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THE POWER AND CLAIMS

OF A

CALVINISTIC LITERATURE:

A SERMON

ON BEHALF OF THE

Assembly's Board of Publication.

BY THE

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DISCOURSE.

SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH, THY WORD IS TRUTH.

JOHN xvii. 17.

TRUTH is to the soul what light is to the eye, or what air is to the lungs, at once its aliment and its element, that in which and by which it must live. Hence, when there is life in the soul, there must be truth to support that life. The first condition of spiritual existence of course is life itself, which Christ imparts by the life-giving Spirit in the new birth. The second condition is truth, by which that life is supported. The life is distinct from its aliment, in the soul as well as in the body, but in both cases the character and continuance of the life depend greatly on the supply of the aliment. The amount and purity of the truth that is furnished to the soul will determine the character of the spiritual life.

These are the principles announced in this text. Sanctification is the vigorous life of the soul. This is asserted to be by the truth; not by every kind of truth, but by Divine truth, that system called God's truth; not by traditionalistic or rationalistic deliverances about that truth, but by the inspired word of God.

In the application of these general principles, we soon encounter a difficulty. Men cannot agree as to what constitutes this system of truth. They may

agree about some great central truths, but in regard to those that radiate from this centre, they differ. How then shall we proceed in this case? Two courses are open to us. The first is to confine ourselves exclusively to these central truths, and not attempt the general inculcation of the others. The simple objection to this is that God has not done it, and we cannot safely depart from his example. The second course is to give that truth, if possible, just as God has given it, not in segments, but as a whole, with its blazing centre, the cross of Christ, and its ample circumference, the doctrines that radiate from that centre, "the truth as it is in Jesus."

Our Church has adopted this course, and among other agencies for carrying it into effect, has instituted the Board of Publication. It is in the propriety of this decision that we find the complete vindication of the Board, and its claim to the support of the Church. It is in the adoption of this course that it differs from the great general and compromise agencies of our country, which have adopted the first course, and its complete vindication must rest at last on the propriety of the course itself.

In former pleas for this Board the general power of truth in the household has been presented, and then, the more specific power of a Christian literature. To complete the argument for its operations only another step is needful, and that is to show the power and consequent claims of that system of truth, and that type of Christian literature, which this Board was established to diffuse. If this can be successfully maintained, its claims to a vigorous support of the Church will be fully established.

It is well known that this Board was created to diffuse, through the press, that system of doctrine drawn from the word of God, which is embodied in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and which is commonly, but not properly, called the Calvinistic system. We object to this name, because these views did not originate with Calvin, and because Calvin did not define them accurately in every particular, and because no human name should be thus attached to Divine truth. But as the term has been widely adopted, and we have no single epithet equally significant; we may use it properly with this general disclaimer. Our position, then, is that inasmuch as we believe what is called the Calvinistic system to be that great summary of truth that God has revealed in his word, it is by preaching that system in its due proportions from the pulpit, and proclaiming it from the press, that we shall most perfectly embody the prayer of our Lord in the text, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

The work then assigned to this Board is much higher than that secular and commercial notion of it that is too prevalent. It is not only the great work of the Church, preaching the gospel by the press, as in her ministry she preaches the gospel by the pulpit; but it is also the work of preserving and extending a Calvinistic literature. The literature of any people is at once an exponent and an element of its life, containing alike the fruits of the past, and the seeds of the future. If he spake a truth who said, "Let me make the songs of a nation, I care not who makes their laws," how tremendous is the power that is

exerted by the entire literature of a people! The Homeric literature of Greece, the Augustan of Rome, that of Elizabeth, or the Restoration in England, the French literature of the age of Voltaire, and many others, familiar to every scholar, were both effects and causes of the most potent character. So it must ever be as long as action is the result of thought, and thought can be embodied and sent forth in written words. Hence, if a Calvinistic people have a real life, it will in the end bud, blossom, and mature into a Calvinistic literature, and that literature will be at once the monument of its power in the past, and the measure of its power in the future. It is this great work that is given to this Board, a work of vast moment, if there be a genuine and vital power in this literature.

We propose, then, in advocating the cause of this Board, to present to your consideration, *The Power and Claims of a Calvinistic Literature*. This we propose to do by looking, *first*, at its *Principles*; and *secondly*, at its *History*.

I. *The Principles embodied in a Calvinistic Literature.*

They may be reduced to two, the views held of the sovereignty of God, and the sinfulness of man. It teaches that God is a great Sovereign, and that man is a great sinner.

As to the Sovereignty of God, it holds that Jehovah reigns supreme, in fact as well as in right; that his creation is not a failure or a defeat, but a development of his eternal purpose; and that what he now performs or permits, (which includes all things) he

always determined to perform and permit; in other words, that "he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

As to the sinfulness of man, it holds that "the fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery:" that this sinfulness "consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it;" and that its misery consists in the fact, "that all mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever." It further holds, that "God, having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer," who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and as Prophet, Priest and King, purchased a redemption which is effectually applied to us only by the Holy Spirit. In a word, it teaches that man is so utterly guilty and helpless that his salvation must be wholly of God, not because of any foreseen goodness in him, but of His mercy; that in its beginning, continuance, and end, it is wholly of grace, for that of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory evermore.

Such are its principles. Now, as character is the result of principles, they must tend to generate a particular type of character. What is that type? Is it a desirable one?

In examining the action of principles on character, there are two aspects in which we must consider them; their action on man individually, and their action on him collectively.

