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*Calvinism*  
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*Modern Thought*

By  
*Francis R. Beattie, D.D.*



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# Calvinism and Modern Thought

BY

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## Calvinism and Modern Thought

IN certain quarters we hear the cry that "Calvinism is dead." Advancing Modern Thought has prepared its tomb, Liberal Theology has arranged for its burial rites, and current Rationalism has made ready its epitaph. But the tomb still remains empty, the body is not yet ready for the burial rites, and the epitaph still remains unused.

In other quarters we hear the report that "Calvinism is dying out." It has been going into a decline, it has been stricken with paralysis, or it is suffering from nervous prostration. Still, it seems to have as many adherents as ever, to be in full possession of all its energy, and to be as aggressive as of old in all forms of mission work.

In still other quarters we are greeted with the assurance that "Calvinism is out



of date." It is no longer abreast of the best thought of the age, it has quite outlived its usefulness, and should now be placed in the museum of theological antiquities. And yet many of the best thinkers of the age persist in being Calvinists, its adherents seem to be vigorous enough to give its opponents a good deal of trouble, and its vital persistence rather indicates that it has a great deal of inherent energy of its own.

The fact is, Calvinism is not by any means dead. It is not even dying out; much less is it out of date. It is the faith of at least thirty millions of Protestants, within and without the Presbyterian fold, at the present day.

The thesis we propose to maintain is, that the Calvinistic type of theology is more fully abreast of the best aspects of modern thought than any other doctrinal system. Amid the din of noisy opposition to Calvinism, and amid the dust of confused thinking upon its main tenets, this may seem a bold claim to make. Still we venture to make it, and believe that it can be sustained.

The question thus raised deserves consideration. If the movements of modern

thought are destined to destroy this time-honored system, the sooner we know it the better, so that we may begin doctrinal readjustments and theological reconstruction. While on the other hand, if it can be shown that Calvinism is not only abreast of modern thought, but is really a rational demand of what is true and good in modern, current mental activity, then an apologetic, which greatly confirms and fortifies the Calvinistic system, is provided.

This, then, is our claim on behalf of generic Calvinism in relation to modern thought: It is the truth and will abide. If it be the truth in the sphere of theology, it is bound to abide and to retain its permanent relations with truth in every other sphere of human inquiry. Such being the case, it will never find itself out of correspondence with its environment of related truth. Hence it will live. Hence it cannot die. Those who anxiously wish for its demise must patiently wait.

The terms of our thesis need some brief explanation. First, as to Calvinism not much need be said. In general, it is that system of truth and duty in the sphere of



religion which is derived from a careful and complete study of the Holy Scriptures. It finds its formal expression more or less completely in the great Reformed Creeds, culminating in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms. These great creeds, especially those of Heidelberg, Dort, and Westminster, are the ripe fruits of the Reformed branch of the Protestant Reformation in Germany, Holland, and Britain, respectively. They all express the Calvinistic type of doctrine, as distinguished from the Greek, Roman, and Lutheran views of divine truth. It is the generic and historic Calvinism of these creeds that we now have in view.

This great historic system exalts God and honors his word. It bows reverently before his throne in heaven, and listens submissively to his voice speaking in the Holy Scripture. Its constructive principle is the nature and purpose of the Triune God, its materials are found in the word of God, and its aim and end are the glory of God. As a type of theological doctrine, this system, in its broad outlines, construes the course of nature about us, the current of

events in human history, and the whole plan and process of redemption, from the lofty vantage ground of the eternal throne of a holy, wise, almighty, and gracious God. From him, for him, and to him, are all things. He is high over all, blessed for evermore. All his creatures and all their actions are under his eye and in his hand. They are brought into being and upheld continually by his wisdom and power. His sovereign and gracious authority is over each sphere of being, and is exercised in harmony with its nature, and in accordance with the laws under which he has placed it. He does according to his own will, alike among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay his hand from working, nor say unto him: What doest thou? He purposes, and he fulfills all his pleasure. He foreknows all things, and foreordains whatsoever comes to pass.

Concerning man, Calvinism holds that he is an apostate from God, and depraved in heart. He is an alien from God, and at enmity with God by wicked works; and his nature is so perverted that he is dead in tres-

passes and in sins. On this account he is guilty before God, and spiritually unable to save himself. He can neither make reconciliation between himself and God, nor can he pardon his own sin. He is without ability to change his own evil heart, so that he may believe and obey the gospel. He needs redemption unto reconciliation, and regeneration unto newness of life.

