

JOHN CALVIN & SERVETUS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY EDITOR

(18th March 2000)

William Cunningham is always a good read. This essay, first published in 1825, is important for one specific reason—it gives, in outline, the best account of what the enemies of so-called “Calvinism” have always used to blacken the name of John Calvin. I mean, of course, the burning alive of Miguel Serveto for heresy. Many years ago I studied this complex matter, and I want to add some further details, which I believe throws an even clearer light on Cunningham’s excellent account.

In Roman Catholic France, Michael Servetus, under the assumed name of Michael de Villeneuve, was personal physician to the Archbishop of Vienne, who was a vehement preacher against John Calvin and the Protestants of Geneva. At Vienne, Servetus set about printing in secret an heretical book he had written. He wrote it in full knowledge that his main anti-Trinitarian argument was, at that time, a blasphemy under both Roman Catholic and Protestant laws, and he knew that if he was caught he was likely to be sentenced to death. This shows to what lengths Servetus was prepared to go to establish his own opinions in the world. Who could he get to print such a dangerous work? It just so happened that at Vienne there were two exiles from Geneva—a printer by the name of Arnollet, and his assistant. Both men had been imprisoned and expelled from Geneva—one for adultery, and the other for drunkenness and anti-social behaviour. Both had every reason to hate the Calvinists at Geneva. Both had also never accepted the Roman Catholic church, though they pretended to. Servetus would certainly have learned from these men the political situation at Geneva, and this fact must always be borne in mind.

When Servetus was eventually imprisoned in Vienne for publishing his blasphemous book, he was, while waiting for his sentence, kept in a house under the guard of one man, who every Thursday morning went away to tend his vines. He often left Servetus free to roam the high-walled back garden where there seemed no possibility of escape. But there had been a old ladder left in the garden. Whether the ladder had been left there deliberately, or carelessly, remains a debatable point. One Thursday Servetus used the ladder to get on to the roof of the house and made good his escape. As far as I know the guard was never punished for his prisoner’s escape. This strange incident has never been satisfactorily explained, especially as Servetus’ name had been on the Index of heretics wanted by the Inquisition for over twenty years. Another mystery was that he escaped with a considerable amount of money on him, as was later found out.

Servetus was next seen some 4 months later at Geneva listening to a sermon preached by Calvin at St. Peter’s Church, and was recognised by a member of the congregation and Calvin had him arrested at once. Calvin was right to be deeply suspicious of this turn of events, and his secretary, Michael de la Fontaine, on his behalf, made a formal charge against Servetus for heresy and

blasphemy. Let it be remembered that Calvin had many years before warned him never to step foot in Geneva. Servetus claimed to be passing through Geneva to go on to Naples in Italy, where he said he had intended to practice medicine. Again it has never been satisfactorily explained why Servetus, an escaped prisoner, would choose to go to Roman Catholic Italy. Also Servetus gave no satisfactory answers as to why he had been lingering in Geneva for a month before he was arrested. And why, knowing Geneva had a law that put blasphemers to death, did he go there and hang around for so long? There is no doubt he fully understood the difficulties Calvin and his party were experiencing against the Libertines, who had just been voted back as a majority on the Ruling Council. Also it is a fact that Geneva had rarely had to use that law.

Now the one consistent complaint against Calvin was that he gave private letters he had received from Servetus to his friend Guillaume de Trie, knowing they would endanger the life of Servetus. De Trie always maintained that he had to ask Calvin persistently for those letters because Calvin was reluctant to hand them over. De Trie's motive in wanting them was because his Roman Catholic cousin in Lyons, Antoine Arneys, had scornfully written to him saying that Geneva was a soft touch for every kind of extreme heretic, whereas in France they were put to the stake. De Trie wanted to retaliate and tell his cousin that there was a heretic of longstanding who was actually printing an heretical book right under their noses in Vienne. But he wanted proof to substantiate his claim. He knew that Calvin could give it him because Servetus had opened correspondence with Calvin, and Calvin had dozens of letters from him in his own handwriting. Calvin even received early drafts of the book Servetus was going to publish in secret. All De Trie needed was to send a copy of one of those letters. But even given the acrimonious ending of the correspondence between himself and Servetus, Calvin was reluctant to do this. However De Trie eventually persuaded him to change his mind. In my view De Trie, by his close friendship to Calvin and his determination to respond to the insolence of his cousin in the most effective way, at last got Calvin to give him a letter in Servetus' handwriting. For what better way could he respond than to prove to his cousin that the Archbishop of Vienne had for his own personal physician that arch-heretic, Michael Servetus, who had been declared a heretic by the Inquisition 20 years ago.

But why, if he had misgivings about it, did Calvin eventually give in to De Trie's request? Calvin knew full well the probable outcome for Servetus by his doing this. That would surely explain his great reluctance. In fact on receipt of the first letter from De Trie, the cousin had gone immediately to Cardinal de Tournon, who then contacted the Grand Inquisitor of France, Matthieu Ory, and the cousin was asked to get further proof from De Trie by telling him that one letter in Servetus' handwriting was insufficient proof and that they would like to see more. Calvin consented to giving de Trie more letters, and de Trie told his cousin, in the letter Cunningham records, that it had been difficult to get them as Calvin preferred to use the sword of the Word against heretics rather than the magistrate's sword. The truth of this statement is shown because Servetus would long ago have been given away and arrested during the 12 years he was at Vienne. For the truth is that the invectives used by

Servetus in his letters to Calvin were severe even by the standard of those days. In addition, the Archbishop of Vienne's railings against Calvin from the pulpit were so notorious at the time, that if Calvin had ever held any personal malice against Servetus, he could have given him away at any time, and also humiliated the Archbishop who never knew his physician was really Servetus. But he kept silent, though the Archbishop continually attacked him. Here is proof that Calvin had never intended to give Servetus away to the Vienne authorities until De Trie persuaded him to do so.

Without doubt the key player here is Guillaume de Trie. Like Calvin De Trie had given up all for the Reformation when he left France. The two were very close friends. It is a slander to say De Trie was merely a "creature" of Calvin. I shall include here what was virtually the very last words of Calvin days before his death to prove the point—this excerpt is taken from his last will and testament*:
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"Touching the little earthly goods which God has given me here to dispose of, I name and appoint for my sole heir, my well-beloved brother Antony Calvin, but only as honorary heir however, leaving to him the right of possessing nothing save the cup which I have had from Monsieur de Varennes [GUILLUME DE TRIE], and begging him to be satisfied with that, as I am well assured he will be, because he knows that I do this for no other reason but that the little which I leave may remain to his children."

Note the mention of a most honoured possession given him by Guillaume de Trie that he now passes on to his brother. De Trie had died two years before and left the guardianship of his children to Calvin. You can't be a closer friend than that. Yet he had the greatest difficulty procuring a single letter to incriminate Servetus by his handwriting. No one can ever accuse Calvin of having been disloyal to his friends. On the contrary, whether it was Farel commanding the young scholarly Calvin to stay and become a preacher at Geneva against his wishes; or whether it was de Trie who sought to counteract the accusation of Geneva harbouring heretics, the fact remains that Calvin, against his better judgement, reluctantly complied with his friend's wishes.

When Servetus escaped custody, and then turned up in Geneva 4 months later, at a time when the Libertines were then a majority on the Ruling Council and rigorously opposed to Calvin, it does not take much insight to realise the concern that Calvin and his supporters must have had at Servetus' sudden appearance at Geneva. As events proceeded it turned out that both the Roman Catholics in France and the Libertines in Geneva would try to use Servetus to undermine Calvin's authority there. Roman Catholic envoys from Vienne even came to Geneva to demand their prisoner back, as they said they had no faith that Geneva would be severe enough in punishing the heretic as he deserved. The Calvinists were angry at this interference in Geneva's affairs by Papists. The Libertines went so far as to let Servetus decide whether he preferred to stand trial in Geneva or at Vienne. Servetus unhesitatingly said Geneva, and he may have drawn solace from the fact that Calvin's enemies seemed to be in control of affairs. It is certain that the previous administra-

tion, which favoured Calvin, would never have asked Servetus where he wanted to stand trial.

It must be remembered that Servetus wrote his book “Restitution of Christianity” in direct opposition to Calvin’s “Institutes of the Christian Religion”. In addition, it is possible he turned up at Geneva with the avowed purpose of making known to the Protestant world, of whom Calvin was becoming the acknowledged theological leader, that Calvin had wickedly sent to the Inquisition his private letters that would be sure to lead to his arrest and death. Personal revenge at the injustice as to what he perceived to have motivated Calvin to do this, plus the knowledge that the Libertines had recently won a majority on the Ruling Council, led, in my view, to Servetus’ recklessness in going to Geneva. After his arrest and throughout his trial he was in contact with some of the Libertines through the Prison Governor who was of their party. He foolishly believed, through this contact, which was all the contact he had, that the worst he could expect was to be banished into exile like Costellio before him. That he could no longer see the political change now affecting the Libertines becomes evident, and was exacerbated by the fact that the Governor, for political reasons, had to put him in the foulest dungeon, where his hatred of Calvin grew worse, as his tirade against him in Court showed.

Servetus had lived most of his life deceiving others as to who he really was. When he was interrogated about his early life, the explanations he gave before the Court of Geneva often contradicted those he had given before the Court of Vienne. Not once, in his many narrow escapes from danger, did he stand before his accusers and say “here I stand, and I can do no more”. In Vienne he had wriggled out of his first interrogation by tears and lies, and, at the second interrogation, when he was shown the many letters he had written to Calvin in his own hand, it was with tears and a groaning voice that he acknowledged the error of his ways. Yet over many years before he had argued with some of the leading Reformers as if they knew nothing of the teaching of the Holy Bible. They were wrong and he was right. It even brought from the usually mild-mannered Bucer the comment that Servetus “ought to be hung”. There was about him a contrariness to the point that he had to out-reform the Reformers, accusing them in his writings of being semi-papists. By wilfully printing his anti-Trinitarian blasphemy that was outlawed under pain of death by the whole of Christendom at that moment in history, Servetus had tempted Providence too far.

During the trial, even under the sympathetic eyes of the Libertine-controlled Council, they could do nothing as the evidence mounted against him. He raved wildly against Calvin. He complained at the conditions of his imprisonment, which the Libertines improved for the remainder of his time there. His arrogance in demanding that Calvin be put on trial for heresy and that Calvin compensate him for his arrest told against him. A most telling and unexpected blow against him was when he had to admit he had been re-baptised by a group of Anabaptists at Chaumier, France, though he never intended to join their congregation. At that time the word Anabaptist was anathema. The horror of the revolutionary, communist Anabaptists at Munster was still fresh in everyone’s mind. An Anabaptist tailor tried to create a heaven on earth at

Munster, but finished up tyrannising the people as he and his friends lived in debauchery. The gates were eventually opened to the invading Roman Catholic army and the revolutionaries were mercilessly dealt with. That catastrophe for Munster was caused by one single Anabaptist demagogue. The political antagonisms between the Swiss Genevans and French Genevans were momentarily forgotten as they listened and watched this shouting Spaniard point an accusing finger at Calvin. For the Libertines it became no longer possible to exile Servetus to spite Calvin, as they had now to prove to the Genevans, who elected them into office, that they could be just as severe as Papists in putting heretics to death. At a time of a life and death struggle between Roman Catholic and Protestant states and cities, this whole issue became submerged in political considerations, where to ignore their own laws in not putting blasphemers to death was to bring into question their own religious convictions. For some reason Servetus could not see the danger he was in. In fact so innocent was Servetus of the final tragic outcome that when the sentence was read out to him in his prison, he collapsed completely, and woefully cried out, "Miserecordias! Miserecordias!". The Council had prolonged events by seeking the views of the other Swiss Cantons on the matter, but they all concurred in condemning Servetus in the strongest possible language. Now it was the Libertines who were determined to burn Servetus at the stake to prove that what Rome could do, they could do just as well. Calvin pleaded with them to be more merciful and use the sword instead. But that made them more determined than ever to have him burned alive at the stake.

An Essay
by
William Cunningham D.D.
(1862 edition)

ON JOHN CALVIN.

JOHN CALVIN¹ was by far the greatest of the Reformers with respect to the talents he possessed, the influence he exerted, and the services he rendered in the establishment and diffusion of important truth. The Reformers who preceded him may be said to have been all men, who, from the circumstances in which they were placed, and the occupations which these circumstances imposed upon them, or from the powers and capacities with which they had been gifted, were fitted chiefly for the immediate necessary business of the age in which their lot was cast, and were not perhaps qualified for rising above this sphere,—which, however, was a very important one. Their efforts, whether in the way of speculation or of action, were just such as their immediate circumstances and urgent present duties demanded of them, while they had little opportunity of considering and promoting the permanent interests of the whole scheme of scriptural truth, or the whole theory and constitution of Christian churches. After all that Luther, Melancthon, and Zwingle had done, there was still needed someone of elevated and comprehensive mind, who should be able to rise above the distraction and confusion of existing contentions, to survey the wide field of scriptural truth in all its departments, to combine and arrange

its various parts, and to present them, as a harmonious whole, to the contemplation of men. This was the special work for which God qualified Calvin, by bestowing upon him both the intellectual and the spiritual gifts necessary for the task, and this He enabled him to accomplish. God makes use of the intellectual powers, which He bestows upon men, for the accomplishment of His own purposes; or rather He bestows upon men those intellectual powers, which may fit them naturally, and according to the ordinary operation of means, for the purposes which He in His sovereignty has assigned to them to effect. He then leads them, by His grace, to devote their powers to His glory and service, He blesses their labours, and thus His gracious designs are accomplished.

Calvin had received from God mental powers of the highest order. Distinguished equally by comprehensiveness and penetration of intellect, by acuteness and soundness of judgment, his circumstances, in early life, were so regulated in providence, that he was furnished with the best opportunities of improving his faculties, and acquiring the learning and culture that might be necessary with a view to his future labours. Led by God's grace early and decidedly to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to devote himself to the service of Christ, he was also led, under the same guidance, to abandon the Church of Rome, and to devote himself to the preaching of the Gospel, the exposition of the revealed truth of God, and the organisation of churches in accordance with the sacred Scriptures and the practice of the apostles. In all these departments of useful labour his efforts were honoured with an extraordinary measure of success. Calvin did what the rest of the Reformers did, and, in addition, he did what none of them either did or could effect. He was a diligent and laborious pastor. He gave much time to the instruction of those who were preparing for the work of the ministry. He took an active part in opposing the Church of Rome, in promoting the Reformation, and in organising Protestant churches. Entering with zeal and ardour into all the controversies which the ecclesiastical movements of the time produced, he was ever ready to defend injured truth or to expose triumphant error. This was work which he had to do in common with the other Reformers, though he brought higher powers than any of them to bear upon the performance of it. But in addition to all this, he had for his special business, the great work of digesting and systematising the whole scheme of divine truth, of bringing out in order and harmony, all the different doctrines which are contained in the word of God, unfolding them in their mutual relations and various bearings, and thus presenting them, in the most favourable aspect, to the contemplation and the study of the highest order of minds.