1. What is the effect of these principles on man individually?

Their first effect is to alarm and humble; their next is to exalt and strengthen. By their teachings of human guilt and helplessness, they drag down all pride and carnal security, and prostrate man at the foot of the cross, a suppliant for mercy—a mercy that is sovereign, and therefore to be secured only in God's own time and way. They warn him thus of the peril of tampering with these offers, lest the appointed day of grace may end, and leave the soul to its doom. It is this stern denial of the vaunted powers of human nature, that has always made these doctrines so hateful to a Pelagian, Socinian, and Infidel philosophy. But it is this very picture of that nature, so dark, so fearful, so hopeless in itself, that tends most powerfully to alarm it, and cause it to cry for mercy; and to humble it, and thus prepare it for that mercy.

But when the soul has found peace in believing, they exalt to a grateful love, just in the proportion that they before humbled and alarmed. They love much, who have much forgiven. The deeper the horrible pit, and the viler the miry clay, the more exulting the notes of the new song, when the feet are felt to be placed on the Eternal Rock.

It is said that these doctrines are discouraging and depressing. But is this so? There are two great departments of our outer life—doing and suffering the

will of God. If this alleged tendency exists, it will be found either in the department of action or suffering. What is their legitimate influence here?

(1.) *Action.* At first sight, it may seem probable that the theory of human ability will generate a greater activity than that of inability. This would be true, if, in denying inherent ability to man, we exhibited no offer of any power to take its place. But when we take away the feeble and finite power of man, only to make room for the infinite power of God, and call on man to work himself, because God is working in him; when we show him that this emptying himself of all strength, is the condition of being filled with the fulness of God; that God's strength is made perfect in man's weakness—we then increase the motives to activity, drawn from power that may be used, just as much as the strength of man is exceeded by the almightiness of God.

Nor is the case altered by the fact that this power is in promise, and not in possession; for it is just in this way that the highest activity ever developed in human life is called forth. Men are confronted with tasks that are above all apparent power; but as they gird themselves for these tasks with a courageous faith, they find a new and strange power as they go forward. All true heroism is developed precisely in this way. A Leonidas, a Luther, a Washington, attempt what seems a hopeless impossibility, but attempt it in a faith that will not falter, and that looks for a power to come in the time of need; and going right forward in that faith, the power does come, like a glorious baptism from above, whose cloven tongues of fire impart a might that enables

them to do what before was impossible. To limit the motives to active exertion thus to the amount of power in conscious possession, would be to dwarf all human heroism, and stunt instead of strengthening human energy. If this be true in all other departments of activity, it cannot be untrue in that of religion.

Nor will it answer to say that the discouraging element is in the other great fact, that human action is controlled by a Divine decree, and that it arises from the certainty that this fact involves. Fatalism, the mere caricature of this doctrine, which involves this element of certainty, has infused the mightiest energy into human activity. Some of the strongest spirits of our race, in their secret hearts have been fatalists, and have owed much of their terrible energy to this fact. Mohammed evoked from the sands of the desert those fierce cohorts that swept the earth like a tornado of fire, because they felt they were but working out the decree of Allah, that they were to conquer the world to the true faith. Attila was inspired with a barbaric energy that knew neither barriers nor bounds, because he believed he was the "the scourge of God!" Even Napoleon was secretly upheld by his conviction that he was "the man of destiny," and hence attempted and achieved what to others seemed impossibilities. Thus it has often been with men of the most superhuman energy. Their energy has been superhuman, because they believed themselves but the instruments of a superhuman power.

Now if the grim caricature of this doctrine has breathed such energy, the doctrine itself must inspire

a yet loftier, for all that is energizing in it remains with added force, when for a blind fate we substitute a wise, decreeing God. Let me believe that nothing is certain, nothing decreed, and I have no assurance that the innumerable elements beyond my control may not baffle my strongest efforts, and defeat my best designs. But let me believe that I am in every commanded duty but working out an eternal purpose of Jehovah, that what he has required me to do, he will aid me in doing; that a mightier energy is breathing its potency through my feebleness, than mere human power; and I am girded with a strength that no other faith can give me, for when I am thus weak, then am I strong. Danger may meet me, but without God's permission shall not touch me. Death may threaten, but I am immortal till my work is done; and if it comes, it comes as a means of doing that which my life could not reach. My efforts may be feeble, and seemingly lost, but they are not really so, for they are the predestined means to the predestined end, if they are made in accordance with God's command. Hence I go forth to my work and warfare shielded by a panoply more invulnerable and nerved by an energy more invincible than any other faith could bestow. And believing that this all-embracing purpose descends to the very fall of a sparrow, there is no event too trivial and no person too obscure for its energizing power. The loftiest are never above it, and the lowliest are never beneath it, and the obscurest task in life is exalted by the thought, that it is a thread in the warp and woof of that mystic web of life which we are ever weaving in the ceaseless loom of time. Hence to say that these

doctrines cripple human activity, is to affirm what is as false in philosophy as it is in theology, and to ignore the teachings of all human history.

(2.) *Suffering.* It is equally erroneous to say that they are depressing in the sorrows of life. The very contrary is true. Did we believe that the world was left to the caprice of human wills and drifting chances; that no great end was evolving, and no great hand working in its history; that a thing so mighty and fearful as sin has entered, in defiance of God's purpose, and is rioting in defiance of His power—we might then well be depressed. But if we believe that beneath all this wild tossing of human purposes and events, there lies, in mighty and controlling embrace, a Divine purpose that governs them all, we may then sit down in calm and joyful assurance that in the end it shall be well.