Touching man's recovery from this guilty and helpless estate, Calvinism teaches that it is due solely to divine grace operating according to God's eternal purpose. By this gracious and loving purpose a people are chosen in Christ, and are given unto him as his seed from the foundation of the world. They are thus chosen, not because of any good in them, but according to the good pleasure of God. They are given to Christ, not because they are holy, but in order that they may be made holy, and become meet for everlasting life. For the redemption of this innumerable company of the elect, Christ came into the world by the mystery of the Incarnation, and in the likeness of man made a satisfaction to the justice of the Father, which is suitable and sufficient for

all men, for all are in the same condemnation, but which is made effective and efficient by the Holy Spirit, who executes God's purposes of grace in all the members of the body of Christ, who by grace are enabled to believe in him as their Saviour, as he is freely offered in the gospel.

Then, having begun a good work in the hearts of those who are the appointed heirs of life and glory, he will surely carry it on till it is complete in the day of Jesus Christ, so that not one of those given by the Father to the Son will be lost, for none is able to pluck them out of his Father's hand. In due time they all will be conformed to the image of his Son, and not one of them will be wanting in that day when he maketh up his jewels.

In addition, Calvinism has its philosophy of nature, its theory of the human race, its interpretation of human history, its scheme of civil government, its doctrine of the Church, and its well defined view of the relation between the Church and civil government. Its philosophy of nature is monistic theism. Its theory of the race of mankind is to the effect that in some way it has

been constituted an organic or corporate whole. Its interpretation of the history of the race is that God is working out his great plan in all that happens in the passing centuries. In regard to civil government, it holds that it is God's ordinance for the proper regulation of human affairs. Its doctrine of the Church is that it is a great, free, spiritual commonwealth of which Jesus Christ is the only King and Head. As to the relations of the Church to civil government, Calvinism has for its watchword, "A free Church in a free State," and thus it stands for civil and religious liberty everywhere. And the battle cry of Calvinism is the conquest of the world for Christ, so that he may see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Such, in brief, is Calvinism in broad outline. It lies in solution, as it were, in the Holy Scriptures, and it is crystallized in the great Reformed Creeds. Its purest gem is the Westminster Creed, our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. It presents a worldwide view of divine realities, and it relates all things in some way to the purpose and power, the goodness and grace, of God. It

provides the philosophy of nature, of human history, of civic relations, and of redemption, in comprehensive outline.

It is not so easy to define what is meant by modern thought, the other term of our thesis. From the nature of the case this term is more or less vague, and few would describe it in quite the same way. In what is popularly called modern thought, there is much that is good, and in which we may rejoice. There is, however, not a little that is tentative and superficial. Sometimes there is a tendency in it to be a little boastful, and unfairly to ignore the thinking of the past. All the great thinkers do not live in modern times, and much of the best in modern thought is the reproduction, in better form it may be, of ancient thought. Modern thought owes much to the mental activity of the past, for thought is an ever advancing stream flowing through the ages. No part of this stream is unimportant.

It is, however, true that perhaps there never has been such activity on the part of the heads and hands of men as during the past century. This activity appears alike in the speculative and the practical.

Geographical discovery has explored almost every nook and corner of the earth's surface. Mechanical invention, by means of all sorts of machinery, has harnessed the wonderful powers of nature for the use and welfare of man. Physical science in many fields has, with patient and persistent energy, made nature reveal her wonderful secrets. Philosophy has lifted reflective thought high up to the clear, calm atmosphere of abiding realities. Historical research has skillfully unfolded many things that happened in the long ago, and has carefully separated fact from myth in the early history of many peoples. And theological inquiry has increased our knowledge of the works and word of God, and has greatly widened for us the horizon of divine things, and has made clear the function of the Church to give the gospel to all the world.

Amid all this activity, it is not possible to define in any formal way what modern thought really is. It can be described only in a general way. It is a trend or tendency, rather than a definite system. It is a spirit or temper, rather than a matured scheme of things. It is an attitude or an



outlook, rather than a set of well assured conclusions. In it all there is much that is good and true, and not a little that must yet be tested. Nor can we overlook the fact that there is a good deal in modern thought that is purely secular, and hence formally antagonistic to revealed religion. But this has always been the case; for in the thinking of every age there have been aspects of mental activity opposed to Christianity. This being the case, we would naturally expect to find in modern thought certain features which are antagonistic to Calvinism, the richest systematic expression of revealed truth yet made.

But we are very far from asserting that all modern thought is antichristian. There is much in it that is true, and noble, and good. Indeed, not a little of the intense activity of modern thinking is due to Christianity, for it has kindled its blazing torch at the eternal light of divine revelation. The Reformation was a revival in learning as well as in true religion. It was a renaissance in the realm of pure thought as well as a reformation in the sphere of spiritual life. Protestantism, therefore, has

ever been the patron of learning and the herald of education. And Calvinism, the richest product of Protestantism, has always stood for freedom of thought and the right of private judgment, as she stands everywhere for civil and religious liberty. In our present inquiry we include what is good and true, what is noblest and best, what is sound and well-grounded in the mental activity of our day, under the term of modern thought. And the question now is as to the relation between the Calvinistic system of divine realities, and modern thought as thus defined, in its trend and tendency.