The systematising of divine truth, and the full organisation of the Christian church according to the word of God, are the great peculiar achievements of Calvin. For this work God eminently qualified him, by bestowing upon him the highest gifts both of nature and of grace; and this work, he was enabled to accomplish in such a way as to confer the greatest and most lasting benefits upon the church of Christ, and to entitle him to the commendation and the gratitude of all succeeding ages.

The first edition of his great work, "The Institution of the Christian Religion," was published when he was twenty-seven years of age; and it is a most extraordinary proof of the maturity and rigour of his mind, of the care with which he had studied the word of God, and of the depth and

comprehensiveness of his meditations upon divine things, that though the work was afterwards greatly enlarged, and though some alterations were even made in the arrangement of the topics discussed, yet no change of any importance was made in the actual doctrines which it set forth. The first edition, produced at that early age, contained the substance of the whole system of doctrine which has since been commonly associated with his name,—the development and exposition of which has been regarded by many as constituting a strong claim upon the esteem and gratitude of the church of Christ, and by many others as rendering him worthy of execration and every opprobrium. He lived twenty-seven years more after the publication of the first edition of the *Institutes*, and a large portion of his time during the remainder of his life was devoted to the examination of the word of God and the investigation of divine truth. But he saw no reason to make any material change in the views which he had put forth; and a large proportion of the most pious, able, and learned men, and most careful students of the sacred Scriptures, who have since adorned the church of Christ, have received all his leading doctrines as accordant with the teaching of God's word.²

The "Institutio" of Calvin is the most important work in the history of theological science, that which is more than any other creditable to its author, and has exerted directly or indirectly the greatest and most beneficial influence upon the opinions of intelligent men on theological subjects. It may be said to occupy, in the science of theology, the place which it requires both the "Novum Organum" of Bacon, and the "Principia of Newton" to fill up, in physical science,—at once conveying, though not in formal didactic precepts and rules, the finest idea of the way and manner in which the truths of God's word ought to be classified and systematised, and at the same time actually classifying and systematizing them, in a way that has not yet received any very material or essential improvement. There had been previous attempts to present the truths of Scripture in a systematic form and arrangement, and to exhibit their relations and mutual dependence. But all former attempts had been characterized by great defects and imperfections; and especially all of them had been more or less defective in this most important respect, that a considerable portion of the materials of which they were composed, had been not truths but errors,—not the doctrines actually taught in the sacred Scriptures, but errors arising from ignorance of the contents of the inspired volume, or from serious mistakes, as to the meaning of its statements. One of the earlier attempts at a formal system of theology was made in the eighth century, by Johannes Damascenus, and this is a very defective and erroneous work. The others which had preceded Calvin's "Institutes," in this department, were chiefly the productions of the schoolmen. Lombard's four books of "Sentences," and Thomas Aquinas's "Summa," with the commentaries upon these works; and they all exhibited very defective and erroneous views of scriptural truth. Augustine was the last man who had possessed sufficient intellectual power, combined with views, in the main correct, of the leading doctrines of God's word, to have produced a system of theology that might have been generally received, and he was not led to undertake such a work, except in a very partial way. The first edition of Melancthon's *Common Places*,—the only one published before Calvin produced the first edition of his "Institutes,"—was not to be compared to Calvin's work, in the accuracy of its representations of the doctrines of Scripture, in the fulness and completeness of its materials, or in

the skill and ability with which they were digested and arranged; and in the subsequent editions, while the inaccuracy of its statements increased in some respects rather than diminished, it still continued, to a considerable extent, a defective and ill digested work, characterised by a good deal of prolixity and wearisome repetition. It was in these circumstances that Calvin produced his "Institutes," the materials of which it was composed being in almost every instance the true doctrines really taught in the word of God, and exhibiting the whole substance of what is taught there on matters of doctrine, worship, government, and discipline,—and the whole of these materials being arranged with admirable skill and expounded in their meaning, evidence, and bearings, with consummate ability. This was the great and peculiar service which Calvin rendered to the cause of truth and the interests of sound theology, and its value and importance it is scarcely possible to overrate.

In theology there is, of course, no room for originality properly so called, for its whole materials are contained in the actual statements of God's word; and he is the greatest and best theologian, who has most accurately apprehended the meaning of the statements of Scripture,—who, by comparing and combining them, has most fully and correctly brought out the whole mind of God on all the topics on which the Scriptures give us information,—who classifies and digests the truths of Scripture in the way best fitted to commend them to the apprehension and acceptance of men,—and who can most clearly and forcibly bring out their scriptural evidence, and most skilfully and effectively defend them against the assaults of adversaries. In this work, and indeed in almost any one of its departments, there is abundant scope for the exercise of the highest powers, and for the application of the most varied and extensive acquirements. Calvin was far above the weakness of aiming at the invention of novelties in theology, or of wishing to be regarded as the discoverer of new opinions. The main features of the representation which he put forth of the scheme of divine truth, might be found in the writings of Augustine and Luther,—in neither singly, but in the two conjointly. But by grasping with rigour and comprehensiveness the whole scheme of divine truth and all its various departments, and combining them into one harmonious and well-digested system, he has done what neither Augustine nor Luther did or could have done, and has given conclusive evidence that he was possessed of the highest intellectual powers, as well as enjoyed the most abundant communications of God's Spirit.

The two leading departments of theological science are the exegetical and the systematic. The two most important functions of the theologian are first, to bring out accurately the meaning of the individual statements of God's word, the particular truths which are taught there; and, second, to classify and arrange these truths in such a way as to bring out most fully and correctly the whole scheme of doctrine which is there unfolded, and to illustrate the bearing and application of the scheme as a whole, and of its different parts. And it is important to notice, that in both these departments, Calvin stands out pre-eminent, having manifested in both of them the highest excellence and attained the greatest success. He has left us an exposition of nearly the whole word of God, and it is not only immeasurably superior to any commentary that preceded it, but it has continued ever since, and continues to this day, to be regarded by all competent judges, as a work of the highest value, and as manifesting marvellous perspicacity and soundness of judgment. There is no de-

partment of theological study the cultivators of which, in modern times, are more disposed to regard with something like contempt the labours and attainments of their predecessors, and to consider themselves as occupying a much higher platform, than the exact and critical interpretation of Scripture; and we think it must be admitted that, in modern times, greater improvements have been made in this department of theological science than in any other. Yet, Calvin's Commentary continues to secure the respect and the admiration of the most competent judges, both in this country and on the continent, even of those who are disposed to estimate most highly the superiority of the present age over preceding generations in the department of scriptural exegesis. And it is perhaps the most striking illustration of the extraordinary gifts which God bestowed upon Calvin, and of the value of the services which he has rendered to Christian truth and to theological science, that he reached such distinguished excellence, and has exerted so extensive and permanent an influence, both as an accurate interpreter of Scripture, and as a systematic expounder of the great doctrines of God's word.³

Besides the Commentary upon Scripture and the "Institutes," the leading departments of Calvin's works are his "Tractatus" and his "Epistolæ," both of which are much less known amongst us than they should be. The "Tractatus" are chiefly controversial pieces, in defence of the leading doctrines of his system when assailed by adversaries, and in opposition to the errors of the Papists, the Anabaptists, the Libertines, the advocates of compromises with the Church of Rome, and the assailants of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. His "Epistolæ" consist partly of confidential correspondence with his friends, and partly of answers to applications made to him from all parts of the Protestant world, asking his opinion and advice upon all the most important topics that occurred, connected with the administration of ecclesiastical affairs in that most important crisis of the church's history. They manifest throughout the greatest practical wisdom and the truest scriptural moderation, as well as warm friendship and cordial affection; and the perusal of them is indispensable to our forming a right estimate of Calvin's character, and of the spirit and motives by which he was animated, while it is abundantly sufficient of itself to dispel many of the slanders by which he has been assailed.

In these different departments of his works, we have Calvin presented to us as an interpreter of Scripture, as a systematic expounder of the scheme of Christian doctrine, as a controversial defender of truth and impugner of error, and as a friend and practical adviser in the regulation of the affairs of the church; and his pre-eminent excellence in all these departments are, we are persuaded, such as justly to entitle him to a place in the estimation and gratitude of the church of Christ, which no other uninspired man is entitled to share. Calvin certainly was not free from the infirmities which are always found in some form or degree even in the best men; and in particular, he occasionally exhibited an angry impatience of contradiction and opposition, and sometimes assailed and treated the opponents of the truth and cause of God with a violence of invective which cannot be defended, and should certainly not be imitated. He was not free from error, and is not to be implicitly followed in his interpretation of Scripture, or in his exposition of doctrine. But whether we look to the powers and capacities with which God endowed him, the manner in which he employed them, and the results by which his labours have been followed,—or to the Christian wisdom, magnanimity, and devoted-

ness, which marked his character, and generally regulated his conduct, there is probably not one among the sons of men, beyond the range of those whom God miraculously inspired by His Spirit, who has stronger claims upon our veneration and gratitude.

We believe that this is in substance the view generally entertained of Calvin by all who have read his works, and who have seen ground to adopt, in the main, the system of doctrine which he inculcated as based upon divine authority. Many men who were not Calvinists have borne the highest testimony to Calvin's great talents and his noble character, to his literary excellencies and his commanding influence. But those who are persuaded that he brought out a full, and, in the main, accurate view of the truth of God, with respect to the way of salvation and the organisation of the Christian church, must ever regard him in a very different light from those who have formed an opposite judgment upon these subjects. If Calvin's system of doctrine, government, and worship, is in the main scriptural, he must have enjoyed very special and abundant communications of God's Spirit in the formation of his convictions, and he must have rendered most important services to mankind by the diffusion of invaluable truth. Men who are not Calvinists may admire his wonderful talents, and do justice to the elevation of his general character, and the purity and disinterestedness of his motives. But unless they are persuaded that his views upon most points were, in the main, accordant with Scripture, they cannot regard him with the profound veneration which Calvinists feel, when they contemplate him as God's chosen instrument for diffusing His truth; nor can they cherish anything like the same estimate of the magnitude of the services he has rendered to mankind, and of the gratitude to which; in consequence, he is entitled.

The Calvin translation Society, which has done a great and useful work, by making almost all his writings accessible to English readers, translated and circulated Professor Tholuck's Dissertation formerly referred to; and subjoined to it a number of testimonies in commendation of Calvin's works, from eminent men of all classes and opinions, of all ages and countries, including not only Calvinists and theologians, but also infidels and Arminians, statesmen and philosophers, scholars and men of letters. These testimonies have been added to from time to time, and being now collected together, they fill above 100 pages in the last volume of his works, which contains the translation of his commentary upon Joshua. Many more testimonies to the value and excellence of Calvin's writings might have been produced.⁴ But this collection, as it stands, could not probably be matched in the kind and amount of commendation it exhibits, in the case of any other man whose writings and labours were confined to the department of religion.

Indeed, it is probably true that no man whose time and talents were devoted exclusively to subjects connected with Christianity and the church, has ever received so large a share both of praise and of censure. He has been commended, in the strongest terms, by many of the highest names both in Christian and in general literature; and the strength of their commendation has been generally very much in proportion to their capacities and opportunities of judging. But if he has received the highest commendation, he has also been visited with a vast amount of censure,—the one being really, in the circumstances, just about as significant a testimony to his excellence and his influence as the other. The papists had the sagacity to see that Calvin—by his great

talents and the commanding influence which he exerted—was really their most formidable adversary at the era of the Reformation. And in accordance with their ordinary principles and policy, they endeavoured to ruin his character by the vilest slanders. Most of these calumnies being utterly destitute of all evidence, and therefore disgraceful only to those who invented or repeated them, have long since been abandoned by every papist who retained even the slightest regard for character or decency, though they are still occasionally brought forward or insinuated. Some of the Lutheran writers of his own time, and of the succeeding generation, mortified apparently that Calvin's influence and reputation were eclipsing those of their master, railed against him with bitter malignity, and were even mean enough sometimes to countenance the popish slanders against his character. Specimens of this discreditable conduct, on the part of the Lutherans, may be seen in the answers made by Calvin himself, and by Beza, to the attacks of Westphalus and Heshusius.

During Calvin's life, and for more than half a century after his death, most of the divines of the Church of England adopted his theological views, and spoke of him with the greatest respect. But after, through the influence of Archbishop Laud and the prevalence of Arminian and Pelagian views, sound doctrine and true religion were, in a great measure, banished from that church, Calvin, as might be expected, came to be regarded in a very different light. During most of last century, the generality of the Episcopalian divines who had occasion to speak of him and his doctrines, indulged in bitter vituperation against him, and not unfrequently talked as if they regarded him as a monster who ought to be held up to execration. Indeed, we do not know that theological literature furnishes a more melancholy exhibition of ignorance, prejudice, and bitter hatred of God's truth, than the general mode of speaking about Calvin and his doctrines, that prevailed among the Episcopalian clergy of last century. Some of them write as if they were ignorant enough to believe that Calvinism and Presbyterianism were invented by Calvin, and were never heard of in the church till the sixteenth century; and when they speak of him in connection with his views about the divine sovereignty and decrees, we might be tempted to think, from the spirit they often manifest, that they looked upon him almost as if he himself were the author or cause of the fate of those who finally perish. It is but fair to say that this state of things has been greatly improved since the latter part of last century. This is owing, partly to the high commendation which Bishop Horsley gave to Calvin's writings, and to the public advice which he tendered to the Episcopalian clergy, as one of which they stood greatly in need,—viz., to see that they understood what Calvinism was before they attacked it;—but chiefly to that far greater prevalence of evangelical doctrine and true religion, which, though grievously damaged by Tractarianism, still forms so pleasing a feature in the condition of the English Church.