Indeed, nothing but this can give real comfort to a mourner. Go to one whose heart is crushed beneath some great sorrow, and tell him that this rending stroke is a mere casualty, the dark smiting of an aimless chance, and you but mock his misery, and make it the more intolerable. The thought that all this agony is without aim or meaning; that the same blind chance which has swept off one object of love, may, in its pitiless eddying, snatch away the rest; and that no foreordered purpose of love is working out in his sorrow, will fill his cup of misery to the brim. But tell him that this stroke is not aimless or undesigned, but foreordained in fatherly kindness; not a thing of lawless chance, but a part of his earthly discipline, decreed in the distant past, and connected with the distant future; and although the sorrow may

still remain, there comes to it a sweet solace. He feels that although the reason for it is beyond his ken, there is a reason; and he is able to lift up his eye in trust, though it be in tears, and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Indeed, the heart in its sorrow instinctively clings to this doctrine; for it always says, not, "It is chance, it is ill-fortune," but, "It is the Lord; let him do as seemeth him good." Deny this doctrine, and you dry up one of the sweetest fountains that has ever been unsealed to the sorrowing in the vale of tears.

Hence we may affirm, that the influence of these doctrines on the individual man is precisely what we desire; for they awaken the soul and lead it to Jesus, and then breathe into it a Divine strength to do and suffer the Divine will.

2. We turn to the influence of these doctrines on *man collectively*, or on *communities*.

The society that is pervaded with these principles must be a progressive community. Believing, as it does, that to it in part is assigned the execution of a given portion of that great Divine plan which is developing in the history of the world, and which is of necessity progressive in its character, such a society must be progressive, or deny its faith. The work before it may be as vast and discouraging as the planting of a Christian church in the luxurious city of Corinth was to the musing Paul. But the stimulus to effort drawn from the Divine purpose is the same as it was to the great apostle. "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with

thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." The fact that God has a people to be called, and a purpose to be fulfilled by the agency of his Church, is an unceasing stimulus to progressive action.

This progressive action developes certain organic facts in the social life. It naturally associates itself with the Presbyterian form of church government. Individuals may hold these doctrines under any form of church government; but when they are held by masses, they naturally attach themselves to this form, partly because of its scriptural fidelity and historic relations, partly because it has so little to gratify human pride and ambition, and partly because it combines that blended flexibility and strength which give the fullest scope to doctrines which require the union of a sense of human weakness with a reliance on Divine strength, in every activity of the Christian life.

A community thus organized must be marked by several characteristics arising from these elements.

(1.) *Intelligence.* These doctrines are such that they cannot long be held by an ignorant community. Either the mind will lose its grasp of the doctrines, or the doctrines will quicken the mind to greater intelligence. They stimulate the thinking powers, by the demands they make of them, and thus excite a thirst for increased knowledge. Hence there is no finer mental discipline for a child, than the study of the Shorter Catechism. The amazing accuracy of its definitions trains the mind to the first and most important attainment in all true mental culture, the correct use of terms; whilst the marvellous symmetry

of its logical structure develops the reasoning faculty, and thus makes it the very best instrument to train the young intellect to think, and so lays the foundation for an enlarged intelligence. And whilst I would not disparage any effort to popularize science, and elevate the standard of education, yet, if I am forced to an exclusive choice between two systems, I will unspeakably prefer that mental training, and that balanced character which a child shall receive from the Shorter Catechism at a pious mother's knee, than all the stuffing that can be given by all the Peter Parley books, and science-made-easy inventions that have ever been tried to make infant-school astronomers, and philosophers in bibs and tuckers.

The same thing is true of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government. Being a republic, it cannot, any more than a civil republic, be worked by an ignorant community. As long as it is used by intelligence, its fine and powerful system works in harmonious beauty. But with stupid ignorance to wield it, the jar and friction would soon be such as to bring it to a dead lock, or tear it to pieces. Hence it educates by necessity as an instinctive law of self-preservation; and wherever it plants the church, it erects in their places beside it, the school, the academy, and the college. "Calvin," says Bancroft, "was the father of popular education, the inventor of the system of free-schools." And we may add that no community has ever embraced the system called by his name, and yet remained in ignorance, for the system cannot live in ignorance. It must excite a people that embrace it to intelligence.

(2.) *Love of Liberty.* The republican character

of Presbytery, involving as it does ministerial parity, popular elections, and the spiritual independence of the Church, generates inevitably a love of liberty. Denying all monarchy and aristocracy in the Church, it readily challenges them in the State; and asserting the rights of the people in sacred things, it teaches them to look for them in civil things. Involving then a constant exercise of popular rights in its various acts of government, it becomes a training institute among a people for civil liberty, and awakes a love for it that can never afterwards be wholly extinguished. In this respect it stands in marked contrast with Prelacy and Popery, that tend to generate submission to rulers, and reverence for prerogative and official power.

(3.) *Reverence for Law.* This important feature distinguishes Presbytery on the other hand from the fourth form of Church polity—Independency. That being a pure democracy, cultivates a love of liberty as intense as Presbytery, but not as well regulated. It lacks the great ideas of law and organized authority that reside in Presbytery. Holding, as it does, that the will of the majority in each congregation is the supreme authority, from which there lies no appeal to any higher court; and having no general constitution giving an organic existence to the whole confederation of churches, it becomes a government of majorities, rather than a government of law. It has nothing to create that grand conception of law and organized authority, which presides over the swaying passions of the multitude, enthroning the embodied wisdom of many generations in high and calm supremacy over the yet unembodied wisdom of but one generation,

and by eliminating in each successive court of review, the causes of error below, correcting the fitful, and often false conclusions of an accidental majority. It is needful in every enduring free government that there should exist checks, and balances, and organic institutions, which shall embody these great ideas, or the government will soon burst in pieces by its own action. A pure democracy from which all external pressure is removed, must eventually disintegrate for lack of these great cohesive and organic principles, which are wanting in the system of Independency.