The question thus raised is a vast one, and opens up many inviting paths of inquiry. There are at least four main heads under which it may be pursued, for modern thought has done much in these four spheres. First, in historical research; secondly, in philosophical speculation; thirdly, in scientific inquiry; and, fourthly, in sociological investigation, modern thought has done much. How, then, does the generic Calvinism set forth in the consensus of the Reformed Creeds relate itself to the best

aspects of modern thought in these four great areas of inquiry and research ?

*I. In the Sphere of History.*

Historical research in modern times has made wonderful advances. It is no longer a matter of mere annals and statistics. It has acquired a distinct method of its own, which is well known as the historical method, and which has also been carried into many other spheres of inquiry. The historian is no longer content to recite mere story and tradition, but seeks accuracy by getting, so far as possible, at the original sources of information. With scrupulous care he seeks to separate fact from myth, event from opinion, and to ascertain the actual reality of the things with which he deals. In doing so he now relies much upon the sources of information found in the inscriptions on the monuments and cylinders which are now being unearthed in those lands where the nations of antiquity once flourished ; and he also seeks to read, with conscientious care, the old documents which tell of the doings of men in the days that are gone. Thus archæology becomes the

handmaid of history, and the historian now seeks to trace all human institutions to their original sources in the dim vista of the past.

Above all, modern historical methods have sought to go below the surface of the incidents described, and to get behind the scenes, to mingle with the individual actors in the drama of the ages, in order to discover and trace out the inner connections and inherent relations of the events which have transpired in the past. This is what is rightly called the philosophy of history, and in many respects the true interest and real value of history lie in this direction. By this means it is shown that the events of history are not isolated happenings, but are intimately related to each other. It thus appears that there seems to be a logical order and rational connection between all that has ever happened among men. We often use the phrase, "the logic of events," and little think how much it means. It may be going too far to say, with the Hegelian school, that history is the concrete expression of the forms of reason, and that all historical incidents

must be construed in accordance with the logical categories. Still, modern historical method is more and more recognizing the profoundly important fact that there is a rational factor in all history, and that one increasing purpose seems to run through the ages. The events of history are not grains of sand lying scattered upon the shore of time, but vital germs making up the historic life of the human race.

In all of this there is an echo of Calvinism. This system teaches, as no other does, that God is the sovereign Ruler over all the affairs of men, and that he is slowly but surely working out his eternal purposes concerning men in the march of the centuries. He it is who establishes thrones and sets up princes. He it is who removes kings, and allows empires to pass away. He even uses one nation to overthrow another, and to accomplish his far-reaching purposes thereby. Thus Pharaoh, we read, was raised up to show the power of God, and that the name of God might be declared in all the earth (Ex. 9: 16; Rom. 9: 17). In like manner, Cyrus is called the shepherd of Jehovah, to perform his pleasure, in connection with

what he did, under God's hand, at the time of the restoration of Judah from the great captivity (Is. 44: 27, 28). So has it been ever since. The hand of God is seen in all human history. His wisdom, righteousness, and power, appear in it all. His eternal purpose is the rational bond which binds all events together, and his omnipotent agency is the vital power that constitutes the secret of the historic life of the human race. This is Calvinism in one point of view, for it is God's sovereignty regarded as the key of human history.

But further, this eternal purpose running through all the ages has a moral quality belonging to it. Human history is not merely rational; it is also moral. There is more than a natural philosophy of history; there is also a moral significance about it. There is moral good and moral evil in it. Righteousness and wickedness play a large part on the stage of human history. The drama is often a terrible conflict between these opposing forces. By the great apostasy in paradise the stream of human history was turned into the channel of evil. But the divine purpose of grace has opened up a

new channel, and the opposing forces have been dashing against each other ever since. Toward the Incarnation and the Cross all the ages before Christ were steadily moving, so that he appeared among men in the fullness of time. Then from the Cross and the Ascension all the ages since Christ's day are moving steadily on to the final consummation of all things. It is only from the standpoint of Bethlehem, Calvary, and Olivet, that all history since the advent of Christ can be properly interpreted. In a word, in the moral sphere, the purpose of God in redemption is the key to the understanding of all history. The prophetic element in the Old Testament makes this abundantly plain. It is equally evident in the New Testament, especially in the book of The Revelation. It is only in the light of the problem of sin and redemption, solved by the gracious purpose of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, that the riddle of human history can be interpreted. And Calvinism, with its comprehensive view of the sovereignty of God and of his eternal redeeming purpose, can say this better than any other system; and we may confidently believe



that, as the true philosophy of history is more and more fully unfolded, Calvinism will be found to be abreast of its latest and best results. He who reads history aright may decipher the thoughts of God on every page, and thereby he may trace the pathway of his eternal purpose through the ages.