Calvin has also had the honour to receive, at all times, a very large share of the enmity of "the world of the ungodly,"—of men who hate God's truth, and all who have been eminently honoured by Him to be instrumental in promoting it. Such persons seem to have a sort of instinctive deep-seated dislike to Calvin, which leads them to dwell upon and exaggerate everything in his character and conduct that may seem fitted to depreciate him. It is not uncommon, even in our own age and country, to hear infidel and semi-infidel declaimers, who know nothing of Calvin's writings or labours, when they wish to say a

particularly smart and clever thing against bigotry and intolerance,—meaning thereby honest zeal for God’s truth,—bring in something about Calvin burning Servetus.

The leading charges commonly adduced against Calvin’s character, as distinguished from his doctrines, are pride, arrogance, spiritual tyranny, intolerance, and persecution. Some of these are charges which, as universal experience shows, derive their plausibility, in a great measure, from the view that may be taken of the general character and leading motives of the man against whom they may be directed, and of the goodness and rectitude of the objects which he mainly and habitually aimed at. Those who have an unfavourable opinion of a man’s general motives and objects, will see evidence of pride, obstinacy and intolerance, in matters in which those who believe that he was generally influenced by a regard to God’s glory and the advancement of Christ’s cause, will see only integrity and firmness, uncompromising vigour and decision, mixed, it may be, with the ordinary remains of human infirmity. The piety and integrity of Calvin, his paramount regard to the honour of God and the promotion of truth and righteousness, to the advancement of Christ’s cause and the spiritual welfare of men, are beyond all reasonable doubt. And those who, convinced of this, examine his history with attention and impartiality, will have no difficulty in seeing that, for most of these charges, there is no real foundation; and that, in so far as evidence can be adduced in support of any of them, it really proves nothing more than that Calvin manifested, like all other men, the remains of human infirmity, especially, of course, in those respects to which his natural temperament and the influence of his position and circumstances, more peculiarly disposed him. The state of his health, the bent of his natural dispositions, and the whole influence of his position, occupations, and habits, were unfavourable to the cultivation of those features of character, and those modes of speaking and acting, which are usually regarded as most pleasing to others, and best fitted to call forth love and affection in the ordinary intercourse of life. The flow of animal spirits, the ready interest in all ordinary commonplace things, and the play of the social feelings, which give such a charm to Luther’s conversation and letters, were alien to Calvin’s constitutional tendencies, and to his ordinary modes of thinking and feeling. He had a great and exalted mission assigned to him; he was fully alive to this, thoroughly determined to devote himself unreservedly, and to subordinate everything else to the fulfilment of his mission, and not unconscious of its dignity, or of the powers which had been conferred upon him for working it out. With such a man, so placed, so endowed, and so occupied, the temptation, of course, would be to identify himself and all his views and proceedings with the cause of God and His truth,—to prosecute these high and holy objects sternly and uncompromisingly, without much regard to the opinions and inclinations of those around him,—and to deal with opposition, as if it necessarily implied something sinful in those from whom it proceeded, as if opposition to him involved opposition to his Master. Calvin would have been something more than man, if, endowed and situated as he was, he had never yielded to this temptation, and been led to deal with opponents and opposition in a way which only the commission of the inspired prophets would have warranted.

Calvin did occasionally give plain indications of undue self-confidence and self-complacency, and of a mixture of personal and carnal feelings and motives, with his zeal for the promotion of truth and righteousness. But there is

nothing suggested by a fair view of his whole history that is fitted to throw any doubt upon the general excellence of his character, as tried by the highest standard that has ordinarily been exhibited among men; or on the general purity, elevation, and disinterestedness of the motives by which he was mainly and habitually influenced. There is sufficient evidence that he still had, like the apostle, “a law in his members warring against the law of his mind,” and sometimes “bringing him into captivity to the law of sin.” And, from what we know, from Scripture and experience, of the deceitfulness of the heart and the deceitfulness of sin, we cannot doubt that there was a larger admixture of what was sinful in his motives and conduct than he himself was distinctly aware of. But this, too, is characteristic of all men,—even the best of them,—and there is really no ground whatever for regarding Calvin as manifesting a larger measure of human infirmity than attaches, in some form or other, to the best and holiest of our race; while there is abundant evidence that, during a life of great labour and great suffering, he fully established his supreme devotedness to God’s glory and service, his thorough resignation to His will, his perfect willingness to labour in season and out of season, to spend and to be spent, for the sake of Christ and His gospel. It was assuredly no such proud, arrogant, domineering, heartless despot as Calvin is often represented to have been, who composed the dedications which we find prefixed to his commentaries upon the different portions of the Bible, and many of his letters to his friends,—expressing often the warmest affection, the deepest gratitude for instruction and services received; and exhibiting a most cordial appreciation of the excellences of others, a humble estimate of himself, and a perfect willingness to be or to do anything for the sake of Christ and of His cause. It was certainly no such man as he is often described, who lived so long on such terms with his colleagues in the ministry, and held such a place, not only in their veneration and confidence, but in their esteem and affection, as are indicated by the whole state of things unfolded to us in Beza’s life of him.

With reference to the principal charge which, in his own as well as subsequent times, was brought against his motives and temper, Calvin has put on record the following protestation, in a letter written towards the end of his life, in the year 1558:—

“I can with reason boast, however much ungodly men call me inexorable, that I have never become the enemy of one human being on the ground of personal injuries. I confess that I am irritable; and, though this vice displeases me, I have not succeeded in curing myself as much as I could wish. But, though many persons have unjustly attacked me, an innocent, and, what is more, well-deserving man,—have perfidiously plotted all kinds of mischief against me, and most cruelly harassed me, I can defy any one to point out a single person to whom I have studied to return the like, even though the means and the opportunity were in my power.”⁵

On a ground formerly adverted to, we have no doubt that there was sometimes, in Calvin’s feelings and motives, a larger admixture of the personal and the imperfect than he was himself aware of, or than he here admits. We always shrink from men making professions about the purity of their motives, as we cannot but fear, that this indicates the want of an adequate sense of the deceitfulness of sin and of their own hearts, a disposition to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. It would not, we think, have been at all unwarrantable or unbecoming, if Calvin, in the passage we have quoted, had made a fuller admission of sinful motives, which he would no doubt have ac-

knowledged that the Searcher of hearts must have seen in him. And yet, we have no doubt, that his statement, strong as it is, is substantially true, so far as concerns anything that came fairly under the cognisance of his fellow-men,—anything on which other men were entitled to form a judgment. Whatever the Searcher of hearts might see in him, we believe that there was nothing in his ordinary conduct, in his usual course of outward procedure, that could entitle any man to have denied the truth of the statement which he here made about himself, or that would afford any materials for disproving it. And if this, or anything like it, be true, then the practical result is, that the common notions about Calvin's irritability, the extent to which he was ordinarily influenced by personal, selfish, and sinful motives, are grossly exaggerated; and that, though this might be said to be his besetting sin,—that to which his constitutional tendencies and the whole influence of his position chiefly disposed him,—there was really nothing in it that entitled any of his fellow-men to reproach him, or that could be justly regarded as anything more than a display of that common human infirmity, which even the best men manifest in some form or degree.

Calvin's superiority to the influence of personal, angry, and vindictive feelings, is very fully brought out in the course he pursued, with respect to the men who filled the office of the ministry at Geneva after Farel and he had been driven into exile, in 1538,—a topic which has not been brought out in any of the histories of Calvin so prominently as it should have been. Calvin and Farel had been banished from Geneva, solely because of their integrity and boldness in maintaining the purity of the church in the exercise of discipline, by refusing to admit unworthy persons to the Lord's Supper. Their colleagues in the ministry who were not banished, and the persons appointed to succeed them, were of course men who submitted to the dictation of the civil authorities in the exercise of discipline, and admitted to the Lord's table indiscriminately without regard to character. These men were, no doubt, strongly tempted, in self-defence, to depreciate as much as possible the character and conduct of Calvin and Farel, and to this temptation they yielded without reserve. Three or four months after his banishment, Calvin wrote from Basle to Farel, who had been called to Neufchatel, in the following terms—⁶

“How our successors are likely to get on I can conjecture from the first beginnings. While already they entirely break off every appearance of peace by their want of temper, they suppose that the best course for themselves was to tear in pieces our estimation, publicly and privately, so as to render us as odious as possible. But if we know that they cannot calumniate us, excepting in so far as God permits, we know also the end God has in view in granting such permission. Let us humble ourselves, therefore, unless we wish to strive with God when He would humble us.”

A division soon arose at Geneva upon the question, whether or not the ministry of these men ought to be recognised and waited on. Many—and these, as might be expected, were the best men in the city in point of character and the most attached to Calvin—were of opinion that these men ought not to be treated as ministers, and that religious ordinances ought not to be received at their hands. Saunier, and Cordier (author of the “Colloquies”), men of the highest character and standing, regents in the college, refused to receive the Lord's Supper at the hands of these men, and were in consequence driven from their posts, and obliged to quit the city. Calvin,—who had now taken up his abode at Strasburg,—was consulted upon this important question of casu-

istry, and gave his decision on the side of peace and conciliation, advising them without any hesitation to recognise and wait upon the ministry of these men. And this may surely be regarded as a triumph of reason and conscience over personal and carnal feeling. In the whole circumstances of this case, as now adverted to, it is very plain that all the lower and more unworthy class of feelings, everything partaking of the character of selfishness in any of its forms or aspects, everything like wounded vanity or self-importance, everything like a tendency to indulge in anger or vindictiveness, must have tended towards leading Calvin to decide this question, in accordance with the views of those in Geneva whom he most respected and esteemed. If Calvin had been such a man as he is often represented, so arrogant and so imperious, so much disposed to estimate things by their bearing upon his own personal importance and self-complacency, and to resent opposition and depreciation, all that we know of human nature, would lead us to expect that he would have encouraged his friends to refuse all countenance to the existing clergy and to the ecclesiastical system which they administered. The fact that he gave an opposite advice, may be fairly regarded as a proof, that the personal and the selfish (in the wide sense of undue regard to anything about self) had no such prominence or influence among his actuating motives as many seem to suppose,—that the lower and more unworthy motives were habitually subordinated to the purer and more elevated,—and that their operation, so far as they did operate, should not be regarded as distinctively characteristic of the individual, but merely as a symptom of the common human infirmity, which in some form or degree is exhibited by all men, even those who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds.

As Calvin's conduct in this matter illustrates not only his elevation above the influence of personal and selfish feeling, but also his strong sense of the importance of respecting constituted authorities, and preserving the peace of the church, it may be worth while to bring out somewhat more fully what he thought and felt regarding it. The great general principle on which he founded his judgment upon this question was to this effect, that the men in office preached the substance of scriptural truth, and administered the sacraments in accordance with scriptural arrangements, notwithstanding the promiscuousness of the admission to partake in them,—and that this being secured, everything else was, in the circumstances, of comparatively inferior importance, and should be subordinated, as a motive in determining conduct, to the respect due to the ministerial office and the persons who, in providence, held it, and to a regard to the peace of the community. He distinctly admits that the people were entitled to judge for themselves, on their own responsibility, whether or not the ministers preached the gospel, and unless satisfied upon this point, were fully warranted to abandon their ministry—recognising thus, the paramount importance which Scripture assigns to the truth and the preaching of it, as the great determining element on this whole subject. It has been well said in regard to this matter, that preaching the truth is God's ordinance, but preaching error is not God's ordinance, and is therefore not entitled to any recognition or respect. The ground taken by Calvin recognises this principle, and, therefore, though it is abundantly wide and lax,—more so, perhaps, than can be thoroughly defended,—it gives no countenance whatever to the views of those who advocate the warrantableness of waiting upon the ministry of men who do not preach the gospel, but who are supposed to have other rec-

ommendations, on the ground of their connection with some particular system or constitution, civil or ecclesiastical. Calvin's first explicit reference to this subject occurs in a letter to Farel, written from Strasburg, in October 1538. The question as there put was this, "Whether it is lawful to receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper from the hands of the new ministers, and to partake of it along with such a promiscuous assemblage of unworthy communicants?" Calvin's deliverance upon it was this:—

"In this matter I quite agree with Capito. This, in brief, was the sum of our discussion: that among Christians there ought to be so great a dislike of schism, as that they may always avoid it so far as lies in their power. That there ought to prevail among them such a reverence for the ministry of the word and of the sacraments, that wherever they perceive these things to be, there they may consider the church to exist. Whenever therefore it happens, by the Lord's permission, that the church is administered by pastors, whatever kind of persons they may be, if we see there the marks of the church, it will be better not to break the unity. Nor need it be any hindrance that some points of doctrine are not quite so pure, seeing that there is scarcely any church which does not retain some remnants of former ignorance. It is sufficient for us if the doctrine on which the church of God is founded be recognised, and maintain its place. Nor should it prove any obstacle, that he ought not to be reckoned a lawful pastor who shall not only have fraudulently insinuated himself into the office of a true minister, but shall have wickedly usurped it. For there is no reason why every private person should mix himself up with these scruples. The sacraments are the means of communion with the church; they must needs therefore be administered by the hands of pastors. In regard to those, therefore, who already occupy that position, legitimately or not, and although the right of judging as to that is not denied, it will be well to suspend judgment, in the meantime, until the matter shall have been legally adjudicated. Therefore, if men wait upon their ministry, they will run no risk that they should appear either to acknowledge or approve, or in any way to ratify their commission. But by this means they will give a proof of their patience in tolerating those who they know will be condemned by a solemn judgment. The refusal at first of these excellent brethren did not surprise nor even displease me."⁷

Calvin discussed the same subject more fully in a letter addressed in June 1539, "To the Church at Geneva;" and as it is most honourably characteristic of its author, while this topic has not received the prominence in his history to which it is entitled, we shall quote the greater part of it.

