

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THREE ADDRESSES

DELIVERED BY

PROFESSORS IN UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AT A SERVICE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
FOUR HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF

JOHN CALVIN

IN THE ADAMS CHAPEL
ON MONDAY EVENING, THE THIRD OF MAY
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NINE

THE REV. PROFESSOR WILLIAM WALKER ROCKWELL, S.T.B., LIC.TH.
CALVIN AND THE REFORMATION

THE REV. PROFESSOR WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, PH.D., D.D.
CALVIN'S INFLUENCE UPON THEOLOGY

THE REV. PROFESSOR THOMAS CUMING HALL, D.D.
THE INNER SPIRIT OF THE CALVINISTIC
PURITAN STATE

700 PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THREE ADDRESSES

DELIVERED BY

PROFESSORS IN UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AT A SERVICE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
FOUR HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF

JOHN CALVIN

IN THE ADAMS CHAPEL
ON MONDAY EVENING, THE THIRD OF MAY
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NINE

THE REV. PROFESSOR WILLIAM WALKER ROCKWELL, S.T.B., LIC.TH.
CALVIN AND THE REFORMATION

THE REV. PROFESSOR WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, PH.D., D.D.
CALVIN'S INFLUENCE UPON THEOLOGY

THE REV. PROFESSOR THOMAS CUMING HALL, D.D.
THE INNER SPIRIT OF THE CALVINISTIC
PURITAN STATE

LIBRARY
KNOX COLLEGE
TORONTO
700 PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK

II.

CALVIN'S INFLUENCE UPON THEOLOGY.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, PH.D., D.D.

It is difficult to say anything original about Calvin. Serene and imperturbable he looks down upon us from his niche in the world's hall of fame, indifferent alike to our praise and blame. A man whom it is difficult to love, easy to hate, impossible not to respect, he is one of the little company who have wrought their personality not only into the ideas of mankind, but, what is rarer and more difficult, into their institutions. Whatever changes the future may bring, his title to greatness is secure.

Our interest at present is primarily with Calvin's contribution to thought. I am to speak to you of his influence upon theology, but here again I realize how difficult it is to say anything that is new. There are certain great thinkers whose systems it is possible to approach in the spirit of the explorer, conscious as one turns each page, of the chance of some new discovery; but with Calvin it is not so. What he believed and what he taught has long been matter of common knowledge.* Questions of detail may remain uncertain, as to the time of his conversion, as to the nature of the influences which produced it, as to the source of this or that specific element in his system; the essential points are clear. The most that I can hope to do is to put these old facts in their relation to a larger environment, and so bring out in clearer relief and bolder perspective the real meaning of the event which we celebrate

* It is worthy of note that we have no great commentary on Calvin's theology, similar to the elaborate monographs of Koestlin on Luther and of Baur on Zwingli. The reason is a very simple one. Calvin is his own commentator. To learn Luther's theology you have to glean it from many different and often inconsistent statements, and the same is true, though to a less degree, of Zwingli. Neither of these leaders has given his thought complete and final form as Calvin has done in the *Institutes*. The commentary which, in their case, is therefore necessary, is in his largely superfluous.

to-day, and the permanent contribution of the man, whose birth we commemorate, to the ideal interests which are our highest concern.

I have spoken of Calvin's teaching as matter of common knowledge, and yet I am conscious even while I speak that for many persons this is no longer true. The days when children were taught the Westminster Catechism as inevitably as their A B C's has long gone by. The layman who has read the *Institutes* for himself is rare indeed, and even the clergymen who know it at first hand are, I suspect, a limited and ever decreasing company. Under the circumstances, you will pardon me if, at the risk of repeating familiar truths, I remind you for a moment what the Calvinistic system really is.

There are three points of view from which we may approach the study of Calvinism. We may regard it either as a transcript of experience, a philosophy of the world, or a rule of life. Each of these is important, but the first is the most important.

