

ARTICLE V.

JOHN CALVIN.

By Dr. P. Schaff, Professor of Divinity at Mercersburg, Pa.

THE correspondence of Calvin, now for the first time collected by Jules Bonnet, and in course of publication, in two editions, at Paris, and at Edinburgh,¹ calls vividly to mind the memory of the greatest divine and disciplinarian of the sixteenth century, and promises to give us a more complete view than we have had yet, of his extraordinary labors and usefulness. Here we find him conversing familiarly with the reformers Farel, Viret, Beza, Bullinger, Burer, Grynaeus, Knox, Melanchthon, on the most important religious and theological questions of his age; counselling and exhorting Prince Condé, Jeanne d'Albret, mother of Henry IV., Admiral Coligny, the duchess of Ferrara, King Sigismund of Poland, Edward VI. of England, and the duke of Somerset; respectfully reproofing the queen Marguerite of Navarre; withstanding the libertines and pseudo-protestants; strengthening the martyrs; and directing the reformation in Switzerland, France, Poland, England, and Scotland.

Calvin belongs to the small number of men, who have exerted a moulding influence, not only upon their own age and country, but also upon future generations in various parts of the world; and, not only upon the church, but indirectly upon all the departments of political, moral, and social life. The history of Switzerland, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and the United States, for the last three centuries, bears upon a thousand pages the impress of his mind and character. He raised the small republic of Geneva to the reputation of a Protestant Rome. He gave the deepest impulse to the reform-movement which in-

¹ *Letters of John Calvin*, compiled from the original manuscripts, and edited with historical notes by Dr. Jules Bonnet. Vol. I. Translated from the Latin and French languages by David Constable. Edinburgh, 1855.

volved France, his native land, in a series of bloody civil wars, furnished a host of martyrs to the evangelical faith, and continues to live in that powerful nation in spite of the horrid massacre of St. Bartholomew and the revocation of the edict of Nantes, the dragoonades and exile of hosts of Huguenots, who, driven from their native soil, carried their piety, virtue, and industry to all parts of Western Europe and North America. He kindled the religious fire which roused the moral and intellectual strength of Holland, and consumed the dungeons of the inquisition and the fetters of the political despotism of Spain. His genius left a stronger mark on the national character of the Anglo-Saxon race and the churches of Great Britain, than their native reformers. His theology and piety raised Scotland from a semi-barbarous condition and made it the classical soil of Presbyterian Christianity, and one of the most enlightened, energetic, and virtuous countries on the globe. His spirit stirred up the Puritan revolution of the seventeenth century, and some of his blood ran in the veins of Hampden and Cromwell as well as Baxter and Owen. He may be called, in some sense, the spiritual father of New England and the American republic. Calvinism, in its various modifications and applications, was the controlling agent in the early history of our leading colonies (as even Bancroft has shown); and Calvinism is, to this day, the most powerful element in the religious and ecclesiastical life of the Western world.

A few years after the catastrophe of the Helvetic Reformation, which gave the death-blow to Zuingli on the battle-field of Cappel, and to Œcolampadius in his quiet study at Basle, and which set limits to the further progress of Protestantism in the German cantons, a French youth of extraordinary precocity of genius and strength of character began to attract the attention of the Protestants in Switzerland, and to revive their drooping spirits. His name was John Cauvin or Caulvin, generally written Calvin. He was born at Noyon in France, July 10, 1509, educated for the priesthood and then for the legal profession, at the universities of

Orleans, Bourges, and Paris, and suddenly converted, as a student, to evangelical views, which he at once professed at the risk of persecution and expulsion from the land of his birth. A Latin speech which he had written for a new rector of the Sorbonne, and in which he strongly advocated certain reforms, was the immediate occasion of his flight from Paris. He spent a short time in the kingdom of Navarre with Queen Marguerite, the sister of Francis I. of France, and a highly accomplished lady, who was favorably disposed to the cause of Protestantism. Thence he proceeded, in 1535, to republican Switzerland, and with many other French refugees he found a hospitable asylum in the ancient city of Basle, which had been rescued a few years before from the yoke of popery by the labors of *Cœcolampadius*.

Here the young exile, who had hardly finished his twenty-sixth year, astonished the religious world by the first Latin edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, A. D. 1536. This great work was written with original vigor of thought, in natural logical order, transparent clearness, and classical elegance of style, and pervaded by the religious enthusiasm of the pentecostal days of Protestantism. He had here a practical, as well as theoretical, object in view, like the early Fathers, in their apologies of Christianity. By presenting Protestant doctrines in their true light, and showing their agreement with the Bible and the primitive church, he wished to induce the king of France to desist from the cruel persecutions against the increasing number of those who embraced them in his dominions. Hence he accompanied the work with a most eloquent appeal to Francis I. in behalf of his brethren.