"Nothing, most beloved brethren, has caused me greater sorrow, since those disturbances which had so sadly scattered and almost entirely overthrown your church, than when I understood your strivings and contentions with those ministers who succeeded us. For although the disorders which were inseparably connected with their first arrival among you, might with good reason prove offensive to you; whatever may have given the occasion, I cannot hear without great and intense horror that any schism should settle down within the church. Wherefore, this was far more bitter to me than words can express;—I allude to what I have heard about those your contentions, so long as you were tossed about in uncertainty; since owing to that circumstance not only was your church rent by division quite openly, but also the ecclesiastical ministry exposed to obloquy and contempt. Now, therefore, when, contrary to my expectation, I have heard that the reconciliation between your pastors and the neighbouring churches, having been confirmed also by Farel and by myself, was not found to be sufficient for binding you together in sincere and friendly affection, and by the tie of a lawful connection with your pastors, to whom the care of your souls is committed, I felt myself compelled to write to you, that I might endeavour, so far as lay in me, to find a medicine for this disease, which, without great sin against God, it was not possible for me to conceal. And although my former letters had not been very lovingly received by you, I was nevertheless unwilling to be wanting in my duty, so that, should I have no further success, I would at least deliver my own soul. Neither do I so much question your spirit of obedience (of which, indeed, I have proof) towards God and His ministers, as that I can at all fear that this my exhortation will have no weight with you, neither has my sincerity towards you lain concealed. That my advice has not

been taken by you, I consider is rather to be imputed to the circumstances of the time, when such was the state of disorder, that it was very difficult indeed to determine what was best. Now at length, however, when your affairs, by the favour of God, are in a more settled and composed state, I trust that you will readily perceive that my only object is to lead you into the right way; that being so persuaded with regard to me, you may show in reality by what motive you are brought into subjection to the truth. Especially, I ask you to weigh maturely, having put aside all respect of persons, of what honour the Lord accounts them worthy, and what grace He has committed to those whom He has appointed in His own church as pastors and ministers of the word. For He not only commands us to render a willing obedience, with fear and trembling, to the word while it is proclaimed to us; but also commands that the ministers of the word are to be treated with honour and reverence, as being clothed with the authority of His ambassadors, whom He would have to be acknowledged as His own angels and messengers. Certainly so long as we were among you, we did not try much to impress upon you the dignity of our ministry, that we might avoid all ground of suspicion; now, however, that we are placed beyond the reach of danger, I speak more freely my mind. Had I to do with the ministers themselves, I would teach what I considered to be the extent and measure of their office, and to what you also are bound as sitting under their ministry. Since, of a truth, every one must render an account of his own life, each individual for himself, as well ministers as private persons, it is rather to be desired, that every one for himself may consider, what is due to others, than that he may require what may further be due to him from someone else. Where such considerations have their due weight, then also this established rule will operate effectually, namely, that those who hold the office of ministers of the word, since the guidance and rule over your souls is intrusted to their care, are to be owned and acknowledged in the relation of parents, to be held in esteem, and honoured on account of that office which, by the calling of the Lord, they discharge among you. Nor does the extent of their function reach so far as to deprive you of the right conferred on you by God (as upon all His own people), that every pastor may be subject to examination, that those who are thus approved may be distinguished from the wicked, and all such may be held back who, under the guise of shepherds, betray a wolfish rapacity. This, however, is my earnest wish concerning those who in some measure fulfil the duty of pastors, so as to be tolerable, that you also may conduct yourselves towards them in a Christian spirit, and with this view that you may make greater account of that which may be due by you to others, than what others owe to yourselves.

“This also I will set forth plainly and in a few words. Two things here are to be considered. The one, that the calling of your ministers does not happen without the will of God. For although that change which took place upon our departure may have been brought to pass by the subtlety of the devil, so that whatever followed on that change may justly be suspected by you: in it, nevertheless, the remarkable grace of the Lord is to be acknowledged by you, who has not allowed you to be left altogether destitute; nor let you fall back again under the yoke of Antichrist, from which He hath once rescued you already. But He rather wished that both the doctrine of the gospel should still exist, and that some appearance of a church should flourish among you, so that with a quiet conscience you might continue there. We have always admonished you that you should acknowledge that overturning of your church as the visitation of the Lord sent upon you, and necessary also for us. Neither ought you so much to direct your thoughts against the wicked and the instruments of Satan, as upon personal and individual sins, which have deserved no lighter punishment, but indeed a far more severe chastisement. I would now therefore once more repeat the same advice. For besides that such is the particular and suitable remedy for obtaining mercy and deliverance of the Lord from that just judgment which lies upon you, there is also another very weighty reason that ought to bring you to repentance; lest peradventure we may seem to bury in oblivion that very great benefit of the Lord towards you, in not having allowed the gospel edifice to fall utterly to ruin in the midst of you, seeing that it has held so together, that as an instance of His direct interference it must be reckoned as a miracle of His power, by which alone you were preserved from that greatest of all calamity. However that may be, it is certainly the work of God’s providence, that you still have ministers who exercise the office of shepherds of souls and of government in your church. We must also take into account, that those servants of God who exercise the ministry of the word in the neighbouring churches, have, in order to check such dangerous contests, themselves approved of the calling of those men; whose opinions we also have subscribed, since no better method occurred to us by which we could consult your welfare and advantage. That you are well assured of our conscientious integrity we have no doubt, so that you ought at once to conclude, that we did nothing which was not sincere and

upright. But putting out of view even all idea of kindly affection, the very discussion of that delicate point was a proof quite as sincere as could be given on my part, that you would have no obscure instruction from me. Therefore, you must seriously look to it, that you are not too ready to disapprove of what the servants of God judge to be essential to your advantage and the preservation of the church. The other point to be well considered by you is this, that there may be due inspection of their regular discharge of duty, that they may fulfil the ministry of the church. And here, I confess, discretion evidently (nor would I wish to be the author of bringing any tyranny into the church) is required, that pious men should esteem as pastors those who do not stand only on their calling. For it is an indignity not to be borne, if that reverence and regard is to be given to certain personages, which the Lord Himself desires may be assigned only to the ministers of the word. Consequently, I readily grant you concerning that minister who shall *not* have taught the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, whatever title or prerogative he may put forth as a pretence, that he is unworthy to be considered as a pastor, to whom due obedience can be shown in the ministry. Because, however, it is clear to me, in reference to our brethren who at present hold the office of the ministry among you, that the gospel is taught you by them, I do not see what can excuse you, as before the Lord, while you either neglect or reject them. If someone may reply, that this or that in their doctrine or morals is objectionable, I require you, in the first place, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that so far as may be, you will first of all weigh the matter in your mind, and without any hastiness of judgment. For since we all of us owe this on the score of charity to one another, that we may not rashly pass sentence against others, but rather, so far as lies in us, that we hold fast by clemency and justice, much more is that moderation to be practised towards those whom the Lord is pleased to peculiarly distinguish above others. And even although there may be somewhat wanting which might justly be required of them (as to which I am not able to speak definitively, since I have no certain knowledge), you must just consider, that you will find no person so thoroughly perfect as that there shall not be many things which are still to be desired. Wherefore, that rule of charity is not duly honoured by us, unless we uphold our neighbours, even with their very infirmities, provided we recognise in them the true fear of God and the sincere desire of following the very truth itself. Lastly, I cannot possibly doubt, in so far as concerns their doctrine, but that they faithfully deliver to you the chief heads of Christian religion, such as are necessary to salvation, and join therewith the administration of the sacraments of the Lord. Wherever this is established, there also the very substance of the ministry ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ thrives and flourishes; and all due reverence and respect is to be observed toward him who is the minister.

“Now, therefore, most beloved brethren, I entreat and admonish you, in the name and strength of our Lord Jesus Christ, that turning away from man your heart and mind, you betake yourselves to that one and holy Redeemer, and that you reflect, how much we are bound to submit entirely to His sacred commands. And if everything He has appointed among you ought deservedly to be held inviolate, no consideration whatever ought so to deflect you from the path of duty, that you may not preserve whole and entire that ministration which He so seriously commends to you. If already you dispute and quarrel with your pastors to the extent of brawls and railing, as I hear has occurred, it is quite evident, from such a course of proceeding, that the ministry of those very persons in which the brightness of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to shine forth, must be subject to contempt and reproach, and all but trampled under foot. It is therefore incumbent on you carefully to beware, lest while we seem to ourselves only to insult men, we in fact declare war on God Himself. Nor, besides, ought it to seem a light matter to you, that sects and divisions are formed and cherished within the church, which no one who has a Christian heart beating in his breast can, without horror, even drink in by the hearing of the ears. But that the state of matters is indeed such where a separation of this kind exists, and as it were a secession between pastor and people, the thing speaks for itself. In conclusion, therefore, accept this admonition, if you wish me to be held by you as a brother, that there may be among you a solid agreement, which may correspond with such a name; that you may not reject that ministry which, for your advantage and the prosperity of the church, I have been forced to approve of without any fear or favour in respect of men. Here, therefore, with the most fervent salutation written by my own hand, do I supplicate the Lord Jesus, that He protect you in His holy fortress of defence; that He may heap on you His gifts more and more; that He may restore your church to due order, and, specially, that He may fill you with His own spirit of gentleness, so that in true conjunction of soul we may every one bestow ourselves in the promoting of His kingdom.”⁸

We are not prepared to adopt every statement made by Calvin in this letter to the church of Geneva, or in the one to Farel, formerly quoted; but we think it very plain, that the decision which he gave upon the important practical question submitted to him, and the main grounds on which he rested it, conclusively disprove some of the more unfavourable prevalent impressions in regard to his character and motives,—especially the supposed undue predominance of pride and arrogance, and, more generally, of the irascible and vindictive tendencies of human nature. Indeed, we cannot conceive how any one can read Calvin's letters with attention and impartiality without being satisfied of the injustice of these impressions. Knowing how prevalent, and yet how unreasonable, was the impression of Calvin's coldness and heartlessness, and of his intemperate violence and imperious arrogance, we once took the trouble of running over the first two volumes of the English translation of his Letters by Dr Bonnet, published at Edinburgh a few years ago, to collect proofs of the falsehood of these impressions, and we noted on the fly-leaf the pages which furnished materials fitted to serve this purpose. We arranged the references under the two heads of—1st, Strong and hearty affection; and 2d, Moderation and forbearance—i.e., moderation in his own judgment upon interesting and important topics, and forbearance with those who differed from him. Our references under both heads,—our evidences of the possession of both these features of character,—soon swelled to a large extent, and at length presented a body of proof which seems to us perfectly overwhelming. It may interest and gratify some of our readers, if we give as a footnote the pages we noted in carrying out this design.⁹ They will find in them abundant evidence of Calvin's strong and hearty affection, and also of his moderation and forbearance.

Every one knows that the favourite topic of declamation and invective with the enemies of Calvin, is the share which he had in the death of Servetus. All who, from whatever cause, hate Calvin, and are anxious to damage his reputation, are accustomed to dwell upon this transaction, as if it were one of the most disgraceful and atrocious which history records; until, from disgust at the shameless falsehood, injustice, and absurdity of the common misrepresentations regarding it, we are in some danger of being tempted to view it, and other transactions of a similar kind, with less disapprobation than they deserve.

Gibbon said, that he was “more deeply scandalized at the single execution of Servetus, than at the hecatombs which have blazed at the Auto-da-fés of Spain and Portugal.” And Hallam has imitated the unprincipled infidel by saying, “The death of Servetus has perhaps as many circumstances of aggravation as any execution for heresy that ever occurred.”¹⁰ The latest writer we have seen upon this subject, Mr Wallace,—we presume a Unitarian minister,—in a work of very considerable research, entitled “Anti-Trinitarian Biography,” in three vols., published in 1850, writes about it in the following offensive style :—“ A bloodier page does not stain the annals of martyrdom than that in which in this horrible transaction is recorded;—” he describes it as stamping the character of Calvin as that “of a persecutor of the first class, without one humane or redeeming quality to divest it of its criminality or to palliate its enormity,” as “one of the foulest murders recorded in the history of persecution;—” and he speaks “of the odium which his malignant and cruel treatment of Servetus has so deservedly brought upon him.”¹¹ While men, who are the avowed opponents of almost everything that has been generally reck-

oned peculiar and distinctive in the Christian revelation, speak on this subject in such terms, other men, whom it would be unfair to rank in this category, deal with this topic in a manner that is far from being satisfactory; and we could point to indications of this both in Dr Stebbing, the translator of Henry's admirable life of Calvin, and in Principal Tulloch. On these accounts it may be proper to make some observations upon this subject, though we cannot go into much detail.

It is common for those who discuss this subject, under the influence of dislike to Calvin, to allege that those who do not sympathise with them in all their invectives against him, are to be regarded as defending or apologising for his conduct in the matter. Mr Wallace, in the work just referred to,¹² says "—Among other recent apologists of the stern Genevese reformer, M. Albert Rilliet and the Rev. W. K. Tweedie (now Dr Tweedie of Edinburgh) stand conspicuous, but their arguments have been ably and triumphantly refuted by a well-known writer in the *Christian Reformer* for January, 1847."

Now it is not true, in any fair sense of the word, that MRilliet and Dr Tweedie are apologists for Calvin in this matter. They both decidedly condemn his conduct; and they merely aim at bringing out fully the whole facts of the case, in order that a fair estimate may be formed of it, and that the amount of condemnation may be, upon a full and impartial examination of all its features and circumstances, duly proportioned to its demerits. Rilliet has evidently no sympathy with Calvin's theological views, or with his firm and uncompromising zeal for truth. He has acted only the part of an impartial historian. He has brought out fully and accurately the whole documents connected with the trial of Servetus at Geneva, and he has pointed to some of the inferences which they clearly establish,—especially these, that Servetus's whole conduct during the trial was characterised by recklessness and violence, or by cunning and falsehood—that Calvin was at this time at open war with the prevailing party among the civil authorities of Geneva, on the important subject of excommunication—that they took the management of the trial very much into their own hands, without consulting with him—that Calvin's interposition in the matter was much more likely to have brought about the acquittal than the condemnation of Servetus—that Servetus knew this and acted upon it, and that this was the explanation of the reckless violence with which, during one important stage in the trial, he publicly assailed Calvin. The only fair question is, Are these positions historically true? Have they been sufficiently established? M. Rilliet and Dr Tweedie answer in the affirmative, and are in consequence set down as apologists of Calvin. As to Mr Wallace's allegation, that M. Rilliet and Dr Tweedie have been triumphantly refuted in the *Christian Reformer* for January 1847, this is really little better than blustering. There is nothing in the article referred to that refutes the above-mentioned positions of Rilliet, which must be regarded as now conclusively established. The article is mainly occupied with an attempt to prove that the authorities of Geneva had no jurisdiction over Servetus, since the offence for which he was tried was not committed within their territory, and that there was no law then in force in Geneva attaching to heresy the penalty of death. The writer has failed in establishing these two positions; but even if he had succeeded in proving them, this would not materially affect the question, so far as concerns its bearing upon Calvin, or the estimate that ought to be formed of the part he took in it. There is more plausible ground for Mr Wallace's allegation that Dr Henry, in

his "Life of Calvin," defends his conduct in this matter, although here, too, there is a great want of fairness manifested by not giving a full view of the biographer's sentiments.