The Calvinistic system is first and foremost the outgrowth of a personal religious experience. It is the experience of men conscious of having been delivered from the guilt and power of sin by the free grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. It is an experience of illumination, bringing with it new insight into truth; of peace, imparting to the penitent the assurance of forgiveness; but, above all, of power, carrying with it the promise of victory over sin and of ultimate transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This experience, signally illustrated in the lives of such men as Paul, Augustine, Luther and Calvin himself, the Calvinistic system assumes as typical, and, by its presence or absence, judges the character and destiny of all mankind.

This generalization is, in turn, justified by a theory of the world. According to this theory, God, the infinite, all-wise creator, made man in his own image, endued him with power to preserve this likeness by his fidelity, or to forfeit it by his

fall, and threatened him in the latter case with eternal punishment, both for himself and for his descendants. Our first parents failed to stand the test, and by their sin, corruption and guilt passed to all the human race. But God, who is infinitely gracious, unwilling to leave man to destruction, determined to redeem a certain number and, to that end, sent Jesus Christ, his only son, to die on the cross for their sins, and, through his Holy Spirit, continually imparts the benefits of his redemption to the elect in regenerating, justifying and sanctifying grace. The remainder of the race he passes over to the destruction which is the just punishment of their sin, imparting to them only such portions of his grace as may be necessary to make the world tolerable for the elect. The whole process, both of salvation and of preterition, takes place according to the good pleasure of God, and is at all points under his control. Yet, in such way that he is in no sense the author of sin, nor is the liberty or responsibility of the creature impaired by his sovereignty.

On the basis of this philosophy and of this experience Calvinism erects its ethical system. Its goal is the utter submission of man's will to the will of God, his gracious Redeemer, and his complete conformity in character and conduct to the rule which God has revealed. This rule is set forth in the Holy Scripture, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and hence the test by which all traditions of men, however ancient and venerable, must be judged. The Scripture not only reveals the law of individual conduct, but the principles of man's social relationships and, above all, the nature and ordinances of the church which God has appointed to be the training school of his elect, and membership in which is, under ordinary circumstances, essential to salvation.

Such, in briefest outline, is the system we call Calvinism, and it is my purpose in what follows to ask what was Calvin's relation to this system and, in particular, what were the qualities on which his greatness as a theologian depends.

It is generally admitted to-day that Calvin was not, in the same sense as Luther, or even as Zwingli, an original thinker. No great break in the history of human thought dates from him. He belonged to the second generation of reformers, building up the majestic structure of his thought out of materials which he found ready to his hand. Much labor has recently been given to the analysis of these materials, and many scholars, English, American, French and German, have separated them into their groups and labelled them according to the quarry from which they were digged. In the light of this research we see more clearly than was once possible how much Calvin's theology has in common with the systems of the Roman divines, with which we are accustomed to contrast it. The bitter polemic of Calvin against Scotus, like the modern Ritschlian polemic against mysticism, is, as so often, but the attempt to hide the consciousness of a half-suspected kinship. The definition of sovereignty in terms of arbitrary will, of authority in terms of inerrancy, of sin in terms of a semi-physical corruption of nature, of salvation as remission of penalty on the basis of a substitutionary atonement, of the Church as the guardian of a uniform law requiring conformity by means of a discipline reinforced by the arm of the state:—all of these, as well as his doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ, are taken over by Calvin from the mother church, and are only in part affected by the new spirit to which Luther had given voice.

This broad foundation in the past explains the courage with which Calvin undertook his reforming work, and the steadfastness with which he held fast to his position under attack. He was confident that he represented not only the spirit of the new age, of which he was spokesman, but the best of the old as well. He cites Augustine, Bernard and Aquinas as witnesses, as well as Isaiah and St. Paul.* As one reads the

* It is interesting to note, however, that while Calvin shows his acquaintance with the works of the later schoolmen, he uses their authority sparingly. It is Augustine in whose writings he finds himself most at home and to whom he continually recurs.

Institutes, one gets the impression of the trained scholar, master of his materials, ready, like the scribe in Jesus' parable, to bring forth out of his treasury things old as well as new.

Yet he is not the scholar merely, but the statesman as well. The author of the *Institutes* impresses us less as the thinker than as the man of affairs; open, alert of mind, living in his own day, and keenly sensitive to its interests, able to speak to its present necessities and to utter his convictions in language which those who hear can understand.