After a short visit to the duchess of Ferrara, a patron of the evangelical movement in Italy, Calvin intended to settle permanently at Basle, or Strasbourg, with the view to lead the quiet life of a scholar, and to serve the cause of the Gospel by his pen.

His way led him, in 1536, through Geneva, on the romantic lake Leman. Under the spiritual guidance of the

fearless evangelist, William Farel, and with the assistance of the canton Berne, this ancient, but small city had then just shaken off the political tyranny of the Dukes of Savoy, and the ecclesiastical yoke of Popery, and become a Protestant republic. But it was now in danger of falling into the opposite extreme of licentiousness and anarchy. It had embraced, so far, the negative part only of the reformation. The more difficult, positive, and constructive part remained yet to be done.

As soon as Farel heard of the arrival of the fugitive scholar, he urged him to remain and assist him in completing his arduous and responsible work. Calvin, who with all his strength of will, was naturally, according to his own confession, of a timid and pusillanimous disposition, declined at first and made various objections, like Moses, when he was called to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. But Farel conjured him as by divine authority, and declared that God would curse his literary rest, if he disobeyed so clear a call to labor for the reformation. At last he yielded against flesh and blood.

The voice of Farel was here evidently the voice of God. Calvin proved to be the man for the place, and Geneva the place for Calvin. Though small in extent and number of inhabitants, this city had an important situation on the borders of Switzerland and France, and afforded him the finest field of operation in both directions.

As soon as Calvin had conscientiously made up his mind to remain in Geneva, he devoted himself most earnestly to his duties, regardless of the fear and favor of men. He insisted from the start, upon a rigorous discipline, without which he thought the reformation would never succeed; and when the people were unwilling to submit to such stern rule, he in concert with his colleagues, Farel and Viret, refused to administer to them the holy communion. This bold step produced such an indignation, that the Protestant preachers were banished in 1538. They left with the words, "It is better to obey God than man."

The reformer proceeded to Strasbourg, which had adopt-

ed the Protestant creed, and occupied with its leading minister, Bucer, a middle position between Lutheranism and Zuinglianism. In this German city he spent more than two years as pastor of a congregation of French refugees, and as theological teacher of the newly founded Academy. There he published the second edition of his Institutes, a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, and a tract on the Eucharist, which attracted the favorable notice of Luther. There he became better acquainted with the German Reformation, and attended as delegate several religious conferences with the Romanists, at Worms, Frankfurt, and Ratisbon. On these occasions he formed the personal friendship of Philip Melancthon, which was based on profound mutual esteem, and lasted to their death. The Germans appreciated his eminent talents, and called him emphatically the "theologian."

In Strasbourg he married, in 1541, Idelette de Bures, the widow of a Dutch Anabaptist, whom he had converted to the Reformed faith. In a letter to Farel he says: "I could only be pleased with a lady who is sweet, chaste, modest, economical, patient, and careful of her husband's health." His wife seems to have fully answered this description. But to his great grief she was taken from him after a short union of nine years. In informing his friend Viret of her departure, he wrote: "I am separated from the best companion, who would cheerfully have shared with me exile and poverty, and followed me into death. During her life, she was to me a faithful assistant in all my labors." His only child died in infancy. He remained a widower during the rest of his life.

Soon after the banishment of Calvin, the people of Geneva found out their mistake, and learned from sad experience the evil effects of a wild and radical spirit upon the church and the state. They resolved to recall their faithful pastor, who was soon to shed immortal lustre on their city. He concluded to return, and was received with great enthusiasm in 1541.

Here commences the second period of his life, the time

of his greatest activity and usefulness. After many wanderings, he found now a permanent home, and remained in Geneva, which is henceforth inseparable from his name, to his death, in 1564.

Although rather weak by constitution, and frequently disturbed by sickness, he developed an astounding activity as preacher, pastor, teacher of theology, president of the consistory or body of ministers, legislator, correspondent, and author. His published works, though voluminous, give us no sufficient idea of the amount of his mental labor. For he preached thousands of sermons, which were never written, nor printed. His correspondence has only recently been brought to light, with some measure of completeness.