No man in modern times defends Calvin's conduct towards Servetus. No one indeed can defend it, unless he be prepared to defend the lawfulness of putting heretics to death, and this doctrine has been long abandoned by all but papists. There is no other ground on which Calvin can be defended, for he has distinctly and fully assumed the responsibility of the death of Servetus, though he endeavoured, unsuccessfully, to prevent his being burned. Some injudicious admirers of Calvin have attempted to exempt him from the responsibility of Servetus's death; and it is quite true that other causes contributed to bring it about, and that it would, in all probability have been effected, whether Calvin had interfered in the matter or not. But there can be no doubt that Calvin beforehand, at the time, and after the event, explicitly approved and defended the putting him to death, and assumed the responsibility of the transaction. Some of Calvin's admirers were at one time anxious to free him from the charge, founded on the letter which he was alleged to have written to Farel in 1546, and in which this passage occurs:—"Servetus wrote to me lately, and added to his letter a large volume of his delirious fancies. He intimates that he will come to this place, if agreeable to me. But I will not interpose my assurance of his safety, for if he shall come, if my authority is of any avail, I will not suffer him to depart alive." There is no reason, however, to doubt the genuineness of this letter, which is preserved in the Imperial Library at Paris. And there is nothing in it which is not covered by the notorious facts, that Calvin firmly believed and openly maintained that Servetus, by his heresy and blasphemy, had deserved death,—that it was a good and honourable work to inflict the punishment of death upon him, and professed that he was quite willing to aid in bringing about this result. Entertaining these views, he acted a manly and straightforward part in giving expression to them. If Calvin had been such a monster of cruelty and malignity as he is represented to have been, by his slanderers, from Bolsec and Castellio in his own time, to Audin and Wallace in the present day, he would have encouraged Servetus to come to Geneva, and then have got him tried and executed. His letter, then, to Farel, is really no aggravation of what is otherwise known and unquestionable in regard to Calvin's views upon this subject.

The injustice usually exhibited by Calvin's enemies upon this whole matter should just make his friends the more anxious to take up no untenable position regarding it, to admit fully and at once everything that can be proved as a matter of fact, and to maintain no ground which cannot be successfully defended. His enemies have little or nothing that is plausible to bring forward, beyond what is involved in the general charge of believing and acting on the lawfulness of putting heretics and blasphemers to death, except what is furnished to them, sometimes, by injudicious friends of the Reformer—taking up ground that cannot be maintained.

But while the conduct of Calvin, in the case of Servetus, must be judged of mainly and primarily by the truth or falsehood of the doctrine of the lawfulness of putting heretics and blasphemers to death,—and while every one now concedes that, tried by this test, it cannot be defended, it is quite possible that there may be other collateral views of the matter, which may materially affect our estimate of the different parties, and tell powerfully in the way either of

palliation or of aggravation. Indeed, the only fair and honest question in regard to the case of Servetus, now that the lawfulness of putting heretics to death has been long abandoned, is this—Does Calvin's conduct in the matter furnish evidence that he was a bad or cruel man? Does it prove him to have been in any respect worse than the other Reformers—that is, worse than the best men of his age? This is the only question which is now entitled to consideration, and this question, we venture to assert, must be answered in the negative, by every one who is not perverted by hatred of the truth which Calvin taught, by every one who is possessed of impartiality and candour. The leading considerations which prove that this is the only answer that can be given to the question, we shall merely state, without enlarging upon them.

1. The doctrine of the lawfulness and duty of putting heretics and blasphemers to death, was then almost universally held by Protestants as well as papists,—by men of unquestionable piety and benevolence, if there were any such persons,—and those who were zealous for God's truth were then not only willing but anxious to act upon this doctrine whenever an opportunity occurred. There is no need to produce evidence of this position; but it may be proper to advert here to a statement which seems to contradict it, made by Dr Stebbing, the translator of Henry's *Life of Calvin*, and adopted from him by Mr Wallace in his *Anti-Trinitarian Biography*. Dr Stebbing thinks that Henry has gone too far in defending Calvin, and in his anxiety to repudiate all concurrence in this, he makes the following statement, in his preface: "Henry has defended Calvin in the case of Servetus with admirable ability; but the translator believes still, as he has ever believed, that when men enjoy so large a share of light and wisdom as Calvin possessed, they cannot be justified, if guilty of persecution, because they lived in times when wicked and vulgar minds warred against the rights of human conscience." Now this statement obviously and necessarily implies, that in Calvin's time it was only "wicked and vulgar minds" who countenanced persecution, and that Calvin's conduct is indefensible, because he agreed on this point only with the wicked and vulgar, and differed from the better and higher class of minds, among his contemporaries. This is what Dr Stebbing has said. But of course he could not mean to say this; for he must have known, if he gave any attention to what he was saying, that the statement is unquestionably false. Every one knows that in Calvin's time the defence of persecuting principles was not confined to the "wicked and vulgar," but was almost universal, even among the best and highest minds. It is to be presumed that Mr Wallace did not perceive the folly or the false hood of this statement of Dr Stebbing's, when he quoted it with so much gusto, and set it forth as a "well-merited censure from the pen of one of Calvin's most ardent admirers."¹³

2 Servetus was not only a heretic and a blasphemer, but one about whom there was everything to provoke and nothing to conciliate. More than twenty years before his death he had put forth views which led Bucer, one of the most moderate of the Reformers, to declare that he ought to be torn in pieces. He continued thereafter to lead a life of deliberate hypocrisy, living for many years in the house of a popish prelate, conforming outwardly to the Church of Rome, while, at the same time, he embraced every safe opportunity of propagating his offensive heresies and blasphemies against the most sacred and fundamental doctrines of Christianity. He repeatedly denied, upon oath, all knowledge of the books which he had published, and he conducted himself

during his trial with reckless violence and mendacity. We do not mention these things as if they excused or palliated his being put to death, but merely as illustrating the unreasonableness and unfairness of attempting to represent the case as one of *peculiar* aggravation, or as *specially* entitled to sympathy. Chauffepié, whose article on Servetus in the 4th volume of his continuation of Bayle's Dictionary is, perhaps, upon the whole, the best and fairest view of the subject that exists, says: "Unfortunately for this great man (Calvin) he is more odious to certain people than Servetus is. They cannot resolve to render him the justice, which no impartial person can refuse to him, without doing an injury to his own judgment."

3 Servetus had been convicted of heresy and blasphemy by a popish tribunal at Vienne, and had been condemned to be burned by a slow fire; and he escaped from prison and came to Geneva with that sentence hanging over him. During his trial at Geneva the popish authorities transmitted the sentence they had pronounced against him, and reclaimed him, that they might carry it into execution. It was then put to Servetus, whether he would go back to Vienne or go on with his trial at Geneva. He preferred to remain where he was, and there is good reason to believe that the determination of the civil authorities at Geneva to pronounce and execute upon him a sentence of death, was, in some measure, produced by the fear that the papists would charge them with being indifferent, if not favourable, to heresy, if they spared him. There is abundant evidence that this consideration operated, to some extent, as a motive, upon the conduct of the Protestant churches at the time of the Reformation.¹⁴ As a specimen of this, we may refer to Bishop Jewel's "Apology of the Church of England," a work which was approved of by the Convocation, and thus clothed with public authority. In the third chapter of the Apology, sect. 2, Jewel boasts, that Protestants not only detested and denounced all the heretics who had been condemned by the ancient church, but also that, when any of these heresies broke out amongst them, "they seriously and severely coerced the broachers of them with lawful and civil punishments." If this was distinctly set forth and boasted of as an ordinary rule of procedure, in opposition to popish allegations, we cannot doubt that the consideration would operate most powerfully, in so very peculiar, and indeed unexampled, a case as that of Servetus, in which not only had a popish tribunal condemned him to the flames, but had publicly demanded his person that they might put that sentence in execution. In these circumstances, no Protestant tribunal could be expected to do anything else but pronounce a similar sentence, unless either the proof of the charge of heresy and blasphemy had failed, or they had believed it to be unlawful to put heretics and blasphemers to death.

4 Although Calvin, after having, notwithstanding extreme personal provocation, done everything in his power to convince Servetus of his errors, approved of putting him to death as an incorrigible heretic and blasphemer, he exerted his influence, but without success, to prevent his being burned, and to effect that he might be put to death by some less cruel and offensive process; so that to talk, as is often done, of Calvin *burning* Servetus, is simply and literally a falsehood.

5 The Reformers generally, and more especially two of the mildest and most moderate of them all, both in their theological views and in their general character,—Melancthon, representing the Lutherans, and Bullinger, representing the Zwinglians,—gave their full, *formal*, public approbation to the

proceedings which took place in Geneva in the case of Servetus.

6 Archbishop Cranmer exerted all his influence with King Edward, and succeeded thereby, though not without great difficulty, in effecting the burning of two heretics—one of them a woman and the other a foreigner—whose offences were in every respect, and tried by any standard whatever, far less aggravated than Servetus's.¹⁵

As all these six positions are notorious and undeniable, it must be quite plain to every one who reflects, for a moment, on what these facts, individually and collectively, involve or imply, that the *peculiar* frequency and the *special* virulence with which Calvin's conduct in regard to Servetus has been denounced, indicate, on the part of those who have done so, not only an utter want of anything like impartiality and fairness, but a bitter dislike, to a most able and influential champion of God's truth.

It might be supposed that most men, knowing these facts, would admit that there are many palliations attaching to the death of Servetus, and to Calvin's conduct in the matter; and yet Mr Wallace, as we have seen, as if determined to outstrip in the virulence of his invective all that had been said by papists and infidels, describes it as being "without one humane or redeeming quality to divest it of its criminality or palliate its enormity." The ground on which men who are fond of railing at Calvin in this style, commonly excuse themselves, is an allegation to the effect that he was mainly influenced in this matter by personal and vindictive feelings,—that, under the influence of these feelings, he had been long plotting Servetus's death, and seeking an opportunity of cutting him off,—and that he gave information against him to the popish authorities at Vienne, and was thus the cause of his being tried and condemned there. These assertions are, to a large extent, utterly destitute of proof; and, in so far as there is any appearance of evidence in support of them as matters of fact, they furnish no foundation for the conclusions which have been based upon them. The general allegation, that Calvin was mainly or largely influenced by personal and vindictive feelings towards Servetus, is destitute of all proof or even plausibility. There is no evidence of it whatever, and there is no occasion whatever to have recourse to this theory. All that Calvin ever said or did in the case of Servetus, is fully explained by his conviction of the lawfulness and duty of putting heretics and blasphemers to death; and by his uncompromising determination to maintain, in every way he reckoned lawful, the interests of God's truth, and to discharge his own obligations, combined with the too prevalent habit of the age to indulge in railing and abuse against all who were dealt with as opponents. There were very considerable differences in character and disposition between Cranmer and Calvin, but it is in substance just as true of the latter as of the former, that his conduct "was truly the effect of those principles by which he governed himself." Calvin, in his last interview with Servetus, on the day before his death, solemnly declared that he had never sought to resent any personal injuries that had been offered to him,—that many years ago he had laboured, at the risk of his own life, to bring Servetus back to the truth,—that, notwithstanding his want of success, he long continued to correspond with him on friendly terms,—that he had omitted no act of kindness towards him,—until at last Servetus, exasperated by his expostulations, assailed him with downright rage. To this solemn appeal Servetus made no answer, and there is no ground whatever to warrant any human being to call in question its truth or sincerity. The truth is, that

there is at least as good evidence that Mr Wallace hates Calvin as that Calvin hated Servetus.¹⁶

We have seen some specimens of the rancorous abuse with which he assails the Reformer. But we have not exhausted his performances in this way. He assures us that Calvin formed a plan for the destruction of Servetus, and that he prosecuted it for thirteen years before he succeeded in accomplishing his object,—that he “came to the deliberate determination of plotting his destruction,”—that “he was always on the watch for something by which he might criminate Servetus,”—that he “was on the watch for him, and caused him to be apprehended soon after his arrival” in Geneva.¹⁷ These are statements for which no evidence has been or can be produced. They can be regarded in no other light than as mere fabrications. Mr Wallace also gives us to understand that, in his judgment, the conduct of Calvin in this matter showed him to be “a man who, under the guise of religion, could violate every principle of honour and humanity.”¹⁸ *Under the guise of religion!* We could scarcely have believed it possible, that any man would have insinuated a doubt of the sincerity of Calvin’s conviction, that he was doing God service and discharging a duty, in contributing to bring about the death of Servetus. The sincerity and earnestness of this conviction do not, of course, furnish any proof that he was right, or supply any materials for defending his conduct. Still this conviction is an important feature in every case to which it applies, and it ought always to be taken into account. We do not believe that Mr Wallace will get much countenance, even from papists and infidels, in his insinuation, that Calvin is not entitled to the benefit of it.

His allegation about “violating every principle of honour and humanity,” is probably intended to bear special reference to what has been charged against Calvin, in connection with the information against Servetus, given to the popish authorities at Vienne; and this is, indeed, the only feature of the case, the discussion of which is attended with any difficulty. Mr Wallace’s statement upon the point is this:—

“Calvin, who was always on the watch for something by which he might criminate Servetus, soon gave out that this work” (his last work, the “*Christianismi Restitutio*,” which he had got secretly printed without his name at Vienne, and the substance of which he had sent to Calvin some years before) “was written by him. And availing himself of the assistance of one William Trie, a native of Lyons, who was at that time residing at Geneva, he caused Servetus to be apprehended and thrown into prison on a charge of heresy. Some of the friends and disciples of Calvin have attempted to free him from this odious imputation, and he has himself represented it as a calumny; but the fact that Servetus was imprisoned at the sole instigation of Calvin is too well established to admit of dispute. Abundant proofs of it may be found in the accounts of De La Roche, Allwoerden, Mosheim, Bock, and Trechsel.”¹⁹

We will advert first to Mr Wallace’s references to authorities. He says that abundant proofs that Calvin was the author and originator of the whole proceedings against Servetus at Vienne, may be found in the accounts of De La Roche, Allwoerden, Mosheim, Bock, and Trechsel. We have not read Mosheim and Trechsel, but we are confident that the proofs to be found in the other three authors are not abundant, and are not even sufficient. De la Roche and Allwoerden published before Trie’s three letters to his friend at Lyons, which Calvin is alleged to have instigated and dictated, were given to the public, and therefore were scarcely in circumstances to judge fairly on this question.

