most prevalent, it will be found that they have *not been distinguished for their immorality, but the reverse.*"<sup>3</sup> The expounder of original sin was the most determined opponent of actual transgression.<sup>4</sup> He interdicted vice and crime. He was no Antinomian, but insisted rigidly on obedience to the law of God. So far from being impractical, his theology took powerful hold of man's temporal, as also of his eternal interests ; having the promise of the best things in the life that is, as well as in that which is to be. Not to admit the moral effects of Calvinism, is to read modern history blindfolded. Take the influences of the theology and polity of John Calvin away from the earth to-day, and the hands would go back on the dial of progress. There are no factors having the promise of the future as Calvin's doctrines of sin and salvation. These are the two wheels that bear humanity on to better days. But Calvin is praised :

III. *As a Republican.* — He leads the dynasty of republicanism in modern times. He was not a man of kings and priests, but a man of the people. He believed in, and labored incessantly for, a government by the people. Hence it is that Calvinism has been so often called the seed-plot of democracy,

<sup>1</sup> Memoir of Dr. Hopkins, pp. 112-169.    <sup>2</sup> Calvin's Institutes, Vol. i. p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. ii. p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> American Cyclopaedia, Vol. iv. p. 285.



the impregnable fortress of popular liberty. Calvin knew of no patent of nobility but the seals of the Invisible. Great as were his labors in theology, his labors in civil law were greater still. These gave him higher title to renown than his Institutes. God overruled his early studies for the legal profession in the fitness he thus acquired for heading the movement of civil and religious freedom. He was a master legislator, a skilful diplomatist. As a ruler, he was respected everywhere. "The wisest of his time," says Hooker, "could not have bettered his system." With plastic hand he moulded the republic of Geneva into the model republic of his time. The polity which revolutionized Scotland was imported there by John Knox, direct from Calvin's instruction. Calvin gave advice to Moravia, to Hungary, and to Poland. He prepared the Dutch for the heroic defence of their national rights. He nerved the French Huguenots. Coligni and Du Bourg hailed him as chief. He anticipated Cromwell in relief for the Waldenses,

"Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled  
Mother and infant down the rocks."

He saved the Genevese from the Roman Catholic Sadolet. He founded English Puritanism. He impressed New England's early character. His own dearly-purchased civil and religious rights were the precious freight conveyed in the Mayflower to the Western world. His own system enwrapped truths as so many capsules, needing development and expansion only to form continental and insular Europe anew, and to shape the bill of rights for every State and Territory in the American Union. "In the reign of Mary," says Rufus Choate, "from 1553 to 1558, a thousand learned Englishmen fled from the stake at home to the happier states of continental Protestantism. Of these, great numbers, I know not how many, came to Geneva. . . . I ascribe to that five years in Geneva an influence which has changed the history of the world. I seem to myself to trace to it as an influence on the English character, a new theology, new politics, another tone of character, the opening of another era of time and of liberty. I seem to myself to trace to it

the great civil war in England, the republican constitution framed in the cabin of the *Mayflower*, the divinity of Jonathan Edwards, the battle of Bunker Hill, the independence of America.”<sup>1</sup> George Bancroft says: “He that will not honor the memory and respect the influence of Calvin, knows but little of the origin of American liberty.” The watch-words of Calvin summoned millions to break away from ages of misery. To advocates of priestcraft Geneva seemed full of German, French, English, and Scotch heretics. Rome would gladly have burned this asylum of heresy to ashes; but this little Sparta with its mighty chieftain held out, and the postulates of its freedom entered into the preface of the immortal Declaration of 1776. Because of Calvin, the world had a pure reformation and a true republicanism in all ecclesiastical and secular affairs. Greater honor could not be credited to him.