His labors were next devoted to Geneva. He was unquestionably the greatest benefactor of that republic. He not only succeeded in establishing Protestantism there on a solid moral and religious basis, but he made the city the metropolis of the Reformed church. And all this he did in the face of innumerable difficulties, and fearful opposition, which at times endangered even his life. It was only a few years before his death, that he fully triumphed over the licentious party of the Libertines, who united political and social radicalism with a pantheistic creed. John Knox, the distinguished reformer of Scotland, who spent several years there as student of Calvin, although he was four years older, and as pastor of a congregation of English exiles, gave in a letter to his friend Locke, in 1556, the following testimony to Geneva: "In my heart I could have wished, yea, and cannot cease to wish that it might please God to guide and conduct yourself to this place, where I neither fear nor am ashamed to say is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles. In other places I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion to be so sincerely reformed, I have not yet seen in any other place besides." Fa-rel wrote, in 1557, that he never saw Geneva in such excellent condition before, and that he would rather be the last

there than the first anywhere else. There, it was said, the pure Gospel is preached in all temples and houses (Calvin himself preached daily, every other week); there the music of psalms never ceases; there hands are folded and hearts lifted up to heaven from morning till night and from night until morning. During the greater part of the seventeenth century the city retained this high reputation for order and piety. In the eighteenth century, it is true, the church which Calvin founded apostatized to Socinianism and relaxed its discipline. Geneva gave birth to the pseudo-reformer Jean Jaques Rousseau, who did as much to disorganize the morals of society, on the basis of corrupt nature, as Calvin had done to organize them on the ground of God's holy word and will, and who contributed, more than any other writer, to prepare the way for the French revolution. But as to literary taste, social refinement, and agreeable manners, Geneva need not fear a comparison with any city of the same size; and more recently, the church in that city, and canton too, has revived to a considerable extent and furnished a number of eminent divines (Gaussen, Merle d'Aubigné, etc.), who are animated by the spirit of the great reformer and his bold idea of evangelizing the neighboring empire of France.

Geneva also became, through Calvin, a hospitable asylum for persecuted Protestants from France, England, Scotland, Italy, and Spain, and through the returning exiles, as well as through many natives trained in its institutions to the gospel ministry, it scattered the seed of the pure doctrine and strict discipline to these countries. It was, in this respect, the same in the sixteenth century, that the English colonies in North America became in the seventeenth, on a much larger scale, to the persecuted religionists of every land and nation.

But Calvin lived not for Geneva alone. He was a true cosmopolite. His heart and soul moved always in the general interests of the kingdom of Christ. He was deeply concerned in a union of all the evangelical churches. From this centre of operations, he extended his influence, through his writings,

correspondence, and hundreds of living disciples, to every country where Protestantism took a foothold. Let us consider him, then, in his general relations and influence, as a divine and founder of a new system of church government and discipline.

As a scientific theologian, Calvin occupies the first rank among the reformers of the sixteenth century, when they were all giants. In native vigor, freshness, originality, and fertility of intellect, he was perhaps inferior to Luther, but far superior to him in cultivation and discipline, in scientific method, logical order, and consistency. It is hard to say whether he excels most as a didactic, or polemic, or exegetical writer.

First among his works for general interest and permanent value are his commentaries on the most important books of the Old, and on all the books of the New Testament, with the exception of the Apocalypse. They combine, in an extraordinary degree, the various theoretical and practical qualifications of a good interpreter of the Scriptures, knowledge of the original languages, sound sense and tact, facility of entering into the condition of the writer, theological depth, religious experience, and great skill in adapting and applying the word of God to the wants of the heart and of the age, without branching out into allegorical expositions, which are mostly impositions, or yielding too much to the polemical propensity of his contemporaries. He is always clear, instructive, and edifying. Upon the whole, his commentaries have not been surpassed by any exegetical works of any age. Hence they have been frequently republished, and are continually referred to by the best modern interpreters, as Olshausen, Tholuck, Lücke, Bleek, Hengstenberg, De Wette, Meyer, Ebrard, etc.

His theological Institutes, which have been recently republished with his commentaries by Dr. Tholuck, in a cheap and convenient form, are unquestionably by far the ablest and fullest exposition of the evangelical system of doctrine and discipline which appeared in the sixteenth century, Melancthon's *Loci Communes* not excepted. They follow the

plain and natural order of the Apostle's Creed, and abound in scriptural truth philosophically comprehended and vigorously and clearly expressed.

Two doctrines occupy the most prominent position in his theological system, and may therefore be called peculiarly his own, although they existed substantially before his time, and he sincerely believed them to be clearly revealed in the Scriptures: the article of the decrees, and the article of the Lord's Supper.