De la Rochet²⁰ does not enter into anything like a full and formal investigation of this matter. The main evidence he adduces, that Calvin was the author or originator of Trie's letters, is a statement to that effect made by Servetus himself on his trial, coupled with the fact, that in his judgment Calvin's denial did not fully meet the precise charge as laid. Allwoerden, whose work is in reality just the first edition of Mosheim's, goes much more fully into this matter, and produces additional proofs, though they are not very "abundant" or satisfactory. His authorities are only Bolsec, in his Life of Calvin, and the anonymous author of the work entitled, "Contra Libellum Calvini," etc., in reply to Calvin's Refutation of the errors of Servetus. Bolsec, indeed, says that Calvin wrote to Cardinal Tournon to give information against Servetus,—that Trie wrote to many people at Lyons and Vienne, at the solicitation of Calvin, and that in consequence, Servetus was put in prison.²¹ But Bolsec's Lives both of Calvin and Beza have always been regarded, except by papists, whose church Bolsec had joined before he published them, as infamous libels, to which no weight whatever is due. The other work referred to has been ascribed to Laelius Socinus and to Castellio; and it is not improbable that both were concerned in the production of it, as is supposed also to have been the case with another work bearing upon this subject, and published under the fictitious name of Martinus Bellius. The author of this work says, that those who had seen Trie's letters to his popish friend, "think that they were written by Calvin, because of the similarity of the style," and that they were of a higher order than Trie could have produced. This is all the evidence he adduces, and it plainly shows, that at the time the report rested merely upon conjecture or suspicion. This anonymous and unknown author says also, that "there are some who say, that Calvin himself wrote to Cardinal Tournon,"—a statement which shows how thoroughly the whole matter was one of mere hearsay. It is proper also to mention, that it is this work which contains the report, given, however, merely as a hearsay (*sunt qui affirmant*), that Calvin laughed when he saw Servetus carried along to the stake. This report even De la Roche, with all his prejudices against Calvin and Calvinism, denounces as an "execrable calumny," though it is really a fair enough specimen of the way in which Calvin has been often dealt with. De la Chapelle very happily ridiculed the manifest and palpable insufficiency of this evidence in this way, "The contemporary enemies of Calvin only suspected that he was the author of the letter, and behold now-a-days, 170 years after the event, De la Roche and Allwoerden are quite certain of it. Perhaps in another 100 years, it will be found out that it was Calvin himself who carried the letter to Lyons."²²

But Trie's three letters have since been published, and may be expected to throw some light upon this subject. They were procured from Vienne, and published by Artigny in 1749, and they have since been commented upon by Mosheim, Bock, and many others. Bock is one of those referred to by Mr Wallace, as exhibiting "abundant proofs" that Calvin employed Trie to effect the apprehension of Servetus at Vienne. But the truth is, that Bock, though strongly prejudiced against Calvin, and though unfair enough to allege that he was somewhat influenced by personal and vindictive feelings in this matter, did not profess to produce "abundant proofs" of the point now under consideration; *nay, he expressly admits that it could not be proved*, though he was strongly inclined to believe it. The whole of what he says upon the subject . is this:—"An. Gui. Trie homo, indoctus, proprio motu an Calvini instinctu et

consilio hoc fecerit, *certo quidem statui nequit* non tamen vanæ videntur *conjecturæ* hanc illi dictasse epistolam, qua Servetus tanquam hæreticus exurendus, accusabatur.”²³ We accept Bock’s concession that there is no proof but only conjectures, but we do not admit that the conjectures are possessed of any real weight or probability. Mr Wallace could easily have found room, if he had chosen, for a summary of the “abundant proofs” of which he boasts. But it was more convenient just to make a flourish by a reference to Bock and other names, whose works few were likely to examine.

Trie’s letters not only afford no evidence, but do not even furnish any plausible ground of suspicion, that Calvin was, in any way, connected with, or cognisant of, the origin of this matter,—that is, that it was at his instigation that Trie conveyed information to his popish friend about Servetus, and the book which he had recently published. So far as appears from the correspondence, Trie’s statement about Servetus and his book seems to have come forth quite spontaneously, without being suggested or instigated by any one. It has every appearance of having come up quite naturally and easily, in the course of correspondence with a friend, who was urging him to return to the Church of Rome, on the ground of the unity and soundness of doctrine that prevailed there, as contrasted with the varieties and heresies that were found among Protestants. This naturally and obviously led Trie, as it would have led any one in similar circumstances who happened to be cognisant of Servetus and his book, to tell his friend of what had been going on of late, in the way of heresy, in his own neighbourhood, and in a place where popish authorities had entire control. In short, there is no ground to believe, or even to suspect, that Calvin was connected with originating or instigating the proceeding, which ultimately led to Servetus’s apprehension by the popish authorities at Vienne. If men are determined to put the worst possible construction upon everything relating to Calvin, they may have some suspicion that he instigated Trie to write to Vienne about Servetus. But Mr. Wallace’s “abundant proofs” can really be regarded in no other light than as downright audacity.

And then it must not be forgotten, that we have from Calvin himself what must in all fairness be regarded as a denial of this charge. In his Refutation of the errors of Servetus, he intimates that it had been alleged against him, that it was through his agency (*mea opera*) that Servetus had been seized at Vienne. He scouted the idea as absurd and preposterous, as if he had been in friendly correspondence with the popish authorities; and then he concludes with saying, that if the allegation were true, he would not think of denying it, for he would not reckon it at all dishonourable to him, as he had never concealed that it was through his agency that Servetus had been seized and brought to trial at Geneva. Calvin evidently saw no material difference in point of principle, between doing what was practicable and necessary to bring him to trial at Vienne, and doing what was requisite with the same view at Geneva. He certainly could not mean by this statement to deny what he did do, in the way of furnishing materials to be used as evidence against Servetus at Vienne; for what he had done in this respect was quite well known, and was distinctly mentioned in the formal sentence of the popish authorities, which had been publicly produced in the subsequent trial. He never could have thought of denying this, and therefore he must have meant merely to deny, that he was the author or originator of the proceedings; in other words, to deny that he had written himself, or that he had instigated Trie to write, although even of this he

indicates that he would not have been ashamed if it had been true.

This leads us to advert to what it was that Calvin did in connection with the proceedings against Servetus at Vienne; and this topic may be properly connected with a statement of Principal Tulloch's on this subject. Dr Tulloch, as might be expected, seems disposed to press the more unfavourable views of this transaction. He describes it as a "great crime,"—he speaks of "the undying disgrace which, under all explanations, must for ever attach to the event,"—and assures us that "the act must bear its own doom and disgrace for ever."²⁴ Of his more specific statements, the only one to which we think it needful to advert, is the following:—

"The special blame of Calvin in the whole matter is very much dependent upon the view we take of his previous relation to the accusation and trial of Servetus by the Inquisition at Vienne. If the evidence, of which Dyer has made the most, were perfectly conclusive, that the Reformer, through a creature of his own of the name of Trie, was really the instigator, from the beginning, of the proceedings against Servetus,—that from Geneva, in short, he schemed, with deep-laid purpose, the ruin of the latter, who was then quietly prosecuting his profession at Vienne,—and, from MSS. that had privately come into his possession, furnished the Inquisition with evidence of the heretic's opinions,—if we were compelled to believe all this, then the atrocity of Calvin's conduct would stand unrelieved by the sympathy of his fellow-reformers, and would not only not admit of defence, but would present one of the blackest pictures of treachery that even the history of religion discloses. The evidence does not seem satisfactory, although it is not without certain features of suspicion. There can be no doubt, however, that Calvin was so far privy, through Trie, to the proceedings of the Inquisition, and that he heartily approved of them."²⁵

This is a curious and significant passage, and seems to indicate, that Dr Tulloch occupies the position of one who is "willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike." Dyer's "Life of Calvin," the authority here referred to by Dr Tulloch, was published in 1850, and is got up with considerable care and skill. Its general object manifestly is to check and counteract the tendency to think more favourably of Calvin, which had grown up in the community, in connection with the labours of the Calvin Translation Society and other causes. It was this, too, probably, that called forth the special virulence of Mr Wallace, whose "Anti-Trinitarian Biography" was published in the same year. But Mr Dyer goes about his work much more cautiously than Mr Wallace. He abstains generally from violent invective and gross misrepresentation, and labours to convey an unfavourable impression by insinuation, supported by an elaborate and sustained course of special pleading in the style of an Old Bailey practitioner, combined with a considerable show of moderation and fairness. The reference which Dr Tulloch, in the passage we have quoted, makes to Mr Dyer, is fitted to convey the impression, that that author goes as far as Mr Wallace in ascribing the whole proceedings connected with Servetus's apprehension at Vienne to Calvin's agency or instigation. But this is not the case. Mr Dyer was too cautious to assert this. He saw and admitted, that there is no evidence that Calvin had anything to do with the origination of the matter,—that is, no evidence that Trie's first letter was written at his instigation or with his cognisance.

"The Abbé d'Artigny goes farther than the evidence warrants, in positively asserting that Trie's letter was written at Calvin's dictation, and in calling it Calvin's letter in the name of Trie. It is just possible that Trie may have written it without Calvin's knowledge; and the latter is therefore entitled to the benefit of the doubt. He cannot be absolutely proved to have

taken the first step in delivering Servetus into the fangs of the Roman Catholic Inquisition; but what we shall now have to relate will show, that he at least aided and abetted it.”²⁶

It is true, as Dr Tulloch says, that Mr Dyer has made the most of the evidence about Calvin aiding and abetting in the matter. But there is really no mystery or uncertainty about this. What Calvin did, in this respect, is well known and quite ascertained, though we do not deny that there is room for a difference of opinion, or rather of impression, as to how far it can be thoroughly defended.

The principal sentence in the quotation from Dr Tulloch is a piece of rhetorical declamation, and is characterised by the inaccuracy and exaggeration which usually attach to such displays. It is not alleged by Mr Dyer, or indeed even by Mr Wallace, that Calvin’s conduct corresponded with the description which Dr Tulloch has here pictured of it; and yet his statement plainly implies that Mr Dyer has asserted all this to be true of Calvin—has undertaken to prove it, and has produced evidence in support of it, which though not, in Dr Tulloch’s judgment, sufficient to establish it, is not destitute of weight. We cannot understand what could have tempted Dr Tulloch to dash off such an inflated and exaggerated description of Calvin’s conduct, and to ascribe it, without warrant, to the cold and cautious Mr Dyer. He surely could not expect that his assertion that Mr Dyer had undertaken to prove all this, and thought that he had proved it, would be sufficient to induce some people to believe it or to regard it as probable, even though it “would present one of the blackest pictures of treachery that even the history of religion discloses.”

The first charge in this indictment against Calvin, given hypothetically, so far as Dr Tulloch is concerned, *but alleged by him to be adduced and believed by Mr Dyer*, is, that “the Reformer, through a creature of his own of the name of Trie, was really the instigator, from the beginning, of the proceedings against Servetus.” Now Mr Dyer, as we have seen, expressly admits that this position cannot be proved, and Calvin himself has denied it, while declaring, at the same time, that he would not have been ashamed to acknowledge it, if it had been true. The second charge is merely a rhetorical expansion and amplification of the first, with a fine touch added in the end by Dr Tulloch’s own hand, without any countenance from his authority, “that from Geneva he schemed, with deep-laid purpose, the ruin of the latter, *who was then quietly prosecuting his profession (as a physician) at Vienne.*” The clause which we have put in italics is fitted, and to all appearance was intended, to convey the impression, that Servetus had abandoned the work of propagating heresy and blasphemy, in which he had been engaged more or less, occasionally, for about a quarter of a century—that he had retired from the field of theology, and was *quietly* occupied with the practice of medicine, giving no ground of offence to any one, when Calvin devised and executed a plot for bringing him to trial and death. Now all this is palpably inconsistent with the best-known and most fundamental facts of the case. *Every one knows*, that the whole proceedings against Servetus, both at Vienne and at Geneva, originated in, and were founded on, the fact of his having just succeeded in getting secretly printed at Vienne, a large edition of his work entitled “Christianismi Restitutio,” in which all his old heresies and blasphemies were reproduced. Servetus had taken every precaution to guard against this work being known in his own neighbourhood, but a large number of copies had been sent to Frankfort and

other places for sale, and one copy at least had reached Geneva. Indeed, the substance of the information which Trie's first letter conveyed to his popish friend at Lyons was just this, that this book had recently been produced and printed in his neighbourhood, and that Servetus was the author and Arnoullet the printer of it. So far is Mr Dyer from giving any countenance, as Dr Tulloch insinuates, to this rhetorical flourish, about Servetus "quietly prosecuting his profession at Vienne," that for a purpose of his own,—intending to damage Calvin in another way,—he calls special attention to the consideration, that Servetus's printing his book at this time "was an overt act, and furnished something tangible to the Roman Catholic authorities, who would have looked with suspicion on mere manuscript evidence, furnished by a man whom they considered to be a great heretic himself."²⁷

This leads us to advert to the third and last charge in the indictment, viz., that "from MSS. that had privately come into his possession, he furnished the Inquisition with evidence of the heretic's opinions." This charge, as here stated, is not put quite accurately, but we admit that in substance it is not only adduced, but established, by Mr Dyer. He puts it thus,—“But this (that is, the admission that there is no evidence that Trie's first letter was written with Calvin's knowledge) does not clear him from the charge of having furnished the evidence by which alone Trie's denunciation could be tendered effectual; and of thus having made himself a partaker in whatever guilt attaches to such an act.”²⁸

Calvin did not perceive or admit that there was any guilt attaching, either to Trie's conduct or to his own, in this matter; but he certainly did the substance of what is here ascribed to him. The facts are these. Trie, in his first letter to his popish friend,—in which he told him of the publication of Servetus's work, and gave the name of the author and printer,—enclosed also the first leaf of the book. His friend communicated this to the popish authorities, who made some investigation into the case. But so effectual had been the precautions taken by Servetus to secure secrecy, that they could get hold of nothing tangible. Trie's friend was in consequence requested to write to him again, and to urge him to furnish, if possible, any additional materials that might throw light upon the matter. In answer to this application, Trie sent about twenty letters, which, a good many years before, Servetus had addressed to Calvin, and which were to be used, not as Dr Tulloch says, "as evidence of the heretic's opinions," but as materials for establishing his identity. Trie's account of the way in which he procured the letters is this, and it is all we know of Calvin's procedure in this matter:—²⁹

“But I must confess, that I have had great trouble to get what I send you from Mr Calvin. Not that he is unwilling that such execrable blasphemies should be punished; but that it seems to him to be his duty, as he does not wield the sword of justice, to refute heresy by his doctrines, rather than to pursue it by such methods. I have, however, importuned him so much, representing to him that I should incur the reproach of levity, if he did not help me, that he has at last consented to hand over what I send.”