## *II. In the Sphere of Philosophy.*

Philosophy is reflection, the thinking consideration of things. It is the search for causes, the inquiry after reasons. Each age has its own peculiar philosophical tendency. The pendulum of speculation swings from one system to another through the ages. It may be safely said that the tendency of the noblest philosophical thinking of the day is toward a unitary system. This means a system with a single principle by which all things are to be explained. Hence the drift in modern thought toward some type of monism is natural. In the past, this tendency has appeared in materialism, which seeks to explain all things from the atom and physical force; and in pantheism, which holds to an impersonal first principle of all existence. But in our own day a nobler

trend appears in connection with modern thought. This tendency is toward a spiritual and ethical monism, which explains all things from the postulate of a personal God. The universe is to be construed in terms of personal spirit. This may be termed theistic monism or monistic theism, which gives a place alike for the personality of the infinite and for the dependent and derived reality of finite things. The reality of the source of all being must be one, and that one reality is the personal God. From him, in some way, all things come; on him, in some relation, all things depend; and for his glory, in the end, all things are. The very best types of modern thought which to-day hold the attention of philosophical minds tend distinctly in this direction. The intense interest concerning theistic speculations in many thoughtful circles fully confirms this statement.

This tendency is in harmony with the fundamental principles of generic Calvinism. According to this system, God is the one source of all finite things. From him, and for him, all things have their being and meaning. In harmony with theistic monism,

God is the alone source of all being. He alone is independent and self-existent. His omnipotent agency lies at the root of all that comes to pass in the universe. His will, guided by infinite intelligence, directed according to absolute righteousness, and moved by boundless love, is the supreme fact in Calvinism. This may be regarded as the sovereignty of God in the sphere of philosophy.

In modern philosophic thought thus viewed there are at least three particulars in which Calvinism is in accord with it. These particulars may be denoted by the terms, unity, immanence, and finality.

It is evident that the idea of unity in modern philosophy has its counterpart in Calvinism. If modern thought demands a unitary and rational spiritual principle to explain the universe, Calvinism provides this in its doctrine of God and his decrees or eternal purpose. Neither materialism nor pantheism meet the requirements of philosophy or theology, for the one denies spirit and the other personality. And dualism is also defective, for it announces two eternal principles, which entirely oppose and ex-

clude each other. Of all types of theology Calvinism best meets the demand of modern thought for unity. Calvinism, therefore, and monistic theism have a natural affinity with each other. The one gives the principle of unity in the realm of philosophy, and the other a similar principle in the sphere of theology. Both agree in holding to the absoluteness of this unitary postulate, and both give to all finite things their proper dependent reality.

The term immanence is one much used by modern thought; and sometimes, perhaps, it may be pushed too far at the present day. Yet what is sound and true in the meaning of this term is a great gain for philosophy. It expresses the intimate relation subsisting between God and the world, between the unitary principle of theistic monism and the multiplicity of finite things in the universe. Two generations ago, a form of dualism in philosophy and of deism in theology prevailed. By this view God was removed far from his works, and seldom, if ever, came in contact with them. But now it is firmly held, by the best types of modern thought, that God is immanent in some sense, while

also transcendent, in his relations with the universe. This means that his relation to his works is inward and abiding, and not merely external. He is always in contact with his works, and hence does not come merely occasionally into vital relations with his creatures. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." In this way theistic monism avoids pantheism, which denies the transcendence of God, and escapes deism, which ignores his immanence, touching the relation of God to his creatures of every grade.

This aspect of modern thought also finds its counterpart in generic Calvinism. God is in all things, and through all things, and over all things. His purpose and his power are constantly expressed in the progress and processes of the universe. Thus Calvinism avoids the abyss of pantheism and escapes the mechanism of deism. It puts God into such relations with his creatures that he may fittingly execute his decrees in the works of creation and providence. Thus there is no event in the universe wherein God's presence and potency, directly or indirectly exercised, are not to be found.

This is Calvinism, where God is in all, through all, and over all. Here, again, the kinship between Calvinism and modern thought is evident.

The term finality is one much used by modern thought, although what it means is not entirely new. It denotes end, or purpose, or design, or goal; and modern thought, in its better aspects in philosophy, is more and more bringing out the view that the universe exists for a purpose. The cosmos has some end. It is ever more and more clearly seen that the universe is not a chaos of separate, independent things, but a cosmos of related, interdependent things. It is consequently rational at its root, and intelligible, and thereby capable of being construed by intelligence. Only on this ground is science itself possible. The universe is moving on toward some definite goal. Even Herbert Spencer, with his idea of the rhythmic movement of the universe in great cycles, is an unwilling witness to this conclusion; and philosophic evolution, if ever clearly proved to be true, will but further confirm the conclusion that the universe is moving on toward some distant and

lofty goal. As in human history there is the rational as well as the natural bond of connection, so in the cosmos there is the rational bond binding it together also. There are plan and purpose in the cosmos, and movement in it toward their realization. There is something other than the cosmos, and above it yet in it, which regulates its onward progress toward its end. This is finality as seen in the universe. The cosmos has a meaning and an end.