This brings me to the first point in Calvin's title to greatness as a thinker; I mean, his skill as a simplifier of theology. Theologians who have been able to deliver their message in simple and intelligible terms have been rare. This power Calvin possessed in supreme degree. Before his day doctrine had been the affair of the specialist. He made it the common interest of the man on the street. He translated its elaborate formularies into plain speech which the man without technical training could understand, and what is more important, he simplified the ideas to which the words correspond. He cleared away a vast mass of accumulated rubbish, interesting only to the antiquarian, and he put the points that remained in their logical relation as parts of a consistent and coherent system. He grounded each in the Bible, the common textbook of religion, which the Reformation had reclaimed from its obscurity, and put into the hands of all the people. Above all, he showed the practical bearing of each truth upon personal life and pointed out its appropriate fruit in practice. Thus, he made theology, for the first time in its history, a popular study, the concern of the layman as well as of the minister, and so set the ideal which, in theory at least, has ever since been dominant in Protestantism. This is his great and enduring title to fame.

Calvin was not, indeed, the only Protestant teacher who attempted such simplification of doctrine. The ideal of all the reformers was a theology which should represent the common

conviction of all intelligent Christians. Melancthon's *Loci*, the first text-book of Protestant dogmatics, was designed as a popular guide to the understanding of the Scriptures, and, in its first edition, contained those doctrines only which bore directly upon practice and admitted of experimental verification. Luther himself was past master in the art of translating religious truths into the vernacular of common life. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it was in the Calvinistic churches rather than in the Lutheran that lay interest in theology was keenest, and lay understanding of the questions at issue most intelligent. In the Lutheran church theology speedily became the affair of the pastors and professors, and the preacher was content to deal with the simple pieties and homely duties which, however much they might satisfy the heart and appeal to the conscience, made slight demands upon the understanding. But doctrine remained for generations the staple of Calvinistic preaching, and the sermon-taster of the modern Scotch novelist is but the last survivor of a race of lay theologians which includes Cromwell's Ironsides and the pilgrims of Plymouth Rock. For the creation and maintenance of this widespread interest in doctrine Calvin's *Institutes* was largely responsible.

No doubt, this great achievement is in part accounted for by the purpose for which the book was originally written. This purpose was the defence of his persecuted fellow Protestants before the bar of public opinion. "My reason," he tells us, "for publishing the *Institutes* was, first, that I might vindicate from unjust affront my brethren whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord, and, next, that some sorrow and anxiety should move foreign peoples, since the same sufferings threaten many. Neither was it that thick and elaborate work it is now, but only a little handbook that then appeared, nor had it any other aim than to witness to the faith of those whom I saw reviled by impious and faithless flatterers."*

* Walker: John Calvin, N. Y., 1906, p. 131.

waste in empty rhetoric, or display of learning. They speak simply, directly and to the point, for their purpose is to persuade. It is in this spirit that the author of the *Institutes* took up his pen, and the audience that he addressed was not a little band of scholars, but the entire French nation with their monarch at their head.

None the less, it was an extraordinary achievement. To understand its full significance one must compare the *Institutes*, a small handbook of 514 octavo pages,* with the ponderous tomes of the schoolmen which it replaced, and the scarcely less formidable systems of the Protestant scholastics which followed it. It is true that with later revisions the book grew in bulk till it assumed the form in which we know it to-day, three substantial octavo volumes, of which two deal with the subject matter of theology proper, and the third with the application of these principles to the doctrine of the church. But the character of the system remains substantially unchanged by the later additions.† When we remember that at the time Calvin put forth the first edition of the *Institutes* he was but twenty-seven years of age, we realize how rare must have been the genius that could so surely have grasped and so securely have developed the essential points upon which the later Protestantism was to base its defence against Rome.‡

This organizing genius is the more remarkable because of Calvin's interest in the interpretation of Scripture. The interest of the exegete and of the systematic theologian is very

* The contents of the first edition are interesting. It consists of six sections, the first dealing with the law, the second with faith, the third with prayer, the fourth with the sacraments, the fifth with the false sacraments of the Roman Church, and the last with Christian liberty and the relation of church and state.