Calvin had great hesitation in giving up these letters to be employed for this purpose, and it would have been better, perhaps, if he had declined to comply with the application. Not that the matter is one of any material importance, or that his conduct in this affair can affect injuriously his general character in the estimation of intelligent and impartial men; but that it is fitted to give a handle

to enemies, and has been regarded with somewhat different feelings, even among those whose prepossessions are all in his favour. Calvin had no doubt as to the lawfulness of his giving up these letters for the purpose of establishing Servetus's identity. His views as to the way in which heretics ought to be dealt with, and the responsibility which, in consequence, he was quite willing to incur in such cases, prevented any doubt as to the warrantableness of the step proposed. His hesitation seems to have turned only on its becomingness or congruity,—on the propriety of a man in his position taking, in the circumstances, an active part in a criminal process, which might result in the shedding of blood. How far Calvin's conduct in this matter should be regarded as a violation of the confidence that ought to attach to friendly intercourse, must depend very much upon the circumstances in which the correspondence was begun, and carried on, and ended; and of all this we know nothing, and cannot judge. Taking even the most unfavourable view which any reasonable man can form of the transaction, there is really nothing in it,—apart of course from its assuming or implying the lawfulness of putting heretics to death,—that can be considered very heinous, or that is fitted to create any strong prejudice against Calvin's general character. There is not one of the leading Reformers, against whom more serious charges than this cannot be established.

It is satisfactory to know, that although these letters to Calvin are mentioned among the *pieces justificatives* in the sentence pronounced upon Servetus by the popish authorities, they had got, before the sentence was passed, direct and conclusive evidence from other sources, to prove, in the face of his deliberate perjury, that he was Servetus,—though he had lived for thirteen years in Vienne under a different name,—and that he had printed and published the heretical and blasphemous book which had been ascribed to him. Dyer has given a full, and, upon the whole, a fair view, of this branch of the case.³⁰

We did not intend to dwell so long on this matter of Servetus. But since so much has been put forth of late years, by Wallace and Dyer, by Stebbing and Tulloch, fitted to convey erroneous and unfair impressions upon some features of the case, we do not regret that we have been led to enlarge somewhat upon it, although confining ourselves strictly to what seemed to require explanation.³¹

The impression which the more temperate and reasonable opponents of Calvin's views chiefly labour to produce with respect to his character is this,—that he was a proud and presumptuous speculator upon divine things, very anxious to be wise above what is written, and ever disposed to indulge his own reasonings upon the deepest mysteries of religion, instead of seeking humbly and carefully to follow the guidance of God's word, without pressing any further than it led him. Now it is perhaps not very unnatural that men *who have never read Calvin's writings*, and who are decidedly and zealously opposed to his doctrines, may have insensibly formed to themselves some such conception of his general character and spirit, or may have very readily believed all this when they saw it asserted by others. This notion, however, has not only no foundation to rest upon, but it is contradicted by the whole spirit that breathes through the writings of Calvin. We are not at present speaking of the actual truth of his doctrines, but merely of the general spirit in which his examination of God's word and his investigation of divine truth is conducted; and upon this point, we have no hesitation in saying, that there is nothing which is more strikingly and palpably characteristic of the general spirit in

which Calvin ordinarily conducts his investigations into divine truth, and his speculations on the mysteries of religion, than his profound reverence for the word of God, the caution and sobriety with which he advances, and his perfect readiness at all times to lay aside or abandon every statement, or even mode of expression, that did not clearly appear to him to have the sanction of the sacred Scriptures. And we think it quite impossible for any man of fairness and candour to read Calvin's writings without being constrained to feel that this was the state of mind and the general spirit, which he at least intended and laboured to cherish and to manifest. Men of general fairness and candour may continue, after reading Calvin's writings, to think that he has brought out from the sacred Scriptures, doctrines upon some of the deeper mysteries of religion which are not taught there; and some may even be disposed to allege that, misled by the deceitfulness of the human heart, he did not always know what manner of spirit he was of. But no person, we think, of fairness and discernment can fail to see and admit, that he had laid it down as a rule to himself, to follow humbly, implicitly, and reverentially the guidance of God's word, that he carefully laboured to act upon this rule, and honestly believed that he had succeeded in doing so.

From the nature of the case, it is not easy to prove this by an adduction of evidence. But there are one or two points of a pretty definite description, which may be fairly regarded as confirming it. It was not Calvin's practice to attempt to strain the particular statements of Scripture, in order to bring out more abundant evidence of doctrines which he believed to be true. On the contrary, he has incurred the suspicion of some of the more unintelligent friends of truth, by occasionally admitting, that a particular text gave no support to a sound doctrine, in support of which it was commonly adduced. He showed no disposition, in general, to sanction the use of unscriptural phrases and statements in the exposition of scriptural doctrines; and it has been thought, that in some cases,—as in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity for instance,—Calvin, disgusted with the unwarranted and presumptuous speculations of the schoolmen upon this subject, even carried to an extreme his anxiety to adhere to mere scriptural terms and statements in the exposition of this mystery. Now whether he was right or wrong in the particular cases to which these observations apply, his conduct in this respect indicates a state of mind, a general spirit, and a habit of procedure, very different from what are often ascribed to him; and may be fairly regarded as affording evidence, that the great object of his desires and aims was just to ascertain and bring out truly and accurately the mind of God in His word; to submit his understanding and his opinions wholly to the control of the inspired standard; to go as far as Scripture led him, and no farther, in the exposition of divine mysteries. Whether he has in every instance succeeded in this object which he proposed to himself is, of course, a different question; but we confess we do not know where to find a finer model, in general, of the spirit in which the examination of God's word and the investigation of divine truth ought to be conducted, than in the writings of Calvin; and we are persuaded also, that the more fully men imbibe his general spirit in this respect and faithfully act upon it,—a spirit which will lead them equally to go without fear or hesitation as far as Scripture goes, and to stop without reluctance where Scripture stops,—the more firmly will they be convinced that the great doctrines, with which Calvin's name is commonly associated, are indeed the very truth of God, and do most

fully show forth the perfections of Him “by whom are all things, and for whom are all things.”

We do not mean to attempt anything like theological discussion; but we would like to make a few observations on Calvin’s historical position, viewed in relation both to the system of doctrine usually called by his name, and to his principles with respect to the worship and government of the church. The sum and substance of what Calvin aimed at, and to some extent effected, was to throw the church back, for the cure of the evils by which she was polluted and disgraced at the era of the Reformation, upon the Augustinianism (or Calvinism) in doctrine, and the Presbyterianism in worship and government, which he believed to be taught in the New Testament. He of course adopted these views, because he believed that the word of God required this. On the scriptural evidence of his views we are not called upon at present to enter. We can merely advert to one or two features of the aspects which they present historically, especially when contemplated in their bearing upon the condition to which the church had sunk at the time when the Reformation commenced. Doctrine (viewed more especially as comprehending the exposition of the way of life, or the method of the salvation of sinful men), worship, and government,—in short, everything about the church or professedly Christian society,—had fallen into a state of gross corruption. There might be difficulties, from want of materials, in pointing out precisely at what times particular corruptions in doctrine, worship, and government were invented and introduced. But it might be supposed that no one could fail to see and acknowledge, that the church of the fifteenth century, viewed both in its Eastern and Western branches,—though it is with the latter that we have more immediately to do,—was very different in all important respects from the church of the first century, as brought before us in the writings of the inspired apostles. The system, however, which had grown up, and which overspread the church in the fifteenth century, was too firmly rooted in men’s passions, prejudices, and selfish interests, to admit of the light of truth, as to what the church should be, being easily let in. The Reformation of the sixteenth century became, in consequence, a severe and protracted struggle, requiring and giving scope for the highest powers and qualities on both sides, both in choosing the ground to be taken, and in keeping or maintaining it. And it is here that the pre-eminent grandeur and majesty of Calvin shine forth. A profound and penetrating survey of the existing condition and of the past history of the church, combined with the study of the word of God, in leading him to see, that the only thorough remedy, the only effectual cure,—for the deplorable state of matters that now prevailed,—the only process that would go to the root of the existing evils and produce a real and permanent reformation, was to reject all palliatives and half measures, and to fall back upon the thoroughness and simplicity of what was taught and sanctioned by our Lord and His apostles.

Perhaps the one most indispensable thing in order to the restoration of true Christianity in the world, was the bringing out from the sacred Scriptures of the whole doctrine of the Apostle Paul in regard to the justification of sinners, and this was the special work which God qualified and enabled Luther to effect. The history of this doctrine of justification is remarkable. In consequence of the particularly full and formal exposition of it which the Apostle Paul was guided by the Spirit to put on record in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, Satan seems to have felt the necessity of carrying on his efforts to cor-

rupt it in an in direct and insidious way, of proceeding by sapping and mining, rather than by open assault. Accordingly, there was scarcely anything like direct and formal controversy on the subject of justification from the time of Paul to that of Luther. But yet the true doctrine of Scripture on the subject had been very thoroughly corrupted. All that is taught in Scripture in regard to it had been thrown into the background and explained away, without being directly and explicitly denied. Notions of an adverse tendency had been introduced, diffused, and mixed up with the general series of ecclesiastical arrangements, connected especially with the efficacy of the sacraments, the conditions and merits of good works, and the interposition of other creatures in procuring the favour of God. By these processes quietly and insidiously carried on, the doctrine of justification had been greatly corrupted in the church, even before Augustine's time, and he did nothing to check the progress of corruption, or to introduce sounder views, upon this important subject. Indeed, his own views upon it always continued confused and to some extent erroneous. When Luther was honoured to bring out fully the true scriptural doctrine of justification, which had been concealed and buried so long, the Church of Rome rejected it, while all Protestant churches received it. Luther applied very fully the true scriptural doctrine of justification to all the corruptions of the papal system, which were *directly* connected with it, but he did not do much in the way of connecting the doctrine of justification with the other great doctrines of the Christian system. It was reserved for the comprehensive master mind of Calvin to connect and combine the Scripture doctrine of justification as taught by Luther, with the large mass of important scriptural truth set forth in the writings of Augustine. And this combination of Lutheranism and Augustinianism is just Calvinism, which is thus the fullest, most complete, and comprehensive exposition of the whole scheme of Christian doctrine. It went to the root of the prevailing corruption of Christian truth, and overturned it from the foundation.

The grand heresy, which might be said to have overspread the church for many centuries, was in substance this,—that the salvation of sinful men, in so far as they might need salvation, was to be ascribed, not to the one true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but to men themselves and to what they could do, or to what could be done for them by their fellow-men and other creatures. This, more or less fully developed, was the great heresy which lay under the whole elaborate externalism of the mediæval and Romish religion. Almost everything that is distinctive, either in the specific tenets and practices, or in the more general features and tendencies, of the full-blown popery with which the Reformers had to contend, might be traced back, more or less directly, to this great principle; while, on the other hand, almost all the particular features of the system tended to deepen and strengthen in men's minds the comprehensive heresy in which they had their root and origin. Calvin saw that the only effectual way of dealing with this great perversion of the way of salvation,—so well fitted to lead men to build upon a false foundation their hopes of heaven,—the only way to overturn it root and branch, to demolish at once the whole height of the superstructure and the whole depth of the foundation,—was to bring out fully and definitely the whole doctrine of Scripture concerning the place held in the salvation of sinners by the Father, by the Son, and by the Holy Ghost. He made it his great object to bring out and to embody the whole doctrine of Scripture upon these subjects, and ac-

cordingly Calvinism is just a full exposition and development of the sum and substance of what is represented in Scripture as done for the salvation of sinners by the three persons of the Godhead. It represents the Father as arranging, in accordance with all the perfections of His nature and all the principles of His moral government, and at the same time, with due regard to the actual capacities and obligations of men, the whole provisions of the scheme of redemption, choosing some men to grace and glory, and sending His Son to seek and to save them. It represents the Son as assuming human nature, and suffering and dying as the Surety and Substitute of His chosen people,—of those whom the Father had given Him in covenant,—of an innumerable multitude out of every kindred and nation and tongue,—as bearing their sins in His own body, and bearing them away,—as doing and bearing everything necessary for securing their eternal salvation. It represents the Holy Spirit as taking of the things of Christ and showing them to men's souls, as taking up His abode in all whom Christ redeemed with His precious blood, effectually and infallibly determining them to faith and holiness; and thus applying the blessings of redemption to all for whom Christ purchased them, and finally preparing them fully for the inheritance of the saints. These are in substance the views given us in Scripture of the way in which sinners of the human race are saved. They are views which, as experience fully proves, are most offensive to the natural tendencies and inclinations of men's hearts; and plainly as they are taught in Scripture, there is a constant and powerful disposition,—especially when true religion is in a low or languishing condition,—to reject them or explain them away, and to substitute in their room notions which, more or less directly, exclude or contradict them. They certainly had been thoroughly excluded from the practical teaching, and from the whole plans and arrangements of the church, at the period of the Reformation; while it is true, on the other hand,—and it is this with which at present we have more immediately to do,—that these views, and these alone, overturn from the foundation the whole system of notions which then generally prevailed, and which so fearfully perverted the way of salvation.

We believe that it is impossible to bring out accurately, fully, and definitely, the sum and substance of what is taught in Scripture concerning the place which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost hold in the salvation of sinners, without taking up Calvinistic ground,—without being in a manner necessitated to assert the fundamental principles of the Calvinistic system of theology. It is, we believe, impossible otherwise to do full justice, and to give full effect, to what Scripture teaches, concerning the sovereign supremacy of the Father in determining the everlasting destiny of His creatures,—concerning the death and righteousness of Christ, as of infinite worth and value, and as infallibly efficacious for securing all the great objects to which they are directed,—and concerning the agency of the Holy Spirit in certainly and infallibly uniting to Christ through faith all whom the Father had given to Him, and preserving them in safety unto His eternal kingdom. Those who reject or put aside the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism can, we think, be shown to be practically, and by fair construction, withholding from God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, more or less of the place and influence which the Scripture assigns to them in the salvation of sinners; and to be giving to men themselves, or at least to creatures, a share in effecting their salvation which the Scripture does not sanction. And when Calvinistic principles are rejected or thrown into the

background, not only is something, more or less, of necessity taken from the Creator and assigned to the creature, but an opening is made,—an opportunity is left,—for carrying on this process of transferring to man what belongs to God to almost any extent, until the scriptural method of salvation is wholly set aside or overturned.