Presbytery, however, tends to generate these very ideas of law and organized authority. The people act not immediately, but through their representatives, and according to a system of written law and general government which binds all into one organic whole. Each governmental act is brought within the scope of that system of courts which rise in their fine and symmetrical arrangement of appellate tribunals from the manifold base of the congregational session to the culminating apex of the General Assembly, each acting under a written law which stretches uniformly over the whole. Thus it embodies in the most perfect manner these ideas of law and government, and trains the community to a reverence for them, as distinct from a reverence for rulers, or for majorities, regarded in their personal aspects. Hence, whilst Presbyterian communities have always loved liberty, they have also revered law and upheld order, and resisted alike the tyranny of the monarch and the tyranny of the mob. They have ever stood in the breach, like a wall of adamant,

against which have dashed in vain alike the proud surges of kingly despotism, and the wilder waves of popular fury that would sweep away the barriers of law and order in their terrible rush.

Now it is precisely these ideas that our country needs to feel more deeply at this time. It needs to feel that there is something sacred in law, as the cumulated experience of many generations, a thing hoary with years and with wisdom, restraining the highest and protecting the lowest, a thing hallowed with solemn compacts and awful oaths, and not to be rudely trampled down by the heated majorities of to-day, which in their turn may be trodden down by the heated majorities of to-morrow. Our dangers as a nation lie in the vast expansion of our population, outgrowing the assimilating and cohesive force of our national life. This tends to substitute the power of numbers for the power of law, and confound the calm and deliberate will of the people, which ought to rule, with the present and often hasty decision of a majority, which may be only the heated echo of a demagogue. The only breakwater against these terrible surges is a reverence for law, and when once a crevasse is made here, then comes the deluge. Hence, it is precisely such an influence as this system of doctrine and order tends to produce, that our country needs to save it from the fate of all past republics.

Then as we look at the natural influence of the principles that underlie a Calvinistic literature, and find that in the individual they generate a type of piety that is both lowly and lofty—lowly in its humility, lofty in its faith and hope, and perseverance

in action and suffering; and that in the community they create a progressive, intelligent, free and law-abiding people, we infer, anterior to all examination of facts, that the circulation of such a literature must be a desirable thing, and that the harvest from such seed cannot be evil. But we are not left to mere *a priori* reasoning; we have the garnered harvests of this seed for many generations, and are able to bring these anterior inferences to the test of facts. Let us then look at

II. *The history of a Calvinistic Literature.*

We might begin this investigation with what we think the earliest specimens of Calvinistic literature extant in the Christian Church—the Epistles of Paul and Peter, and the Gospel of John. But as this is disputed ground, we begin at a later date. In tracing this history, we cannot and need not separate the influence of books and men, for they are so intermingled, that they must be considered together. The literature has always existed with the men, and the men have always created or cultivated the literature. Hence we need not carefully separate them.

There is one negative fact of no small importance. It is, that this literature has never been found connected with fundamental error. No heretic has ever held these doctrines; whilst many have reviled them, and begun their course of error by renouncing them. The Pelagian, the Arian, the Socinian, the Deist, and the Atheist, all unite with the Arminian in denouncing these doctrines. Since that old and ominous union of Herod and Pilate, and Annas and Caiaphas, no other such remarkable alliance against any system of doctrine can be found.

Another important fact is, that the devotional literature of the Church has been generally vitalized with these doctrines. Whatever a Christian may be when he argues and speculates, he will always be a Calvinist when he prays, and generally when he sings or suffers. The more profound his piety, the deeper will be his sense and utterance of God's sovereign grace and man's helpless guilt. The great hymn-writers of the Reformation in Germany and France, the sweetest singers of modern times, Watts, Doddridge, Newton, Cowper, Kirke White, Toplady, Bonar, and others, have held and loved these doctrines.

A third fact is, that a very large proportion of the most important works in didactic and practical theology, the works that live and are now moulding human character, have been informed by these doctrines.

Were any intelligent scholar asked whose writings among the Fathers wielded the most potent and permanent influence for good, he would at once reply, "Those of Augustine." They arrested the Pelagian heresy, defined to the mind of the Church her own views of the grace of God, and like golden vessels, carried the sacred fire of apostolic piety for a thousand years to many a stray heart that shone as a light in those ages of darkness. Augustine was at once the Plato and the Aristotle of the mediæval Church; and to the influence of his writings we owe much that was most pure in the piety, and most vigorous in the life of those ages, and his writings were instinct with these doctrines.

The form that rises next to the eye along the writers of the past, is that of the saintly Anselm, the devout Christian, the acute dialectician, who antici-

pated the ontological argument for the being of God, to which some of our profoundest minds are now turning as the most satisfactory; of whom Gieseler says, "that he was the first of the schoolmen, and the founder of natural theology, but who laboured, nevertheless, to preserve the faith uncompromised by philosophy;" who made the first attempt at a system of theology, and whose celebrated treatise on the incarnation so presented the doctrines of original sin and atonement, that an able writer has said, "that his views and speculations on this whole subject have prevailed very generally quite down to the present time. Nor have Grotius and Edwards, and the most elaborate modern writers added much on the subject." He, it is well known, was a docile disciple of Augustine in his theology. And although the scholastic theology became in later and feebler hands, a mere drivelling play of subtleties, yet as a whole, it was an important training institute, an intellectual gymnastic, that prepared the way for the theology of the Reformation.