Notwithstanding which, Calvinism is said to be prosaic and unpoetical. “What poem,” it is asked, “has it written?” Our reply is ready. We know not that those Calvinists who fled to their homes and from their homes, across river and meadow and mountain boundaries, across channels and oceans, on wintry days, had any fairy-land pleasure at all, or “one ray of fancy, or one emotion of dainty, poetical taste.” Their hats were steeple-crowned; their beards were unshaven; their trousers were patched. They had membership not at St. Paul’s, nor at Notre Dame, but in the churches of the desert. Their preachers were “preachers of the tub and of the barn.” Their sermons and prayers were “linked sweetness, long drawn out.” They were seldom, if ever, sentimental, and as far removed as possible from dapper *dilettanteism*. Nevertheless, they were *conditores imperiorum* — the “most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced.”<sup>2</sup> Pollok, we believe, wrote “The Course of Time”; Bunyan, the “Pilgrim’s Progress”; Cowper, “The Task”; Watts, the fore-

<sup>1</sup> Works of Rufus Choate, Vol. i. p. 378

<sup>2</sup> Essay of Macaulay on Milton, p. 48.

most of English sacred lyrics; Milton, "Paradise Lost" (said by some to be brilliant). But, letting these pass, what poem have Calvinists written? Oh, ye bones blanched on Alpine cliffs and French fields; ye shades of the Bastile, and of St. Bartholomew's day; ye cool and valorous Ironsides, winning victory for Cromwell at Marston Moor; ye daring companions of Knox and Melville, chiding fearlessly kings and queens; ye satirized, but immortalized body of Puritans, "crushing and trampling down oppression, pierced by no weapons and withstood by no barriers; charmed by no pleasures, and terrified by no deaths"; pursued, and yet pursuing freedom to worship God — your judgment has come, — what poem have you written? We listen as the answer comes: Seen in all our toils and sorrows, separations, and sacrifices, journeyings, voyagings, and fastings from famine and fear; our cells and caves, our stocks and martyr-fires, our enforced expatriations and colonial plantings, you have "a whole Iliad in action," and an epic of heroism more sweet and grand than ever Virgil conceived. We show you deeds of valor of which Achilles and Aeneas never dreamed. We offer you bolder and braver knights than any ever dubbed by St. Michael or St. George. For chivalrous daring and high undertaking we yield not to the crusaders at the gates of the holy city. For lofty enterprises we claim never to have been excelled. For brilliant achievement and sublime self-sacrifice and invincible faith, we challenge the world of romance to excel the reality of our history. What poem has Calvinism written? It has written on the sublime and the beautiful, on the self-denying and the grand, on the tender and the emotional, on the picturesque and the lovely, in a large book of ancestral recollections and inspirations such as the world had never before possessed. Its poetry is its thrilling history and "the mighty visions passing there. The world praises Calvin,

IV. *As an Educator.* Calvin well knew that the best of his principles were insufficient in themselves to stand alone without a firm basis upon wide-spread intelligence. He was

therefore friendly to the fullest learning. Valuable as are the two principles of civil and of religious liberty, the Goliath either of ignorance or of superstition often strives to come between the mighty columns to pull them over his head. Calvinism is the parent, however, of popular education. Its hero was too far-sighted to neglect the culture of the people. He inaugurated schools in Geneva. He furnished textbooks, as Hallam says, for a long time to English universities. His children were heirs of his spirit in founding Harvard College. *Pro Christo et ecclesia*. He established chairs of Hebrew, of Philology, of Philosophy, and of Theology. Institutions of learning sprang up wherever Calvinism spread. To Calvin, Bancroft credits the invention of the system of free-schools. He was a scholar of great erudition and exegetical power. His influence in substituting general intelligence in the room of the ignorance and superstition of the Roman Catholic masses cannot be too highly estimated. Hundreds upon hundreds, from all parts of Europe, sat at his feet, and drank in his mind-ennobling ideas. He was more than a match for the sophistries of the Sorbonne. The preface to his Institutes takes rank as one of the three immortal prefaces of literature; those of President De Thou and of Casaubon being the other two.<sup>1</sup> He invoked intelligence, as he had invoked religion and liberty, for the masses and the children of the masses. By no other clarion voice has general intelligence been summoned to being as by Calvinism. We hold that it is adapted to awaken the intellect, and to send it forth upon great inquiries, as no other theology is able to do. The greatness and majesty of its doctrines engenders what Bacon calls "large learning." It strikes a fuller music in the soul. The Arminianism of England, for example, "is a greatly less awakening system of doctrine than the Calvinism of Scotland. It does not lead the earnest mind into those abstruse recesses of thought to which the peculiar Calvinistic doctrines form so inevitable a vestibule. Hence it is that Calvinism proves the best