The Augustinian doctrine of predestination was at first held by all the reformers, in opposition to the prevailing Pelagianism of the Romish church of that time. It resulted naturally from their view of the absolute inability and slavery of the human will in all spiritual matters, and of the unconditioned freedom and irresistibility of divine grace. Melanchthon went so far, in the first edition of the *Loci* and in his commentary on the Romans, published by Luther in 1523, as to derive the adultery of David and the treason of Judas from the will of God, as well as the conversion of Paul.¹ Luther defended the doctrine at length, and in the strongest terms, in his tract *de Servo Arbitrio* against Erasmus, A. D. 1525, where he makes a distinction, as clearly as Calvin ever did, between the secret and the revealed will of God, and gives the exhortations of the Scriptures to holiness an ironical sense, as if God meant to say to men: Try to be holy and to do good works, and you will see that your efforts are all in vain! It cannot be proved that Luther ever formally retracted these views. Melanchthon, however, exchanged them for a semi-Augustinian theory; and the Form of Concord, while it retained the principle of the utter moral inability of the natural will of man, condemned the Calvinistic theory of predestination, which seems to follow as a logical consequence.

Calvin, then, stands by no means isolated in the sixteenth century as regards the dogma of the absolute decrees. But

¹ Ad Rom. IX.: "Constat Deum omnia facere, non permissive, sed potenter, ut sit ejus proprium opus (Augustini verbis utor) Judae proditio et Davidis adulterium sicut Pauli voratio."

he developed it more philosophically and vigorously than any other reformer, made it one of the pillars of his system, and held to it with unwavering consistency through life. He unquestionably gave it an unscriptural predominance in his theology, and went beyond the Infralapsarian position of St. Augustine to the very borders of Supralapsarianism. And yet, though one of the most consistent of men, both in his thoughts and his actions, he shrunk from the last logical conclusion, which would make God the author of sin, and thus contradict the voice of conscience and destroy the very foundation of morality. "Adam fell," he says, "God having so ordained it; but he fell by his own guilt."

The doctrine of the decrees rested, with him, principally on religious and exegetical, but also on philosophical, considerations. He was led to it by an overwhelming sense of man's sinfulness and moral impotence, on the one hand, and the absolute supremacy of God's will and grace, on the other; and by the study of certain portions of the Bible, especially the ninth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. His motive for enforcing the theory was to cut up all Pelagianism and self-righteousness by the root, to humble man's pride, and to give all glory to God. From this deepest self-humiliation sprang his moral strength; and God's free grace was, to him, the most powerful stimulus to holiness, as well as the source of rich comfort. Far from leading to Antinomianism or despair, as one should suppose from logical reasoning, we find Calvinism to this day generally combined with profound moral earnestness and energy, severe self-control, and a cheering, though humble, conviction of the certainty of salvation, but not always with the sweeter graces of the gospel. When Olevianus, one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism, was asked in his dying moments, whether he was certain of his salvation, he triumphantly exclaimed: *Certissimus*.

Nevertheless the doctrine of a double predestination is the weakness as well as the strength of Calvinism, and is not without reason called its "knotty point." It presents only one side of the truth to the exclusion of the other; it

does violence to the conception of God's love and justice, and to a number of the clearest passages of the Scriptures. It undermines the philosophical basis of the moral responsibility of man, and deprives history of its proper realness and earnestness and freedom, by suspending it, as it were, on a *funis desperationis*, and making it the inevitable result of an absolutely independent and unchangeable decree that lies beyond it. For these and other reasons it never can become catholic, but must ever remain sectional.

Hence it was only adopted by the French, Dutch, and Scotch Reformed churches; and even their confessions guard themselves with more or less caution against the Supralapsarian extreme to which Calvin's philosophy tended, but against which his moral and religious sense protested. But the Thirty-Nine Articles of the church of England, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the other symbols of the German Reformed church, occupy a more liberal and moderate position on this mysterious subject; for, while they teach the positive and consoling part of the theory, viz. the election of believers by free grace to everlasting life, they either pass over in silence or expressly reject the negative part, the unconditioned decree of reprobation and the Supralapsarian scheme of the foreordination of the fall of Adam. For this reason, the German Reformed and Anglican churches cannot be called Calvinistic in the same sense in which this term may be applied to the Reformed churches of France, Holland, and Scotland.