Time would fail us to enumerate the names of the great writers who have mingled these doctrines with the life of the Church; such as the venerable Bede, the martyred Gotteschalk, the eloquent Bernard, who in his ruddy youth vanquished Abelard, the Goliath of dialectics, who was the oracle of his age, and of whom Calvin says, "that he so speaks, that truth herself seems to speak;" and of whom Sir James Stephen says, that his writings could only proceed from one "who never ceased to worship except to write, and never laid down his pen except to pray;" and Greathead, and Bradwardine, Wickliffe, Huss,

Jerome of Prague, Tyndale, John Wesselus called the forerunner of Luther, and the light of the world, and others, all of whom loved and taught these doctrines.

And it is a well known fact that all the most devoted witnesses for the truth, before the Reformation—the Paulicians, the Culdees, the Bohemian brethren, the Waldenses and Albigenses—held these doctrines, whilst within the Church of Rome, the purest portions, such as the Augustinians, and the Port Royal Jansenists, who have almost redeemed the name of Popery from utter condemnation, have done the same, whilst the Jesuits, and those on whom the mark of Antichrist blazes with most baleful lustre, have opposed and hated these doctrines, with an instinctive hatred. It is a fact most significant and unparalleled, that all heretics, all infidels, and all tyrants have hated Calvinism.

We thus reach the remarkable fact, that the fore-runners and causes of the Reformation, whether we look at individuals or masses, were nearly all moulded by these doctrines, and influenced by this literature. Luther himself was an Augustinian monk, a fact in which lay wrapped the history of the Reformation.

At the opening of the Reformation then, it is not wonderful that nearly all the Protestant leaders held these doctrines, and advocated them in their writings. And although the early divisions of Protestantism have since connected these doctrines mainly with that great name which they now bear, these divisions had then no reference to these doctrines, for they are found more or less distinctly in nearly all the Protestant Confessions. But we need not go beyond the

writings of the great Genevan to find ample support for our argument.

We will not attempt to trace the influence of the writings of John Calvin, for that would require a volume, and one to which new pages must be yearly added, for "he being dead, yet speaketh." We will select but two testimonies to their power, from amongst many others, because they come from sources whence nothing but the truth could have extracted them.

Sir James Stephen, who is by no means friendly to "the great ergoist," as he terms him, thus speaks of his first work, the *Institutes*. "The religious influence that attended it was incalculable. It was received by the whole body of the Protestants in France, as the standard around which they might all rally." "We may indeed reject the story that a thousand editions of it were sold in his own lifetime; but we cannot dispute that, during a century and a half, it exercised an unrivalled supremacy over a large part of Protestant Europe."

"For that dominion it was indebted, in part, to the novelty and comprehensiveness of the design it accomplished; to the vast compass of learning, scriptural, patristic and historical, which it embraced; to the depth and the height of the morality which it inculcated; and to the calm but energetic keenness with which it exposed the errors of his adversaries. But the popularity and influence of this remarkable book is also, in part, to be ascribed to its literary merits. Calvin has been described as the Bossuet of his age. Of all the French authors whom France has as yet produced, he was the most philosophical when he

speculated, the most sublime when he adored, the most methodical and luminous in the development of truth, the most acute in the refutation of error, and the most obedient to that law or spirit of his nation which demands symmetry in the proportions, harmony in the details, and concert in the parts of every work of art, whether it be wrought by the pen, the pencil or the chisel. In the ninth chapter of Bossuet's *Histoire des Variations* may indeed be found the best, as it is a very reluctant, eulogy on the literary excellence of his first rival and predecessor." *Lectures on the History of France*, pp. 410. 521.

Speaking of the ecclesiastical organization effected by the General Synod of France, which met May 25th, 1559, exactly three hundred years ago, whose confession was but an epitome of the *Institutes*, he says: "A great social revolution had thus been effected. Within the centre of the French monarchy, Calvin and his disciples had established a spiritual republic, and had solemnly recognized as the basis of it, four principles—each germinant of results of the highest importance to the political commonwealth. These principles were—first, that the will of the people was the one legitimate source of the power of their rulers; secondly, that power was most properly delegated by the people to their rulers, by means of elections, in which every adult man might exercise the right of suffrage; thirdly, that in ecclesiastical government, the clergy and laity were entitled to an equal and coördinate authority; and, fourthly, that between the Church and State, no alliance, or mutual dependence, or other definite relation, necessarily or properly existed." P. 415.

The other testimony is from the *Westminster Review*, which none will suspect of Calvinistic leanings, and from a writer who confesses "an implacable antipathy" and "a personal hate" of Calvin. This writer is compelled to state that Calvin "saved the Reformation," "sowed the seeds of liberty in Europe," and "evoked a moral energy which Christianity had not felt since the era of persecution." He says, "The peculiar ethical temper of Calvinism is precisely that of primitive Christianity—of the catacombs and the desert—and was created under the same stimulants."

"Had Calvin, like Plato, left only a paper sketch of a republic, in glowing language and magnificent imagery, how much more would he have been admired by the world! He did much more than describe a virtuous society—he created one. Calvin's ideal is, doubtless, vastly inferior to that of Plato; but it is under the disadvantage of having been worked in practice. With what surprising effect it worked, the whole history of Protestant Europe is witness. It was a rude attempt, indeed; but then it was the first which modern times had seen, to combine individual and equal freedom with strict self-imposed law; to found society on the common endeavour after moral perfection. The Christianity of the middle ages had preached the base and demoralizing surrender of the individual; the surrender of his understanding to the church; of his conscience to the priest; of his will to the prince. Protestantism, as an insurrection against this subjugation, laboured under the same weakness as all other revolutions. It threw off a yoke, and got rid of an exterior control, but it was destitute of any basis of interior life. True freedom can only be

founded on a strong sense of personality; the conscious possession of a moral force, from which the moral actions flow. Mere emancipation from the tutelage of a church or a government, will not convey this basis of self-reliance. The will is not free, merely because it is relieved from outward restraint.