<sup>1</sup> "Calvin." — American Cyclopaedia.

possible of all schoolmasters for teaching a religious people to think. I found," adds Hugh Miller, "no such *peasant metaphysicians* in England as those I have so often met in my own country — men who, under the influence of earnest belief, had wrought their way, all unassisted by the philosophers, into some of the abstrusest questions of the schools." <sup>1</sup> Calvinism in national and individual life has often aroused the deep sleep of the faculties, reasoning and imaginative, which otherwise might have been forever unbroken. It honors intellectuality, therefore, and greatly distances Arminianism, and especially Socinianism, as an awakener of great thought. It strives

"To grasp, in its mighty span,  
The purpose of God and the fate of man."

As a theologian, therefore, as a moralist, a republican and an educator, Calvin is entitled to the praise of mankind. He was progressive in spirit, with little lingering attachment in him, as there was in Luther, to the past. His theology was revolutionary. It may have loudly proclaimed the holiness of God, but it did not the self-righteousness of man. There may have been retrogressions since his day in his own beloved Geneva. A king may have come to the throne knowing not Joseph. The Reformed Church of France, until of late, may have been in retreat. The theology of Hopkins may hold Calvinism in greater harmony than it was held by its founder. The times may be smoother and more delicate than in the days of Bellamy and of the elder Edwards. The need of sermons on "Sinners in the Hands of an angry God" may have passed away, and a theology of rose-water and of sweet-smelling herbs have come into demand. Preachers may find it to their taste to be unto their congregations as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice. But, if priestcraft is ever again to be rebuked, if Pelagianism is ever again to be vanquished, if pious men are to be perpetuated by a belief in the deity and atonement of Christ, if the consciences of men are ever again

<sup>1</sup> First Impressions of England, p. 399.

to be shaken out of their leaden apathy, — in a word, if sin is ever again to be challenged in the name of a holy God, the hope-theology of fairy-land must be made to surrender (as it always surrenders in the revivals of Christendom), and the fear-theology must be heralded — treating of God's "wrath, as revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Calvinism can never be at a discount, without threatening ill. Let it never be lightly esteemed; for it has been associated with all the religious and social and intellectual emancipations of the last three hundred years. It has been the key-note to which almost every great soul in all this period has vibrated. It still continues to brand the fear of doing wrong upon the consciences of men. *Its end is not yet*; for it appears and reappears, of necessity, in history; teaching that God is strict to mark and to punish all iniquity and wrong. Modify it or impugn it as we may, it lies on an enduring basis of apostolic thought, on foundations deeper than the Alpine mountains, and firm as the throne of God.

The traveller searches in vain in the Genevan cemetery for the place where Calvin was laid. No man knoweth the place of his sepulchre. He has no monument in marble, in granite, or bronze; nor has he a stone-cut epitaph. He has, however, a monument of great proportions in the work he achieved for man; in the deliverance he secured from tyrannical states and prelates for his body and his soul; in the heroism and high daring he inspired; in the achievements he won for the cause of universal liberty, education, and religion; in the world-wide expansiveness of his republican institutions; in the self-devotions of his brave souled children; in the unswerving fidelity with which he honored and obeyed the word of God. He has an epitaph, also, in five pregnant words of his master Paul's speech, and accepted with great humility and thankfulness as the *dictum* of his theology and the inspiring motive of his life:

"BY GRACE YE ARE SAVED."