Calvin's doctrine of the eucharist is an elaborate and ingenious attempt to combine the realness and mysticism of the Lutheran theory with the spiritualism and rationality of the Zuinglian view, and this to satisfy the heart as well as the head. To the former he objected that it still retained some materialistic and semi-popish features, by maintaining a local, corporeal presence in, with, and under the elements, and an oral manducation of Christ's body by unbelievers as well as believers. The Zuinglian theory, on the other hand, which seems to empty this holy mystery of its real contents, by resolving it into a purely symbolical and commemorative

ordinance, he regarded as too negative, superficial, and jejune, and in a private letter he went so far as to call it "profane." He held, therefore, to the fact of a real but spiritual presence, and a real but spiritual fruition of Christ, i. e. not of any amount of material substance, but of the vivific power or supernatural virtue of Christ's glorified humanity, that dwells in heaven and yet is truly communicated to the soul by the mysterious working of the Holy Ghost, not through the mouth, but through the medium of faith.

This view, which saves the mystery and divests it at the same time of all carnal and irrational (not superrational or supernatural) elements, passed substantially into all the symbolical books of the Reformed church, from the Consensus Tigurinus down to the Westminster standards. But it must be admitted that, in modern times, it has been given up again, to a large extent, in favor of the Zuinglian or even Socinian theory, which, by discarding the mystery and resolving the strong language of the Saviour and of Paul into mere oriental figures, recommends itself most to the logical understanding and common sense, but for this very reason can never satisfy the exegetical conscience and the deeper wants of the believing heart, that longs after a living union with the whole Divine-human Christ as the source of life and immortality.

Calvin's reformatory activity was by no means confined to the sphere of doctrine and scientific theology. He was equally great as legislator and disciplinarian. He was not only an eminent scholar and writer, but also an eminently practical man, and exerted as powerful an influence upon his age and upon posterity by his actions and institutions as by his sermons, lectures, and books. He labored as earnestly for the purity of morals as for the purity of doctrine.

He may be compared to the greatest legislators of antiquity. He remodelled the entire commonwealth of Geneva, politically and socially as well as religiously and ecclesiastically. He inspired into the Reformed church at large the genius of practical organization and self-government, the spirit of or-

der and discipline, the aggressive energy and boldness, and the principle of thorough and constant reform.

The French character is naturally inclined to levity ; but by the law of reaction it produces, when once brought under the influence of religion, a very high degree of seriousness. Romanism in France has given birth to the severest monastic orders, the Carthusians and the Trappists. So also Protestantism assumed there a stern and serious character, especially in the person of Calvin, and among the Huguenots generally, who in this respect bear a striking resemblance to the early Puritans of England. There are few men whose whole life was so strict, so regular, and well ordered as the life of the reformer of Geneva. It presents a beautiful unity and harmony on the basis of an unshaken firmness of conviction and absolute submission to the sovereign will of God.

Luther and Melancthon confined themselves to a reformation of faith and doctrine, and thought that all outward changes in government and discipline would follow, in due time, as a matter of course. Hence the Lutheran churches in Europe present, to this day, very little advance upon Romanism as regards congregational self-government and discipline. Zuingli and Œcolampadius differed little, in this respect, from their German neighbors. But Calvin, from the beginning of his labors in Geneva to the last, laid great stress upon a system of strict discipline as the indispensable basis of a flourishing condition of church and state, which were then very intimately united in Protestant as well as Roman catholic countries. Severe against himself, he was also severe against others. With all his uncompromising opposition to popery, he had a very strong church feeling and high view of the Divine authority of the ministerial office. "The church," he says in the fourth book of his *Institutes*, "is our mother. This appellation alone is sufficient to show how useful and necessary it is to know her. For we cannot enter into spiritual life unless we are born of her womb, nourished at her breasts, preserved under her roof and protection, until we shall be delivered from this mortal life and

be like angels." He hated and abhorred an unchurchly radicalism and licentious spirit, full as much as the opposite extreme of popery and despotism. Hence his unrelenting war against the Libertines of Geneva, or Spirituals as they called themselves, who abused the liberty of the Gospel as a cloak for the licentiousness of the flesh, and threatened religion and society with anarchy and dissolution.

To defeat the power and machinations of this pseudo-protestant and fanatical sect, and to establish order and purity of life in Geneva, Calvin retained or revived the most rigorous punishments of the Mosaic law and of the Middle Ages. Adultery, cruelty against parents, blasphemy, and dangerous heresy were punished with death. Even innocent amusements were prohibited. Gamblers were put in the pillory, with the cards on their neck. A child was publicly whipped, another one executed, for having insulted its parents. The most dangerous leaders of the opposition were deposed from office or banished, as Castello, Bolser, Amcaux; or beheaded, as Gruet; or burned, as Servetus. It seems almost incredible to what an extent discipline was enforced at Geneva, in the latter part of his life. We freely admit that the extreme severity of these laws and their execution reminds one more of Judaism than Christianity, more of the code of Moses than the gospel of Christ. But we must take into consideration the malicious and anti-christian opposition he had to contend with, and the salutary reforms which, after all, were accomplished by this system of discipline. For Geneva became, towards the end of Calvin's life, a model of order, good morals, and piety, and retained this high reputation for nearly two centuries. We have already quoted the favorable testimonies of Farel and Knox. To this might be added the equally favorable judgment of the distinguished Lutheran divine, Valentine Andreæ, of the seventeenth century, who on visiting Geneva was astonished at the high degree of order and discipline which prevailed there, contrasting so strongly with the lax condition of the churches of his own creed in Germany.