“The policy of Calvin was a vigorous effort to supply that which the revolutionary movement wanted—a positive education of the individual soul. Crushed under the weight of a spiritual aristocracy on the one side, and ground down by the huge machine of administrative monarchy on the other, all personal freedom, all moral attributes, had nearly disappeared among the people on whom this superincumbent mass pressed. To raise up the enfeebled will, to stir the individual conscience, to incite the soul not only to reclaim its rights, but to feel its obligations; to substitute free obedience for passive submission—this was the lofty aim of the simple, not to say barbarous legislation of Calvin. The inquisitorial rigours of the Consistory encouraged instead of humbling independence. Government at Geneva was not police, but education; self-government mutually enforced by equals on each other. The power thus generated was too expansive to be confined to Geneva. It went forth into all countries. From every part of Protestant Europe eager hearts flocked hither to catch something of the inspiration. The reformed communions, which doctrinal discussion was fast splitting up into ever-multiplying sects, began to feel in this moral sympathy a new centre of union. This, and this alone, entitled the Reformation to make head against the terrible repressive forces brought to bear by Spain—the Inquisition and the Jesuits. Sparta against Persia

was not such odds as Geneva against Spain. *Calvinism saved Europe.* The rugged and grotesque discipline of Calvin raised up, from St. Andrews to Geneva, that little band, not very polished, not very refined, but freemen!

‘That which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.’

“Such is the admirable force upon the human conscience, of the simple virtues of sincerity and self-denial. Where they are exhibited in a distinct and recognizable form, they never fail to conquer, and to spread themselves. Henceforward Calvinism tended to take up into itself all the moral worth existing anywhere in Protestantism. As the Humanistic movement has been absorbed into the Protestant, so the first or Lutheran reform was gradually overborne by the Calvinistic, save where State interests interfered to prevent it. Such is the law of all great movements. The truly great excite a magical influence. Character is more powerful than intellect. The lesser stream empties itself into the greater. Lutheranism was incapable of propagating itself. Calvinism reappeared again and again, with no less vitality than at first. It animated the Cameronians of Cleland no less than the Independents of Cromwell, or the defenders of La Rochelle.”—*Westminster Review*, No. cxxxviii., pp. 3, 7, 13. American edition.

We need not add to these testimonies others equally emphatic to show the power of Calvin’s pen, for that pen has made wider and deeper tracings on the world’s history, than the sceptre of Charlemagne, or the sword of Napoleon.

This is no random assertion, for did our limits per-

mit, we could show from admitted historical facts that the influence of Calvinism which "saved Europe" in the middle of the sixteenth century has moulded, negatively or positively the whole current of modern history.

Negatively it is connected directly with the French Revolution, and all its tremendous results. Calvinism cherished in France would have saved the French Revolution, as far as we can see, for there is not a single cause of that terrible convulsion that may not be traced to the blind and bloody policy of France toward the Hugonots. Had she cherished that Hugonot element, which in its banishment so wonderfully built up the commerce and manufactures of Holland and England, she would have had the wealth, the population, and the moral and religious influence that would have neutralized the causes of that fearful eruption. But for two hundred years she was butchering and banishing her best and bravest sons, until having destroyed her Lots, there came down upon her guilty cities the whirlwind of fire.*

* As some may question this position, a few facts in support of it may not be amiss, although a full development of the evidence would require a volume, rather than a note. - France lacks two requisites to a free government, possessed by England and the United States, (1.) that substratum of ideas or principles which qualifies a people for self-government; and (2.) that class of men moulded by these ideas, which would support such a government. Both these would have been furnished by the Hugonots. That they possessed the ideas is already clear from what has been quoted before in reference to Calvin. That they possessed the kind of population that would have given expression to these ideas, and that this population was butchered and banished is equally clear. The massacres of D'Oppede in 1545, depopulated a whole province; that of St. Bartholomew, according to Perefixe, a courtier and a catholic, destroyed one hundred thousand, and the revocation of the edict of Nantes exiled most of the manufacturing and commercial industry of France. A few facts from a vast mass will illustrate this statement. The policy of Richelieu toward the Hugonots compelled them to create manufactories,

But that influence which was banished from France was welcomed elsewhere, and carried with it the seeds of modern history. It was received into Switzerland, and uniting with its kindred elements there, made Geneva, in the words of Bancroft, the fertile seed plot of liberty.

It was welcomed into Holland, and evoked from its marshes that mighty Dutch Republic, which in its very cradle grappled with Spain, and drove back in disgrace the haughty usurper; and then girdling the world with its colonies, and covering the seas with its fleets, prepared the way for English and American liberty. And if Holland produced Arminius, she also gave birth to the Synod of Dort.*

which soon became noted throughout the world. One place in Normandy exported linens to the amount of 400,000 livres annually, another 800,000, and another 4,500,000. All other kinds of trade were equally flourishing. Most of these establishments were broken up by the revocation. 70,000 workmen emigrated to England alone, and laid the foundation for her vast manufacturing interest. Macpherson estimates that France lost from England by this emigration an annual revenue of 90,000,000 francs, which considering the change in the value of money, is equal to \$40,000,000 now. The exiles built up the commerce of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and other cities in an equal ratio. Vauban in an official paper admits that France lost 100,000 men; 60,000,000 of money; her commerce and navy crippled by the transfer of 9,000 of her best sailors to the enemies' fleet; and 600 officers and 12,000 veteran soldiers to their armies. Sismondi estimates the exiles at 400,000. St. Simon says that it ruined French commerce and perceptibly depopulated one fourth of its territory. Nine of the generals thought worthy of an inscription on the statue of Frederic the Great in Berlin, were Hugonot exiles. Some of the first scholars and most illustrious soldiers of the age were Hugonots. Had all this rich material been left to France, who can doubt that the Revolution might have been avoided, or at least greatly modified? For additional facts, see the works of Weiss, Bungener, De Felice, and others.