With no type of theology does this so well agree as with the Calvinistic. God's eternal purpose, which has reference to his glory, is the final end of the whole cosmos, and his comprehensive plan determines the history of the entire universe. Thus this profound feature of modern thought is in full accord with Calvinism in its essential principles. Immanence provides the basis for the attainment of this end, in the execution of the decrees.

We may therefore safely conclude that in the realm of philosophy Calvinism is not out of date, but quite up to the times. The facts of unity, of immanence, and of finality, all are profound aspects of modern thought



with which Calvinism has the fullest sympathy, and for which it may have a ready welcome.

### *III. In the Sphere of Science.*

In the sphere of the physical sciences, modern thought has made some of its greatest advances and has won some of its most signal triumphs. In this sphere, also, modern thought has perhaps moved as far from the old moorings as anywhere else. It is in this sphere, too, that some of the sorest assaults of recent times upon the Christian system have been made. Some have even been bold enough to assert that Christianity in general, and Calvinism in particular, have met their Waterloo at the hands of modern science. In its youthful exuberance it was natural that certain aspects of modern science should produce this conviction in hearts not really in sympathy with the Christian system.

But, happily, things are changing now. The best types of modern scientific thought are steadily taking positions more and more in harmony with the Christian faith; and Christian faith, in turn, is gradually coming

to a better understanding with modern science. In not a few cases, where broad and reverent views of nature are taken by modern scientists, conclusions are announced in the sphere of pure science which are closely akin to some of the main principles of the Calvinistic system. It would almost seem now as if the laws and forms of physics and chemistry may turn out to be the expressions of the thought and activity of God, directly or indirectly exercised. Is it too much to say, in the light of the best in modern science, that the law of gravitation expresses the thought and plan of God concerning one aspect of the universe?

This recent tendency of the best aspects of scientific thought is well fitted to remove the dread of physical science which some earnest minds feel, and specially to suggest that Calvinism has nothing whatever to fear from the careful and reverent study of the works of God. In addition, it is reasonable to conclude that if Calvinism be the truth in the sphere of revealed religion, it will not be found out of harmony with the assured results of modern science. The word and the works of God must agree, if

rightly understood at their various points of contact.

In all that modern science is doing to show the prevalence of law and order, of unity and harmony in nature as a whole, of plan and end in the cosmos, it is confirming much that has already been said under the head of modern philosophy and Calvinism. In addition to all this, there are certain striking features in modern science which deserve special consideration in this discussion. These are found largely in the realm of biology, and may be grouped under three terms—heredity, selection, and causation.

Modern scientific thought makes much of heredity in the sphere of biology. Heredity consists in that aspect of living organisms by means of which certain traits possessed by one generation are transmitted to the next. Heredity, or inheritance, however, originates nothing. It merely hands down what comes into its possession. It is not really a manufactory, but rather like an express agency. In biology this principle has a large place, and it constitutes one of the laws of the theory of descent, or biological evolution. It also has its application

to some extent beyond the realm of biology. In the mental and moral spheres, the same principle has its significance. Certain traits are inherited, or transmitted from sire to son.

Now, so far as this principle is established, it is in perfect harmony with one of the profound tenets of the Calvinistic system. One of the great doctrines of this scheme of divine things is that of original sin and hereditary depravity. Generic Calvinism has always firmly held that sin is a malady inherent in the race. It is in the blood. It is on the race. It descends from sire to son in some hereditary way. There is such a thing as race sin, and some bond of connection between the generations of men in the matter of sin. Calvinism always asserts that in the apostasy of our first parents the whole race was somehow involved, and that the iniquity of the fathers comes upon the children in some mysterious way. Explain it as we please, the whole race is implicated in this great apostasy and lies under its terrible disabilities. All types of Calvinism agree in this.

Here, again, Calvinism and modern scien-

tific thought have no quarrel. The fact of heredity, so far as true in biology, in psychology, and in ethics, confirms the doctrine of original sin and hereditary depravity. As one race of organisms may come into the possession of certain traits, without any choice on its part, so may it be true that the generations of men may find themselves heirs to a heritage of moral evil, by no volition of their own. The principle of *heredity*, therefore, on the basis of the organic unity of the race, renders useful service to the Calvinistic system at this point. It is at least true that the doctrine of hereditary depravity, as held by generic *Calvinism*, can no longer be charged with being unscientific. It is abreast of modern science at this point at least. Let it never be forgotten that Calvinism, in its doctrine of original sin, expresses a profound principle which is at once the teaching of Holy Scripture and a truth witnessed to by the best modern scientific thought. The principle of heredity may in coming ages destroy certain types of theological doctrine, but Calvinism has nothing whatever to fear from it. To assert hereditary depravity is

simply to assert the principle of heredity in the moral world.