By far the most famous and generally interesting case of discipline, which was exercised at Geneva under the eyes of Calvin, is the burning of the unfortunate Spanish physician Michael Servetus, for heresy and blasphemy, A. D. 1553. The authentic acts of the process have been published, in 1844 by Rilliet, from the original documents, which enable us to understand the case more clearly and fully.¹

This sad tragedy has brought an unlimited amount of reproach upon the reformer to this day, both from Roman Catholic, Protestant, and infidel writers. There can be no apology for it, of course, from the point of view of the nineteenth century. The true spirit of the Gospel and the best feelings of the human heart condemn it alike as cruel. But every man has a right to be judged by the standard of his own age, and can hardly be expected to anticipate the views of future generations. In this case, the following facts must be kept in view, which do not justify the thing itself, but place it in its true light and materially extenuate the guilt of Calvin.

1. Servetus was not an ordinary heretic, but a blasphemous of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which he represented as the infernal fountain of all evils and corruptions in the church; a fanatical pseudo-reformer, who dreamed that he was called to reconstruct Christianity and society on a new basis, and he was linked in with the sect of the Libertines for the purpose of overthrowing the authority of Calvin and taking his place.

2. Servetus had been previously imprisoned, tried, and condemned to the flames by the Roman Catholic tribunals of France, and was actually burned in effigy after he escaped from prison and fled to Geneva. Hence the Romanists at least have no right to throw a stone at Calvin for doing what they taught him to do, what they did themselves before him in this very case, and what they have done many times since for much smaller offences. But there is this difference, that, while persecution flows naturally from the principle of

¹ Relation du procès criminel intenté à Genève 1553 contre Michael Servet, rédigé d'après les documents originaux. Genève 1844.

exclusiveness (*extra ecclesiam Romanam nulla salus*) in the Roman communion, which regards every dissent from its authority as damnable heresy and schism, it is an evident inconsistency in Protestantism, which starts in opposition to the exclusive dominion of popery, in the assertion of evangelical liberty, the rights of private judgment, and individual conscience; and had therefore no right to treat those who dissented from it in the same way as they were treated by the church from which they seceded. Nor had they a right to complain of Romish persecution, as long as they persecuted themselves. Here is an inconsistency, which adheres to a large part of Protestantism to this day.

3. Calvin, with all his natural severity and abhorrence of the doctrines of Servetus, interceded with the magistrates in his behalf, and requested them, although in vain, to mitigate the form of punishment by substituting the sword for the stake. "Spero," he wrote Aug. 20, 1553, several weeks before the execution, "*spero capitale saltem judicium fore, pœnæ vero atrocitatem remitti cupio.*"

4. All the leading Protestant divines and churches, Farel, Beza, Bullinger, and even the mild and amiable Melancthon, fully approved of the capital punishment of Servetus. The only quarter from which some censure proceeded, at that time, was Socinianism and Romanism. But the Socinians and Anabaptists sympathized with Servetus's heretical views, and of course thought him unjustly condemned; and the Papists laid hold of everything which might throw discredit upon the hated reformer, and represent him in the light of a cruel despot.

5. The general right and duty of the civil magistrate to propagate truth and to punish heresy by the sword, was at that time, with the exception of a few Socinians, universally admitted and acted upon by Protestants as well as Catholics, from whom the former had inherited this view, as the Catholics again had derived it from the Old (not the New) Testament. Servetus himself admitted the legal theory under which he suffered; for, in his work on the Restitution of Christianity, he says distinctly that blasphemy is worthy