* To these we might add Hungary, whose gallant struggle in 1848 awaked a sympathy that subsequent events have unreasonably cooled. In the petition of the Protestant clergy of Hungary, to Francis Joseph I., dated Pesth, May 5, 1851, their second request of the Emperor is, "that your Majesty would restore us

On the gray hills of good old Scotland did this sturdy seed take a deep root, and watered by the tears and prayers of Knox and Henderson, and the blood of Hamilton and Argyle, and many a hunted Covenanter, the handful of corn on the top of the mountains now shakes like Lebanon. From its earliest struggle with Popery, to its last great contest for Christ's crown and covenant, the Calvinism of Scotland has always stood like her own Benlomond; a grand, unchanging witness for the majesty of God, transmuting the very storms that have raged around her unwrinkled brow, into fountains of gushing purity from her heart.

Nor has England failed to illustrate this influence. Three times in her history has she been stirred to the heart by a great revival; and each time by the power of these doctrines. In the great Reformation-revival, which gave the Bible to the people, and lifting up the rude Saxon, whilst it softened down the haughty Norman, created the strong-hearted English people, all the great actors were Calvinists. In the brief and blessed reign of Edward VI., the influence of Calvin was paramount in England, as the Articles remain to testify, and even the Liturgy is said to have felt

our independence as a Church, and allow us to manage our ecclesiastical affairs in the Presbyterian form, which we regard as apostolical, and, therefore, as the only proper mode of Church Government. We lay on the freedom of our Church courts the same stress which John Knox laid on it, when he said: 'It is all one whether they take from us the freedom of the Church courts, or deprive us of the gospel.' " *History of the Protestant Church in Hungary*, with an Introduction, by D'Aubigné, p. 556; and *Brace's Hungary in 1851*. Pp. 208-210.

A writer in the *Westminster Review* of January 1859, after stating that the teachings of Calvin were introduced into Hungary in 1554, and eagerly embraced by all classes, adds—"So deeply are the people still attached to a creed which was once that of nearly all Hungary, that to this day the Confession of Geneva is popularly called 'the Hungarian faith.' "

his hand, and lost some of its relics of Popery. Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, Rogers, and others of blessed memory, were all Calvinists. Then came the great Puritan revival, which was moulded essentially by the returned exiles of bloody Mary, who learned lessons in their refuge in Geneva, which they practised on a wider field in the hall of debate, and the field of battle. This revival swayed the English heart by the mighty power of God, as it had never been swayed before, fought the battle of civil liberty, expelled the Stuarts from the throne, and seated a Dutch Calvinist in their place. The Arminianism of England, under Laud, rallied around the Jameses and Charleses, whilst the men who trampled down the haughty Cavaliers like tinselled puppets, and made the name of England terrible by land and by sea, were Calvinists. Then came the great evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, which breathed so much of its present life into England. That was largely produced by the power of these doctrines. We do not forget the great work of the Wesleys, but even their power lay not in their denial of these doctrines, so much as in the truth they preached, which is included in this system. And a very large part of the great work was wrought by such men as Whitefield, Hervey, Walker, Toplady, Berridge, Adams, Grimshawe, Venn, and Romaine, who were Calvinists. And the Evangelical portion of the Anglican Church, which contains so much of its life and benevolent activity, is mainly Calvinistic.

When we come to the last and mightiest birth of the great Protestant movement—our own giant Republic—every page of its annals illustrates the words of Bancroft: "He that will not honour the memory, and respect the influence of Calvin, knows but little

of the origin of American liberty." The men who laid its foundations—the stern Puritans of New England, the sturdy Hollanders of New York, the strong-hearted Scotch-Irish of Pennsylvania and Virginia, the hardy Caledonians of North Carolina, and the chivalrous Hugonots of South Carolina, were Calvinists. The churches that declared earliest for the Revolution, most of whose sons are sleeping beneath the sods of the bloodiest fields of that mighty struggle, were Calvinistic. The colleges and schools, the benevolent and religious enterprises, and all departments of Christian activity, have since been largely indebted to the gifts and toils of Calvinists.

Thus, as we trace the flow of modern history, there is not a tide-wave in its current, not a struggle for human advancement, civil or religious, in which the influence of these doctrines has not been felt. And where the surge of battle has rolled fiercest and fastest, and the day of toil has hung hottest and heaviest, there have always been found among the hearts to dare, and the arms to do—hearts and arms that were nerved by the faith and love of these old and hallowed doctrines.

Indeed, where is the field of holy activity where these doctrines have not been felt? Where the realm of holy thought where this literature does not stand eminent, if not preëminent? Is it in the stately department of systematic theology? We are met by the massive tomes of Gerhard, Pictet, Mark, Turretine, Witsius, Van Mastricht, Ridgely, Hill, Dick, Dwight, and many others, who stand peerless among the mighty thinkers of the past. Is it in Scripture exposition? Calvin is to this day unsurpassed as an expositor; Vitringa, and the Holland divines; Beza, Luther, and

many of the German expositors of that and later times, were and are Calvinistic, at least in their interpretations; Poole, and the Puritan commentators, are still mines for modern students; the commentaries that now mould most widely the great heart of English Christendom, are those of Henry, Scott, and Doddridge; whilst among Scotch and American expositors, it is not invidious to say that the very first rank is confessedly held by Calvinists. Is it in didactic divinity? Who are more venerable than many of those grave and godly men who sat in the Westminster Assembly, that august senate of sages, whose roll held such majestic names as those of Selden, Hale, Lightfoot, Calamy, Caryl, Goodwin, Tuckney, Henderson, Rutherford, and others, whose memorial the Church will not soon permit to die?