Another factor in modern science is the principle of selection. Based on variations which occur in organisms in nature, it is sometimes called natural selection. This principle of selection in biology asserts that there seems to be an activity operative in nature which makes a choice, out of the many changes which are supposed to happen by chance, of those features of living things which are suited to serve their best interests, and to preserve their successive generations in increasing vigor from age to age. Here we have nature's choice, her election, which she unconsciously makes, not so much for the welfare of the individual as of the species as a whole. Many organisms fall by the way in the struggle for existence, but the species is preserved steadily.

This, again, is in analogy with the doctrine of election. If we hold the immanence of God in his works, then all these activities of selection in nature are to be directly or indirectly connected with the plan and agency of God. The variations upon which selection works are not of chance, but ac-

ording to the plan of God ; and selection, in so far as it is true in nature, is to be associated, through the medium of second causes, doubtless, with the agency of God. If, therefore, God's plan and activity lie back of variation and selection in the realm of nature, may the same not be true in other spheres? If of the many variations which appear in organisms some are selected and some passed by, we have what may be called the Calvinism of nature. Here is the selection of certain traits, not so much for their own sake as for the good of the whole species. The election of individuals among men for certain services, the selection of nations to fulfill some high function, and the choice of souls in Christ unto salvation and eternal life, are conceptions with which modern scientific thought need have no dispute. Calvinism will be found to be fully abreast of that thought, so far as it is sound and true, so that it has nothing to fear. If natural selection be proved to be the truth of nature, it will simply be in analogy with divine election in the sphere of grace and salvation. Let modern science reverently seek to ascertain the truth in biology, and



let biblical study try to find out the truth in theology. When they compare results they may be found to agree. Natural selection in the sphere of nature is in analogy with divine election in the realm of grace.

The third feature of modern scientific thought to be considered is described by the term causation. Modern science is more and more making it plain that amid all the changes which take place in nature an adequate cause must be assumed. And this cause, it is seen, cannot be merely one of the series of changes, but an agency which accounts for the passage being made from one to another in that series. This requires a cause whose fulcrum, at least, is outside the series. More and more the best types of scientific thought are taking this position in regard to the changes which arise in nature. The facts that water cannot rise higher than its level and that all life must come from preëxistent life, are familiar examples of what is here suggested. In all analysis and synthesis in the chemical laboratory this principle of causation is illustrated. Some agency is needed to effect the synthesis or the analysis of the substances under experi-

ment. If this principle of causation were not universal the problem of perpetual motion might be solved. In all the processes of nature, therefore, where change is involved, a cause operating without the process must be postulated. Even evolution, of which so much causal capacity was expected a few years ago, is now generally held to be, at most, simply a process or a method. In no sense is it a cause. And, especially, when any upward movement takes place in the sphere of nature in the appearance of some new thing, some adequate cause must be assumed. In fact, modern science, from this view point, is largely a search after causes which lie outside the series of changes and operate upon it.

Here, again, we have an echo of a cardinal factor in generic Calvinism. Calvinism has ever laid stress upon the necessity and efficacy of divine grace in the salvation of the human soul. That soul is spiritually dead by reason of sin's fatal infection. In order to work a spiritual and saving change in it, a cause operating from without, yet also within the soul, must be provided. The soul cannot revolutionize its own disposi-

tions, but must be revolutionized by some suitable cause whose fulcrum lies without the soul. This cause is provided in the Calvinistic doctrine of efficacious grace. It is exercised by the Holy Spirit, who quickens the spiritually dead soul into newness of life. This fully meets the scientific demand for an adequate cause operating from without that which is to be changed. The principle of biogenesis in biology is akin to the doctrine of regeneration in theology. If life comes only from antecedent life in nature, so life comes only from antecedent life in the spiritual sphere. In asserting the operation of efficacious grace in regeneration, Calvinism is in the atmosphere of the very latest aspects of scientific thought. Calvinism is simply the scientific notion of causation applied to the sphere of divine grace in regeneration. Its scientific climate, therefore, is fitted to preserve it in good health, and prolong its life indefinitely.

Hence, modern scientific thought and Calvinism have kinship at these three important points: heredity, selection, and causation. The Calvinistic counterparts are hereditary depravity, divine election, and

efficacious grace. May we not venture to repeat that no doctrinal system is so fully abreast of modern thought, when tested in the sphere of biology, as is Calvinism.