† In this the *Institutes* forms a marked contrast to Melancthon's *Loci*, the first dogmatic text-book of Protestantism. In the first edition of his *Loci* Melancthon omits altogether the doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ, confining himself to those matters which, in his opinion, could be verified in the personal Christian experience. The omission is supplied in later editions, and the change radically alters the character of the book.

‡ Cf. on this subject Professor Warfield's elaborate article on Calvin's apologetic in the *Princeton Review*, 1909.

different, and it is not often that a single man excels in both fields. Calvin combined critical insight and constructive power in unusual degree. As is well known, he was an admirable exegete, and to this day his commentaries retain a permanent value for the interpreter of Scripture. But he was theologian first, and exegete second, and he never allowed his interest in questions of detail to divert him from his main purpose,—the clear statement of the central truths of the Gospel, as he understood them.*

A second title to Calvin's greatness as a theologian is his clear perception of the intimate relation between doctrine and life. Among the saints of pragmatism Calvin might well hold an honorable place. "The duty of a theologian," he tells us,† "is not to tickle the ear but to confirm the conscience by teaching what is true, certain and useful." From first to last, theology is to him the systematic expression of those convictions which inspire and regulate conduct. This is true of all doctrines, without exception. "By the knowledge of God," he says, "I understand that by which we not only conceive that there is some God, but also apprehend what it is for our interest, and conducive to his glory, what, in short, it is befitting to know concerning him. For, properly speaking, we cannot say that God is known where there is no religion or piety. . . . Hence, it is obvious that in seeking God

* As an example of Calvin's method, cf. his treatment of the divine attributes in Bk. I, ch. 10, sec. 2 (Vol. I, p. 116, ed. Calv. Tr. Soc.), a model of conciseness and clearness: "Not to collect a great number of passages," he says, "it may suffice at present to refer to one Psalm, 145, in which a summary of the divine perfections is so carefully given that not one seems to have been omitted." The same is true of his treatment of creation, Bk. I, ch. 14, sec. 21 (p. 211). Such sentences as the following, Bk. I, ch. 7, sec. 1 (Vol. I, p. 90), are of frequent occurrence: "This subject well deserves to be treated more at large and pondered more accurately, but my readers will pardon me for having more regard to what my plan admits than to what the extent of this topic requires."

In this respect there is a marked contrast between Calvin and another great theologian, who was a frequent student and great admirer of the *Institutes*—I mean Ritschl. Had the latter been able to resist the temptation to digression, against which Calvin so rigorously sets his face, the study of Ritschl's theology would be a much simpler and more inviting matter than it is.

† Bk. I, ch. 14, sec. 4 (Vol. I, p. 194).

the most direct path and the fittest method is not to attempt with presumptuous curiosity to pry into his essence, which is rather to be adored than minutely discussed, but to contemplate him in his works, by which he draws near, becomes familiar, and in a manner communicates himself to us."* If he takes over from the older creeds the doctrine of the Trinity, it is because he is convinced that it is necessary to safeguard the deity of Christ, upon which man's salvation depends. He has little interest in the speculations of the philosophers as to the inner mysteries of the divine being. He does not care to discuss the relation between the substance and the persons that compose it, or the nature of the mysterious distinctions which separate each of these from the other,—questions which, in the past, have given rise to such endless controversy. He would gladly banish the very terms which have been used to describe them, if he knew how to express his faith without their use.† But the faith must be maintained at any cost, for it concerns the God with whom we have to do in personal experience, the God who on Calvary has borne in his own person the burden of our sins, and who through his present Spirit creates within us the new man who is being daily renewed in knowledge and righteousness.

This practical interest appears in connection with his controversy with Servetus. One feels as one re-reads the records of this famous case that the arguments used on either side do not correctly represent the real question at issue. To Calvin, Servetus is the representative of an irreverent criticism which, had it triumphed, would have involved the destruction of all that he held dear. In denying the accepted doctrine of the Trinity, this "impiety," as he designated the Spanish heresy, broke with the past at the very point where the French

* Bk. I, ch. 2, sec. 1 (Vol. I, p. 51); Bk. I, ch. 5, sec. 9 (Vol. I, pp. 74, 75).