And where are pages of profounder thought and warmer piety than those of the colossal Owen, the Platonic Howe, the saintly Sibbs, the fervid Flavel, the quaint Brooks, the massive Charnock, the glowing Hervey, the holy Romaine, the Erskines, Bostons, Jonathan Edwardses, and a host of more recent writers, whose books are on every shelf? Is it in practical piety? Nearly all the living works of this kind were written by Calvinists. Baxter's Call, Alleine's Alarm, Doddridge's Rise and Progress, Wilberforce's Practical View, Pike's Persuasives, the Dairyman's Daughter, James's Anxious Inquirer, Henry's Anxious Inquirer, the writings of Nelson, Alexander, Nevins, and others that are speaking in other tongues, and beneath other skies, the everlasting gospel, were all written by Calvinists. The books and tracts that the toiling colporteur has this day been carrying to the thousand lonely hovels, hidden away in mountain

gorges and pathless forests, have mainly been written by Calvinists. Is it in revival power? Livingstone, Edwards, Whitefield, Tennent, Haldane, Neff, Nettleton, Nelson, Gallaher, Baker, McCheyne, Bonar and others, were Calvinists. Is it in pulpit eloquence? What names blaze with a lustre above the mighty preachers of the Reformation—the Claudes, Saurins, and Rabauts, of France; the great Puritan preachers of England; and such modern names as Irving, Chalmers, Thomson, Hall, Binning, Spencer, Guthrie, McLeod, Candlish, Spurgeon, Guinness, McNiele, Melvill and Caird; and in this country such sons of thunder as Davies, Waddel, Mason, Griffin, Payson, Larned, and a host of others, living and dead, eloquent men, and mighty in the Scriptures? Is it in far-reaching philanthropy? Let the great benevolent agencies set on foot by Calvinists give reply. And if individual names are asked, that of John Howard will answer for a hemisphere, and those of Brainerd, Martyn, Carey, Moffat, Duff, and our own noble roll of martyrs sleeping beneath the palm-trees of Africa, the waves of the Chinese Sea, and the bloody sands of Cawnpore, will be held in perpetual remembrance. Is it in more graceful departments of literature? The Pilgrim's Progress was written by a Calvinist: Paradise Lost was written by one whose early mental training, and whose riper spiritual discipline, before the wanderings of age and blindness came upon him, were in these doctrines. Cowper, Beattie, Pollok, and the sweetest hymn-writers of the Church, wrote under their inspiration; whilst the finest material for much of Scottish song was created by that Calvinistic piety, so touchingly depicted in the "Cottar's Saturday Night."

A Western paper and an Eastern magazine have recently proclaimed sneeringly to the world, that this literature is now effete, that this old tree is girdled and dead. But is this wealth of foliage and fruit a sign of death? True, its bark is rough, its stem is gnarled; and its boughs are twisted often into knotted shapes of ungraceful strength. But, remember it is not a willow-wand of yesterday. These boughs have wrestled with the storms of a thousand years; this stem has been wreathed by the red lightning and scarred by the thunder-bolt; and all over its rough rind are the marks of the battle-axe and the bullet. This old oak has not the pliant grace and silky softness of a green-house literature, but it has a majesty above grace, and a grandeur beyond beauty. Its roots are strangely contorted, it is true, but some of them are rich with the blood of glorious battle-fields, some of them are clasped around the stakes of martyrs; some of them hidden in solitary cells and lonely libraries, where deep-thinkers have mused and prayed, as in some apocalyptic Patmos; and its great tap-root runs back, until it twines in living and loving embrace around the cross of Calvary. Its boughs are gnarled, we grant, but they hang clad with all that is richest and strongest in the civilization and Christianity of human history. Yes, this old tree is girdled, but it is girdled with a growth, and belted with a might, that give promise of a life that shall unfold its living green, beneath the sky of the millennial morning.

And shall we, in the face of such facts as these, concede for a moment that such doctrines are to be held in abeyance, or such literature restrained? Does not all that is best in history rebuke such folly as treason to the noblest names and deeds of the past?

Shall we then concede that our Board of Publication, charged with the dissemination of this literature, must take a secondary place, as a mere supplementary agency, subordinate to others in value and importance? No, never! We will rather seek to widen its orbit and quicken its speed, until its light shall go round the world. We will rather send forth each year a larger number of toiling colporteurs, who shall carry to lonely valleys, and rugged mountains, and sequestered hamlets, the mighty masters of thought, who, untouched by the weariness, sickness, and death that come upon the living preacher, may tell them the wonderful works of God. We will allow it to send to them the high-hearted Calvin, to unfold by his masterly logic, the institutes of the Christian religion: the dreaming tinker of Bedford jail, to tell them of the wicket-gate, the delectable mountains, the sunny land of Beulah, and the gleaming walls of the celestial city; the gentle Doddridge to trace the rise and progress of religion in the soul; the venerable Miller to expound to them our scriptural polity; the revered Alexander to unfold the rich depths of religious experience; the holy Matthews to illumine the Divine purpose; the sage Green, to expound the Shorter Catechism; and living writers to proclaim to them the doctrines of grace in their fulness and beauty. And then when God writes up his people, it may be found that this and that man, in numbers like dew from the womb of the morning, were led to Jesus by some of these silent, unwearied itinerants, and that in sending forth these printed sheets, we have been giving to the messenger-winds of heaven, some leaves of the tree of life that are for the healing of the nations.

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