of death "*simpliciter*," i. e. without dispute. The Anabaptists and Antitrinitarians were everywhere imprisoned, fined, banished, or in some instances even drowned or burned. Archbishop Cranmer sent Joan of Kent to the stake, and followed himself in a few years, with his fellow-reformers Latimer and Ridley. In the very year in which Servetus suffered, five disciples of Beza were committed to the flames by the Catholics at Lyons, and in the same year commenced the bloody reign of Queen Mary in England, which sent hundreds of Protestants to the prisons, the scaffold, and the stake. The horrors of the Spanish Inquisition need only be alluded to. During the violent doctrinal controversies which agitated the Lutheran churches of Germany, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, depositions, imprisonments, and banishments were the order of the day; the Protestant exiles were refused a temporary home at Hamburg and Rostock, and turned off, in the cold winter, because they denied the real presence; and Nicolaus Crell, chancellor of Saxony, was executed in 1601 for the simple crime of crypto-Calvinism. The seventeenth century made no progress in the doctrine of religious toleration, and was fully as intolerant in principle and practice as the sixteenth. Think of the horrors of the thirty years' war in Germany; the penal laws, the persecution of Puritans, Quakers, Baptists, and Romanists, in England; the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the dragoonades of Louis XIV., in France. The great Bossuet was able to say that all Christians had long been unanimous as to the temporal punishment of heretics. Every reader of American history knows that as late as 1650 and '60, quakers and witches were publicly whipped, cruelly mutilated, and even committed to the flames, by the Puritans of New England.

It was only in the latter part of the eighteenth century that our present views on toleration began to take hold of the public mind. They are to be traced partly to the spread of religious indifferentism and an infidel philosophy (Voltaire, Frederick the Great, and Jefferson were among the most zealous defenders of toleration of all sorts of religion and ir-

religion), partly to the progress of humanity and philanthropy, and finally to a more careful separation of the Jewish and Christian dispensation of church and state, the secular and the spiritual power. Sound and consistent Protestantism must necessarily lead to an enlightened policy of toleration to full civil and religious freedom within the limits of public order and Christian morals. But it could not reach this result at once, and in many countries it has not reached it to this day.

However deeply, then, we may now deplore and abhor the cruel punishment of Servetus for spiritual offences, it is unjust to censure Calvin more than his age for what was inherited of the spirit and laws of mediæval Catholicism; for what grew out of the close union of church and state, and what had the express sanction of all the surviving reformers. He was not in advance of his age in this respect, and formed no objection to the general rule.

But it is nevertheless true, and placed beyond reasonable dispute by the history of Holland, England, Scotland, and the United States, that Calvinism, by developing the spirit of moral self-government and manly independence, has done more, directly or indirectly, for the promotion of civil and religious liberty in the world, than any other church or sect in Christendom.

Another important feature in Calvin's reformation, which was closely connected with the exercise of discipline, is the institution of Seniors or Elders, by which he became the proper founder of the Presbyterian form of church government, although it could only be imperfectly executed in so small a territory as Geneva. These officers were chosen from the people with the view to represent the conscience of the congregation and to assist the minister in the discharge of the pastoral functions, the care of the poor and the sick, and especially the maintenance of a proper discipline. They were not elected by the people, but by the ministers. For the republic of Geneva was no democracy, but rather a spiritual aristocracy, controlled by the mighty genius and pure will of Calvin, who has sometimes been called the pope

of Geneva. Yet the people confirmed the election of elders, and had also some part in the choice of ministers.

In Scotland, the principles of the equality of ministers, synodical rule, and coöperation of the laity, were more fully and freely developed into the regular system of Presbyterianism, which has done so much to promote the spirit of popular self-government, to realize the general priesthood of the Christian people, and to engage their intelligent and active interest in all the affairs of the church.

After this short survey of the far-reaching public activity and usefulness of Calvin, we must return to his personal history and contemplate for a moment the closing scenes of such a life.

The reformer was yet in the prime of manhood when his body sunk under the load of such extraordinary labors. Frequent headaches, asthma, fever, gravel, and other diseases, nocturnal studies with a dim lamp suspended over his humble bed, fasting, watchful anxiety, and care of all the churches, gradually undermined his weak and emaciated frame. But he had the satisfaction of dying in full possession of his mental powers, at the height of his reputation and usefulness, with the assurance of leaving the church of Geneva, in the best order, to the able and like-minded successors, and amidst the prospects of the rapid progress and triumph of reform in France, Holland, England and Scotland.

Like a patriarch, he assembled the ministers and syndics of Geneva round his dying bed, asked humbly their pardon for occasional outbreaks of violence and wrath, and affected them to tears by words of the most solemn exhortation to persevere in the pure doctrine and discipline of Christ. Beza gives a full account of this sublime scene, which has been worthily represented by artistic skill also in a well-known picture. The few remaining days Calvin spent in severe bodily pain, in constant prayer and repetition of Scripture-passages, such as : "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." He died peacefully May 27, 1564, in his fifty-fifth year, in the arms of his faithful friend and successor, Theodore Beza. Though dead, he still speaks

with the same effect and to a much larger circle of friends and admirers than in the sixteenth century.