† "I am not so minutely precise," he tells us, "as to fight furiously for mere words, for I observe that the writers of the ancient church, while they uniformly spoke with great reverence on these matters, neither agreed with each other, or were always consistent with themselves" (Bk. I, ch. 13, sec. 5, (Vol. I, p. 151); Cf. also pp. 149, 168, 187. A similar reserve appears in his treatment of the doctrine of angels and of the devil. (Cf. pp. 193, 205, 226.)

Reformer was most anxious to maintain his own continuity with it. Victory here was essential to the triumph of the practical interests to which he was committed, and, however much he may have regretted the price which had to be paid to secure it, he did not falter for an instant. On the whole, the best public opinion of his time sustained him, and the fact that to us to-day his conduct seems so indefensible is the best measure of the extent to which we have moved from the principles which were then everywhere regarded as axiomatic.

Nowhere does this practical interest appear more clearly than in that doctrine which has been made the subject of the most severe criticism—I mean that of reprobation. Calvin holds this doctrine because it seems to him essentially involved in the fact of the divine sovereignty, which is his deepest personal conviction. Engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with men seeking to destroy the truth, he asks himself how they have acquired such power, and he finds his answer in the divine will. God, for his own wise purpose, that he may magnify his justice as well as his mercy, has granted to wicked men a temporary ascendancy, only that he may destroy them in the end. In this conviction he finds assurance and peace. For only if God controls all things without exception can we be sure that no harm can come to the man who puts his trust in him. This practical interest dominates Calvin's entire treatment of the doctrine. He is insistent in his warning against idle speculation. It is enough to know "that the will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness, so that everything which he wills must be held to be righteous, by the mere fact of his willing it. Therefore, when it is asked why the Lord did so, we must answer, because he pleased, but, if you proceed further to ask why he pleased, you ask for something greater and more sublime than the will of God, and nothing such can be found. Let human temerity, then, be quiet and cease to inquire after what exists not, lest perhaps it fails to

find what does exist."* This is not the language of philosophy, but of religion.

Opponents of the Calvinistic system have often referred to the paralyzing effect which the doctrine of divine sovereignty must have upon the human will. This was not the effect which it had upon the will of Calvin. In the first book of the *Institutes* there is a discussion of the use to be made of the doctrine of providence, which sheds so significant a light upon the character of the author that I cannot forbear giving a brief quotation. After speaking of the Christian's recognition of the fact that there is no single event which is beyond the control of the divine will, he goes on to say that "at the same time the Christian will not overlook inferior causes. . . . Regarding all the aids which the creatures can lend him, as hands offered him by the Lord, he will avail himself of them as the legitimate instruments of Divine Providence. And as he is uncertain what the result of any business in which he engages is to be (save that he knows, that in all things the Lord will provide for his good), he will zealously aim at what he deems for the best, so far as his abilities enable him." (Bk. I, ch. 17, sec. 9, Vol. I, pp. 259 sq.) †

* Bk. III, ch. 23, sec. 2 (Vol. II, p. 562).

† The whole passage is instructive. "For, while he (that is, the Christian) regards those by whom he is benefited as ministers of the divine goodness, he will not, therefore, pass them by, as if their kindness deserved no gratitude, but feeling sincerely obliged to them, will willingly confess the obligation, and endeavor, according to his ability, to return it. In fine, in the blessings which he receives, he will revere and extol God as the principal author, but will also honour men as his ministers, and perceive, as is the truth, that by the will of God he is under obligation to those, by whose hand God has been pleased to show him kindness. If he sustains any loss through negligence, or imprudence, he will, indeed, believe that it was the Lord's will that it should so be, but, at the same time, he will impute it to himself. If one for whom it was his duty to care, but whom he has treated with neglect, is carried off by disease, although aware that the person had reached a limit beyond which it was impossible to pass, he will not, therefore, extenuate his fault, but, as he had neglected to do his duty faithfully towards him, will feel as if he had perished by his guilty negligence. Far less where, in the case of theft or murder, fraud and preconceived malice have existed, will he palliate it under the pretext of Divine Providence, but in the same crime will distinctly recognize the justice of God, and the iniquity of man, as each is separately manifested. But in future events, especially, will he take account of such inferior causes. If he is not left destitute of human aid, which he can employ for his safety, he will set it down as a divine blessing; but he will not, therefore, be remiss in taking measures, or slow in employing the help of those whom he sees