*IV. In the Sphere of Sociology.*

Sociology, with its related anthropology, is almost entirely a product of modern thought. In ancient times, Aristotle had his "Politics," and Plato set forth his civic and social ideas in "The Republic." But anthropology and especially sociology, as now conceived, have assumed definite scientific form only in recent times. Now, the social fabric, and the complex relations which men sustain to each other in the family, the tribe, and the nation, are carefully studied. Social statics and social dynamics are now expounded in a learned way, and the relation of the races to each other becomes a very practical problem in sociology. The origin and growth of various social, tribal, and domestic customs and institutions, including religion, are diligently investigated. Various theories of the genesis of the social fabric, and of the conditions which led to the growth of tribes

and nations, are propounded. The relation of the individual to the whole social organism, and the duty of that organism to the individual, are also considered. The relative merits of individualism and collectivism are earnestly canvassed. And the more practical and concrete questions of the ownership of property, of the relations of labor and capital, and of the care of the helpless members of the social fabric, receive much attention from certain types of sociology at the present day. The social settlement is the product of modern sociological studies.

In this absorbing field, the question as to the relation of generic Calvinism to these problems is a matter of vital moment. Can Calvinism give as good account of herself in this sphere as in the others already considered? We have time to note only a point or two of the many which arise.

First, theoretic sociology makes much at the present day of what it calls the solidarity of the race. By this it means that the members of the human race sustain inherent relations with each other. Man is not fully understood when he is regarded merely as an individual. He is also to be considered

in his relations with the other members of the social organism. The family of mankind is a corporate whole. There is such a thing as race unity and solidarity, and upon this modern sociology lays great stress. This solidarity is twofold. First, the successive generations of men are linked together by a genetic bond, of which heredity is an important factor. Secondly, the men of any given generation are related to each other by various social, domestic, civic, and religious bonds. The latter is the main aspect of race unity and solidarity with which sociology is concerned. Men, by the very fact that they are a race and not a class, are constituted as a corporate or organic whole. This, in brief, is the solidarity of the race, which its unity implies.

Now, Calvinism, more than any other system, lays stress upon this fact in the sphere of theology. In its moral relations with God the race is viewed as a unity and as having a moral solidarity. Not only is the race bound together by the tie of one blood; it is also a constitutive unity under the moral government of God. Thus the natural solidarity of the race as set forth by

sociology, becomes the moral solidarity of the race as set forth by Calvinistic theology. It matters not whether we hold the natural or federal view of the in-being of the race in Adam, or whether we see a measure of truth in both the natural and federal aspects of the unity of the race as a whole, we have phases of generic Calvinism, all of which lay stress upon the moral solidarity of the race, and are consequently in harmony with the latest conclusions of sociology. The race as a whole was in Adam in some sense. Many Calvinists say that it was in him both naturally as its root, and federally as its head. Under this relation the whole race has gone into apostasy from God, and has become guilty before him, as well as depraved in its moral state.

And what is true of Adam and the race is true of Christ and his people. His people are members of his body, and in him they have a spiritual unity of which his life is the vital bond. He and they are one, by no merely outward bond of devoted friendship, but by an inward spiritual tie, that gives what may be termed the spiritual solidarity of the body of Christ, the Bride, the Lamb's

wife. It can be very fairly asserted that no other type of theology does such justice to these fundamental ideas as Calvinism. The natural and social solidarity of the race is in analogy with the moral and spiritual solidarity on which Calvinism places emphasis. The covenant of works and the covenant of grace are but the doctrinal expressions of two aspects of this solidarity.

A second principle in modern sociology is that of representation, with which substitution is also associated. Social statics and dynamics imply this principle. Hence modern sociology has done much to show, in the various stages of social development, that the head of the family, the clan, the tribe, or the nation, stands in a representative relation toward those under him and dependent on him. Many primitive institutions exhibit this fact. The totem and the blood bond of the tribe, and various other things, illustrate this point. And the whole scheme of free representative government in the State, which is the pride and glory of modern civilization, implies the principle of representation on a large scale.

That the fact of substitution is also im-



plied in representation is evident. The welfare of those represented in the family, tribe, or clan, may require certain sacrifices on the part of those who stand as their representatives. The head of the family, clan, or tribe, acts in the place of those of whom he is the head; and for their sake he may have to endure hardship and suffering. And, in addition, whatever advantage is thereby secured by the head is enjoyed by the whole constituency which the head represents and acts for. So, too, any misfortune which may come through the folly or failure of the head to fulfill his trust, is entailed on those for whom he acts. Modern sociology is more and more bringing this principle of representation into view.