In his private life, Calvin was exceedingly plain, self-denying, and ascetic. For years he took but one meal a day. He refused high salary and presents of every description, and yet he had always to spare for the poor and the persecuted. All the property he left, exclusive of his library, hardly exceeded the sum of two hundred dollars, which he bequeathed to the poor and to the children of his brother; for he died a widower without descendants.

He was averse to all earthly enjoyments. He spent the greater part of his life in midst of the most charming beauties of nature, that give to lake Lemane the appearance of an earthly paradise; and within his sight arose the lofty Alps of Savoy and Switzerland, like clouds of incense, up to heaven in constant, silent adoration of their Maker. And yet we look in vain, in his writings, for even an incidental expression of sympathy with these wonders of the visible world. He was self-possessed, dignified, stern, severe, a Christian stoic. He represents the type of English and Scotch piety in its puritanic and rigorous forms. He is not one of those men who encourage familiarity and take hold of one's feelings and affections, like the open, straight-forward, warm-hearted, humorous Luther, the truest representative of German evangelical piety. He excites either intense respect and admiration, or intense hatred; to despise him is impossible. He was an impregnable tower of strength to the friends of a thorough, energetic reform, and a terror to papists and libertines.

Yet we must not suppose that Calvin was destitute altogether of the tender affections. They were simply concealed beneath a marble cover, and revealed themselves only on particular occasions, in his more familiar correspondence with Farel, Viret, Beza, and Melancthon. "His soul," says Jules Bonnet, in a recent essay on Calvin's marriage and domestic life, "absorbed by the tragic emotions of the struggle he maintained at Geneva, and by the labors of his vast propagandism abroad, rarely laid itself open, and only in

brief words which are the lightnings of moral sensibility, revealing unknown depths, without showing them wholly to our view."

The true glory of his character is indicated in his motto : "Cor meum velut mactatum Domino in sacrificium offero." He lived constantly in the fear of God, and labored most earnestly and consistently, as one of his most faithful servants, to promote the honor of his heavenly Master, and to reform his church on the basis of his holy word. "I would rather," he says, "ten thousand times, be swallowed up, than not obey what the Spirit of God commands me to do through the mouth of his prophets."

Unwilling to take any glory to himself, Calvin forbade the erection of any monument on his grave, and the stranger asks in vain even for the resting place of his body in the cemetery of Geneva. But his word and example still live, and the Reformed churches of Europe and America are his imperishable monument.

In conclusion, we direct the attention of the readers of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* to the important publication which has suggested this Article, reserving to ourselves the privilege of a detailed review when it shall be completed.

It was but a few days before his death, we are told in the preface to the first volume on the authority of Beza, that Calvin, pointing with his failing hand to his most precious furniture, his manuscripts, and the archives of the correspondence that, during a quarter of a century, he had kept with the most illustrious personages of Europe, requested that these memorials might be carefully preserved, and that a selection from his letters, made by some of his friends, should be presented to the Reformed churches, in token of the interest and affection of their founder. This request, owing to the violent convulsions, and the civil wars in France, as well as to a delicate regard to persons, times, and places, was but imperfectly performed, in the sixteenth century, by an edition of *Calvini Epistolæ et Responsa*, which appeared under the superintendence of Beza, at Geneva, in 1575, comprising about four hundred letters or memoirs.

But the letters themselves were carefully preserved in manuscript, in the libraries of Geneva, Zurich, Gotha, and Paris. From these sources Dr. Bretschneider of Gotha, Dr. Henry of Berlin, in his valuable biography of the Reformers, and Mr. Ruchat of Geneva, have published in the present century many important documents.

But a complete collection of all the letters of the great Reformer was left to Dr. Jules Bonnet, who promises thus to do the same labor of love for Calvin, which the late Dr. De Wette has so faithfully performed for Luther. Charged by the French government under Louis Philippe with a scientific mission of a more general nature, and sustained by distinguished scholars and admirers of the Reformer, Mr. Bonnet has devoted five years of study and research to this object, and succeeded in completing a collection which throws much light not only upon the life of Calvin, but also upon the whole history of the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century. Of the original Latin and French edition, the first two volumes have already appeared in Paris, containing the French letters of Calvin. Of the English edition, we have seen thus far only the first volume, which is to be followed by three others, and will embrace in the end at least six hundred letters. The translation has been ably and faithfully executed by Mr. Constable, under the superintendence of the excellent Dr. Cunningham, principal of the New college, of the Free church at Edinburgh. We need not add that such an important work is worthy of the hearty support of all friends of evangelical Protestantism.