No one who is acquainted with the life of Calvin can doubt that these sentences give a truthful description of his own character. Certainly he was a man who, so far as his abilities enabled him, zealously aimed at what he deemed for the best.

This clear perception of the practical significance of doctrine has been characteristic of Calvinism through all its later history. Its theology was one which could be preached, and which was preached from beginning to end, and no preacher would have felt that he had done his full duty to his congregation if he had not pointed out the practical application of the truth in question to the lives of his hearers.

I had occasion recently to read a monograph on the doctrine of the covenants by Peter Bulkley, printed at London in 1645, while the Westminster Assembly was still in session. The author states in his preface that the book consists of a series of sermons which he had preached a few years before to his congregation at Concord, in New England, he having come in the course of his orderly survey of Christian theology to this particular *locus* in the dogmatic system. The case is typical. The theology of the Puritans—the English Calvinists—was largely developed in sermon form.

How sincerely the hearers took the preaching to heart, even in the case of doctrines which have largely lost their familiarity to-day, I may illustrate by a single example. Among Cromwell's letters, contained in Carlyle's classic edition, there is one directed to his son-in-law, General Fleetwood, then Lord Deputy of Ireland. It is dated, Whitehall, June 22nd, 1655, two years after the dismissal of the famous Rump Parliament. After treating of various matters of business, the writer, then ruler of one of the most powerful

possessed of the means of assisting him. . . . In adopting his measures, he will not be carried away by his own impressions, but will commit and resign himself to the wisdom of God, that under his guidance he may be led into the right path. However, his confidence in external aid will not be such that the presence of it will make him feel secure, the absence of it fill him with dismay, as if he were destitute. His mind will always be fixed on the Providence of God alone, and no consideration of present circumstances will be allowed to withdraw him from the steady contemplation of it."

nations in the world, and bearing upon his shoulders burdens of responsibility that would have crushed any but the strongest man, concludes as follows:

“Dear Charles, my dear love to thee; and to my dear Biddy—(his daughter)—who is a joy to my heart, for what I hear of the Lord in her. Bid her be cheerful, and rejoice in the Lord once and again: If she knows the Covenant, she cannot but do so. For that transaction is without *her*; sure and stedfast, between the Father and the Mediator in His blood: therefore, leaning upon the Son, or looking to Him, thirsting after Him, and embracing Him, we are His Seed;—and the Covenant is sure to all the Seed. The Compact is for the Seed: God is bound in faithfulness to Christ, and in Him to us: the Covenant is without us; a Transaction between God and Christ. Look up to *it*. God engageth in it to pardon us; to write His Law in our heart; to plant His fear so that we shall never depart from Him. We, under all our sins and infirmities, can daily offer a perfect Christ; and thus we have peace and safety, and apprehension of love, from a Father in Covenant,—who cannot deny Himself. And truly in this is all my salvation; and this helps me to bear my great burdens.”

This reference to Cromwell suggests the third and last point in Calvin's contribution to theology, of which I shall have time to speak. I mean his clear perception of its social outcome.