This, it is evident, represents one of the most profound and severely criticised factors in the Calvinistic system. This system holds, with more or less definiteness, that Adam sustained federal relations to the race, and that he represented it under God's moral government. Its teaching is that Adam represented the race of mankind, and that in some way or other the race sinned in him and fell with him in his first trans-

gression. Calvinism also teaches that Jesus Christ is the head and representative of his people, given to him by the Father to be redeemed. As their representative he stood in their place, and for their sake he offered himself as a sacrifice for their sins. Federal representation and vicarious atonement are the related teachings of Calvinism at this point, especially as it appears in our Standards, and modern sociology witnesses to the truth of these principles in its own proper field. Those types of modern theology which ignore these principles entirely are in danger of being declared obsolete by the most recent conclusions of modern sociology. The principles of representation and substitution are not strange things to sociology, and Calvinism and modern thought have no just ground of quarrel in the sphere of theology. Of all the systems of theology it seems clear that Calvinism has most to gain and least to lose from the results of modern sociological science. When the smoke of battle clears away, the lines of this system will be found intact.

Another principle which modern sociology brings to light is the interdependence of the

human race. This, indeed, is implied in the facts of solidarity and representation already considered. If the individuals of the race are all bound together as a social unity, then each member sustains such relations to those about it as to form the basis of certain duties and responsibilities. These emerge in many ways. We see them in the family, in the clan, in the tribe, and in the nation. It is true in this regard that no man lives unto himself or dies unto himself. There is an altruism, or concern for the welfare of those about us, which modern sociology properly adduces as the basis of its various philanthropies. The very nature of the social organism and the interdependence of its various units, in the light of modern sociological thought, bring this about.

This, once more, is a thought to which Calvinism is not a stranger. The lofty ideas of home life, flowing out of the domestic relations, and parental care, and filial regard, which Calvinism teaches, have their natural explanation in this connection. The theory of national life and economic relations which Calvinism teaches exalts the duties and responsibilities that rest upon all

the individuals which make up the body politic. The ideal State, from the standpoint of Calvinism, is found where every unit in it, in all its relations, is actuated by a holy altruism to promote the welfare of the other members of the community. The State is God's ordinance for certain definite ends, and Calvinism holds a doctrine of civil government and social relations which makes it the defender of civil and religious liberty wherever its influence is rightfully exerted. Calvinists, if true to their own system, can be neither tyrants nor slaves. They will claim their own rights, and at the same time regard the rights of others. It balances egoism and altruism aright.

Thus Calvinism, with its doctrine of the federal relation of the race, with the fact of representation and substitution, and with its broad principle of altruism, is not out of date, even when the bright light of sociology is turned upon it. The facts of solidarity, representation, and altruism, bear testimony to the truth of this statement. In a word, Calvinism will be found in harmony with both theoretical and practical sociology.

But we must conclude this brief statement of a great theme. In four great fields we have studied Calvinism and modern thought. In historical research, in philosophical speculation, in scientific inquiry, and in sociological investigation, these studies have been pursued. What then should be our attitude toward both branches of our thesis?

On the one hand, we need not fear modern thought. All that is good and true in it will be found in harmony with Calvinism, as it is the truth of God's word. What is not sound and true in modern thought will pass away, and in due time be no more.

On the other hand, we need not be ashamed of the generic Calvinism of the Reformed Creeds as the well-rounded truth of divine things. And perhaps what the churches which hold this system now need as much as anything else, is not a toning down of the essential principles of the system, but a toning up of the thought and life of the churches to the high level of the Calvinistic system. In any case, care should be taken to have our system constantly vital

and active, so that Calvinism may show its faith by its works. Let the creed be ever baptized with the Holy Ghost and with power, and let those who hold it be filled with a holy zeal to preach the gospel, in all its freeness and fullness, to the very ends of the earth.

As to the perpetuity of the essential principles of what is known as the Calvinistic system we have no doubt. If it be, as we take it to be, the ripest fruit of the study of the word of God, if it has done so much for the world in the past, if it be abreast of the best in modern thought, we need not fear for its future permanency and power. And our conviction is that if there is to be any doctrinal reconstruction in the near or far future, this must take place, not as a revolt against the principles of generic Calvinism, but as a constructive forward movement from its immovable foundations.

We believe that there will be progress in the knowledge of the sacred deposit of divine truth found in Holy Scripture, as the Church is led to a fuller grasp of its contents, under the tuition of the Holy Spirit. But we also believe that sound and

secure foundations were laid when the essential features of the Calvinistic system were formulated in the Reformed Creeds. Hence, any further progress in theology is not to be secured by digging up these foundations, but by erecting, in the days to come, a nobler structure upon these abiding foundations. Any revision of these Creeds, therefore, which proposes so to dig up these foundations should be earnestly resisted. And all study of divine things which contributes to the erection of this nobler structure is to be welcomed. But Calvinism, in its essential principles, will ever abide, and always keep pace with all that is true and good in modern thought.

~~JUN 8 '56~~

~~MAY 12 '61~~

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