In Froude's famous essay on Calvinism, after passing in review the various unfavorable opinions which have been passed upon this system by its opponents, he asks the pertinent question: “How it came to pass that if Calvinism is indeed the hard and unreasonable creed which modern enlightenment declares it to be, it has possessed such singular attractions in past times for some of the greatest men that ever lived, and how is it that being, as we are told, fatal to morality because it denies free will, the first symptom of its operation wherever

it established itself was to obliterate the distinction between sins and crimes, and to make the moral law the rule of life for states as well as persons."*

In part, this question has already been answered by the quotations which I have given. Calvinism possessed attractions for great men, because it brought them, as they believed, into direct contact with the source of all power; but the answer is not complete until we add that it offered them an end worthy to engage the uttermost energies of men of power. The God whom Calvin worshipped was not Saviour only, but law giver; and the task which he set was not simply the reformation of individual character, but the transformation of society as well. It is not an accident that of the three volumes of the *Institutes* in their finished form a full third should be given to the doctrine of the church; nor can any account of Calvin's achievement be adequate which does not give the place of central importance to the work which he did in erecting in the city of Geneva a form of church government which, reproduced with slight variations in other countries, has formed the model of the most powerful independent churches of the modern world, and which, directly or indirectly, has profoundly affected the course of political as well as of religious history. It is not my part to follow this work in detail. That remains for the speaker who succeeds me. Here I am concerned only to trace this social outcome to its roots in Calvin's theology, and to remind you that it was the union in his system of the conception of an absolute authority with that of a definite social goal, which explains its far-reaching effects in history and accounts for its attraction for statesmen as well as for theologians, for men of action and of affairs, like Coligny and William the Silent, as well as for students and thinkers, like John Milton and Jonathan Edwards.

To us to-day indeed the methods which Calvin used seem arbitrary and unspiritual, the goal which he set an impossible

* Short Studies, II, p. 13.

uniformity, and the result he attained an intolerable tyranny. Other presuppositions dominate our thinking, other ideals give direction to our social effort. We no longer think of the Bible as an inerrant book, issuing complete and perfect from the hand of God, equally valid in all its parts, Old and New Testament alike, for the establishment of doctrine or the enforcement of law. We recognize that God works by slow degrees, that revelation has a history, that the teaching of Jesus has a higher authority than that of the Chronicler or the author of the imprecatory Psalms, or even than that of St. Paul himself.

We are more sensitive too to the evils with which human life abounds, less ready to regard them as ultimate and necessary, less willing to ascribe them to the deliberate will of the God whom we worship, far less content to find in our own good fortune an antidote and compensation for the misery of those who have suffered shipwreck on the sea of life. We have learned from Jesus a different conception of God than that which Calvin held. We think of him not as our Father alone, but as the Father of all mankind, interested in the welfare of each individual, seeking his salvation, not willing that any should perish. It is inevitable that, with such presupposition, we should find much in the Calvinistic system which repels us.

In order to judge its author correctly we must measure him by the standards of his own day, not of ours. We must remember the environment in which he lived, and the work which he attempted to perform. He was confronted, on the one hand, by the Roman church, with its corrupt and selfish hierarchy, claiming absolute authority over the consciences and the lives of men, and ready to go to any lengths to secure the recognition of that authority. On the other side were a number of secular states governed by rulers, many of them equally corrupt and no less selfish, often opposing the church for their own private ends, but ready whenever necessary to

enter into alliance with her if it furthered their interests. In a world divided between two such powers, Calvin undertook to build up a free church and to secure standing ground for its normal expansion and development. This task he actually accomplished, and if, to our more sensitive feeling, there seems to be more of the law than of the gospel in his methods, we must remember that in such an age no less drastic methods would have prevailed, and that to his valiant use of the weapons which God put in his hands we owe the larger liberty which we enjoy to-day.

It is from this point of view that we must answer the question which has recently been proposed, whether Calvin was a reformer or a reactionary, whether he belonged to the old age or to the new. Such a dilemma is necessarily misleading. Every great man belongs to more than one age, and in this fact his greatness consists. In the methods of his reasoning, in the temper of his mind, in many of his specific ideas, Calvin, as we have seen, was in sympathy with the great church in which he was born and under whose nurture he was trained. But, in the rigor with which he submitted her claims to authority to the test of God's Spirit, speaking to his own conscience through the Scripture, and in the courage with which he broke with the organized Christianity of his day when once he was convinced that those claims could not stand the test, he showed himself a Protestant of the Protestants, and we who, in our turn, submit to the test of our own consciences in the light of the new age the system which he has handed down to us, are only walking further along the pathway which he has marked out for his successors.