Men who profess to derive their opinions, in any sense, from the sacred Scriptures, must be substantially,—whether they will or not, and whether they are aware of it or not,—Socinians, or Arminians, or Calvinists. The distinctive characteristic of Socinianism is, that it virtually invests men with the power of saving themselves, of doing everything that is needful for effecting their own salvation.³² Arminianism virtually divides the work of saving men between God and men, and is more or less Pelagian according to the comparative share and influence which it assigns to the Creator and the creature respectively. Calvinism, and that alone, gives to God the whole honour and glory of saving sinners,—making men, while upheld and sustained in the possession and exercise of all that is necessary for moral agency, the unworthy and helpless recipients at God's hand of all spiritual blessings. Calvinism not only withholds, in point of fact, from men, any share in the work of effecting their own salvation, and ascribes this wholly to God; but when rightly understood and faithfully applied, it prevents the possibility of any such perversion of the gospel scheme of redemption, of any such partition of the work of men's salvation. And it is upon this ground that it was so thoroughly adapted,—not only to overturn from the foundation the whole system of destructive heresy that had overspread the church at the time of the Reformation, but to prevent, in so far as it might be adopted and carried out, the possibility of the reintroduction of such a dangerous perversion of scriptural principles and arrangements.

Popery, if we view it in relation to the method of salvation, and have respect more to its general spirit and tendency than to its specific tenets, may be said to belong to the head of Arminianism. Papists concur with the Arminians in admitting the divinity and atonement of Christ and the agency of the Spirit; but they concur with them also in not giving to the Son and the Spirit the commanding and determining position and influence in the salvation of sinners, which the Scripture assigns to them. Popery thus realises the general idea above indicated of Arminianism, viz., that it divides the work of saving sinners between God and sinners themselves. What may be called the Arminianism of popery,—in a sense which will be easily understood from the explanation that has now been given,—was, before the Reformation, of a very Pelagian cast,—that is, the work of saving sinners was practically taken almost entirely from the Creator and assigned to the creature;—not, indeed, that men in general were represented, according to the Socinian view, as able to save themselves, but, what is the special peculiarity of popery in regard to this subject, men were represented as on the one hand able to do a good deal for saving themselves, and then as dependent for the remainder, not merely upon the Saviour and the Spirit, but also upon fellow-men and fellow-creatures, upon saints and angels. And for this complicated system of anti-scriptural perversion of the way of salvation, the only effectual cure, the only radical remedy, was the great Calvinistic principle, which distinctly, consistently, and unequivocally ascribes the whole salvation of sinners, from first to last, to the grace and the power of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

This perversion of the way of salvation was most congenial to man's natural

inclinations and tendencies. Everything had been done which human and Satanic skill could devise, to give it a commanding influence over the whole current of men's thoughts and feelings. It was firmly established over the whole of Christendom at the Reformation; and if it were to be dealt with at all, it would require the strongest appliances,—the most powerful and thoroughgoing influences,—to counteract it, to drive it out and to keep it out. And this was what Calvinism, and Calvinism alone,—looking to the natural fitness of things, the ordinary operation of means,—was adequate to effect. Calvin derived his system of doctrine from the study of the sacred Scriptures, accompanied by the teaching of the divine Spirit. But there is nothing in the fullest recognition of this that should prevent us,—especially when we are comparing Calvin with the other Reformers who enjoyed the same privileges,—from noticing and admiring the grasp and reach of intellect, the discernment and sagacity, which God had given to Calvin in such large measure, and which fitted him so peculiarly for the station and the work that were assigned to him. And this view of the admirable suitableness of Calvinism, to go to the root of the evils that polluted the church and endangered the souls of men at the time of the Reformation, is confirmed by the consideration, that all subsequent deviations from Calvinism in the Protestant churches,—whether leading in the direction of rationalism or traditionalism,—whether pointing towards Socinianism or popery,—have tended to bring back, in some form or degree, the great ante-Reformation heresy, the great heresy, indeed, of all times, that of taking the work of men's salvation from the Creator and assigning it to the creature.

With respect to Calvin's views in regard to the worship and government of the church, we had an opportunity, in discussing Principal Tulloch's "Leaders of the Reformation," to state briefly what they were, and to point out their magnitude and importance, as throwing a flood of light upon the whole subject to which they relate. His great principle of the unlawfulness of introducing anything into the worship and government of the church without positive scriptural sanction, evidently went to the root of the matter, and swept away at once the whole mass of sacramentalism and ceremonialism, of ritualism and hierarchism, which had grown up between the apostolic age and the Reformation, which polluted and degraded the worship of God, and which, in themselves and in their connection with unsound views on the subject of justification, were exerting so injurious an influence on men's spiritual welfare. Any other principle, or rule, or standard, that could have been applied to this whole subject, must have been defective and inadequate, and must have left at least the root of the evil still subsisting, to be a source of continued and growing mischief. The fair and full application of Calvin's great principle, would at once have swept away the whole mass of corruption and abuse which had been growing up for 1400 years; would have restored the purity and simplicity of the apostolic church; and have prevented the introduction of unauthorised and injurious innovations into the Protestant churches, and saved a fearful amount of mischief, occasioned by the efforts made to retain or reintroduce such things.

A fact or two will illustrate the elevation of Calvin's position in regard to this class of topics. Augustine bitterly deplored the prevalence of rites and ceremonies in his time, and declared that the condition of the Christian church in this respect, had become more intolerable than that of the old dispensation. But having, to some extent at least, abandoned the principle of the exclusive

authority of the written word in regard to rites and ceremonies,—though he still held it fast in regard to matters of doctrine,—he had no means of grappling with this giant evil,—he did not venture to attempt to do so; and matters continued, at least, without any improvement in this respect for 1000 years. Luther objected to the mass of rites and ceremonies with which he found the worship of the Christian church overspread, mainly upon two grounds. 1st, That they had, from their number, become burdensome and distracting, tending to supersede and exclude other things of more importance; and 2d, That the idea of meritoriousness, which was commonly attached to them, more or less definitely, tended to pervert and undermine the great doctrine of justification. But these principles, though undeniably true, still left the whole subject on a very vague and unsatisfactory footing. Calvin grappled with it in all its magnitude and difficulty, by maintaining, 1st, That they were in the mass unlawful, simply because of their want of any positive scriptural sanction; and 2d, That many of them, independently of mere tendencies, were positively idolatrous, and were therefore directly and immediately sinful, as being violations of the first and second commandments of the Decalogue.

So much for worship; and then in regard to government, Calvin took the best practicable means both for putting an end to all existing corruptions and abuses, and preventing their recurrence. 1st, By putting an end to anything like the exercise of monarchical authority in the church, or independent power vested officially in any one man, which was the origin and root of the papacy; 2d, By falling back upon the combination of aristocracy and democracy, which prevailed for at least the first two centuries of the Christian era, when the churches were governed by the common council of presbyters, and these presbyters were chosen by the churches themselves, though tried and ordained by those who had been previously admitted to office; 3d, By providing against the formation of the spirit of a mere priestly caste, by associating with the ministers in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, a class of men who, though ordained presbyters, were usually engaged in the ordinary occupations of society; and 4th, By trying to prevent a repetition of the history of the rise and growth of the prelacy and the papacy, through the perversion of the one-man power, by fastening the substance of these great principles upon the conscience of the church, as binding *jure divino*. These great principles, so well fitted to sweep away all the existing corruptions and abuses in the government of the church, and to prevent their recurrence, are evidently in accordance with the fundamental ideas on which the modern theory of representative government is based, and with the leading features of the provision, which has commended itself to all our best and wisest men, for the management of those religious and philanthropic associations which form one of the great glories of our age.

In looking back upon the last three centuries, whether we survey the history of speculative discussion or of the practical influence of Christian churches, we have no reason to be ashamed of our Calvinism or our Presbyterianism; but, on the contrary, are just confirmed in our admiration and veneration for Calvin, or rather in our gratitude to the great Head of the church for all the gifts and graces which He bestowed upon that great man, and for all that He did through Calvin's instrumentality.

FOOTNOTES

*

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF MASTER JOHN CALVIN

In the name of God, be it known to all men by these presents that in the year 1564, and the 25th day of the month of April, I Peter Chenelat, citizen and sworn Notary of Geneva, have been sent for by *spectable*¹ John Calvin, minister of the word of God in the Church of Geneva, and burgess of the said Geneva, who, being sick and indisposed in body alone, has declared to me his intention to make his testament and declaration of his last will, begging me to write it according as it should be by him dictated and pronounced, which, at his said request, I have done, and have written it under him, and according as he hath dictated and pronounced it, word for word, without omitting or adding anything—in form as follows:

In the name of God, I John Calvin, minister of the word of God in the Church of Geneva, feeling myself reduced so low by diverse maladies, that I cannot but think that it is the will of God to withdraw me shortly from this world, have advised to make and set down in writing my testament and declaration of my last will in form, as follows:

In the first place, I render thanks to God, not only because he has had compassion on me, his poor creature, to draw me out of the abyss of idolatry in which I was plunged, in order to bring me to the light of his gospel and make me a partaker of the doctrine of salvation, of which I was altogether unworthy, and continuing his mercy he has supported me amid so many sins and short-comings, which were such that I well deserved to be rejected by him a hundred thousand times—but what is more, he has so far extended his mercy towards me as to make use of me and of my labour, to convey and announce the truth of his gospel; protesting that it is my wish to live and die in this faith which he has bestowed on me, having no other hope nor refuge except in his gratuitous adoption, upon which all my salvation is founded; embracing the grace which he has given me in our Lord Jesus Christ, and accepting the merits of his death and passion, in order that by this means all my sins may be buried; and praying him so to wash and cleanse me by the blood of this great Redeemer, which has been shed for us poor sinners, that I may appear before his face, bearing as it were his image.

I protest also that I have endeavoured, according to the measure of grace he has given me, to teach his word in purity, both in my sermons and writings, and to expound faithfully the Holy Scriptures; and moreover, that in all the disputes I have had with the enemies of the truth, I have never made use of subtle craft nor sophistry, but have gone to work straight forwardly in maintaining his quarrel. But alas! the desire which I have had, and the zeal, if so it must be called, has been so cold and so sluggish that I feel myself a debtor in everything and everywhere, and that, were it not for his infinite goodness, all the affection I have had would be but as smoke, nay, that even the favours which he has accorded me would but render me so much the more guilty; so that my only recourse is this, that being the Father of mercies he will show himself the Father of so miserable a sinner.

Moreover, I desire that my body after my decease be interred in the usual manner, to wait for the day of the blessed resurrection.

Touching the little earthly goods which God has given me here to dispose of, I name and appoint for my sole heir, my well-beloved brother Antony Calvin, but only as honorary heir however, leaving to him the right of possessing nothing save the cup which I have had from Monsieur de Varennes, [*who was Guillame de Trie* (editor)] and begging him to be satisfied with that, as I am well assured he will be, because he knows that I do this for no other reason but that the little which I leave may remain to his children. I next bequeath to the college ten crowns, and to the treasure of poor foreigners the same sum. Item, to Jane, daughter of Charles Costan and my half-sister, that is to say, by the father's side, the sum of ten crowns; and afterwards to each of my nephews, Samuel and John, sons of my aforesaid brother, forty crowns; and to each of my nieces, Anne, Susannah, and Dorothy, thirty crowns. As for my nephew David their brother, because he has been thoughtless and unsettled, I leave to him but twenty-five crowns as a chastisement. This is the total of all the property which God has given me, according as I have been able to value and estimate it, whether in books, furniture, plate, or anything else. However, should the result of the sale amount to anything more, I mean that it should be distributed among my said nephews and nieces, not excluding David, if God shall have given him grace to be more moderate and staid. But I believe that on this subject there will be no difficulty, especially when my debts shall be paid, as I have given charge to my brother on whom I rely, naming him executor of this testament along with the *spectable* Laurence de Normandie, giving them all power and authority to make an inventory

without any judicial forms, and sell my furniture to raise money from it in order to accomplish the directions of this testament as it is here set down in writing, this 25th April, 1564.

Witness my hand,
JOHN CALVIN.

¹*British and Foreign Evangelical Review*. The Works of Calvin in English, by the Calvin Translation Society. 52 vols. 8vo. 1843-1856. Letters of John Calvin. by Dr JULES BONNET.

²In a work published a short time before Calvin's death, Beza made the following statement upon this point,—a statement fully confirmed by all the facts of the case. “Hoc enim (Deo sit gratia) vel ipsa insidia Calvino tribuat necesse eat, ut quamvii sit ipee ex eorum numero qui quotidie discendo consenescent, nullum tamen dogma jam lade ab initio ad hoc usque tempus, in tam multis et tam laboriosis scriptis, ecclesiæ proposuerit, in quo ilium sententiam mutare et a semetip so dissentire oportuerit.” —*Absterso Calumniarum*, p. 263.

³In proof of the truth of this statement of the high estimate of Calvin's qualifications and success in the department of exegesis, formed by the most competent judges in the present day, it is enough to refer to Professor Tholuck's elaborate Dissertation on Calvin as an interpreter of the holy Scripture. Tholuck has published editions of Calvin's Commentaries on the Psalms, and on the New Testament; and, in the dissertation referred to, he has set forth the grounds of the high estimate he had formed of the value of these works, under the four heads of Calvin's *doctrinal impartiality*, exegetical tact, various learning, and deep Christian piety. Tholuck's very high estimate of Calvin, as an interpreter of Scripture, is the more to be relied on, and has probably exerted the greater influence in Germany, because he is not himself a Calvinist, and, indeed, brings out, in the conclusion of his dissertation, his divergence from Calvin's views on predestination and cognate topics. Bretschneider and Hengstenberg also, critics of the highest reputation, and of very different schools of theology, both from Tholuck and from each other, have borne the strongest testimony to Calvin's qualifications as an interpreter.

⁴There are some additional and very valuable testimonies to Calvin's character and writings given in his life in Haag's “*La France Protestante*,” tom. iii. p. 109, especially from three of the most eminent literary men of the present age, Guizot, Mignet, and Sayous. Haag brings out also an interesting contrast between the candid admissions of some of the older Romish writers, and the unscrupulous mendacity of his latest popish biographer Audin.

⁵*Letters of John Calvin*, by Dr Bonnet, vol. iii. p. 429.

⁶“*Letters*,” vol. i. pp. 50, 51.

⁷Vol. i. pp. 77—8.

⁸*Calvin's Letters*, by Bonnet, vol. i. pp. 118-125.

⁹Vol. i., p. 75, 79, 86, 89, 111, 119, 130, 133, 147, 151, 187, 195, 205, 208, 214, 222, 230, 242, 270, 283, 421, 434, 452; vol. ii., p. 43, 50, 53, 95, 123, 257, 260—1, 295, 323, 377, 386, 407: and of his moderation and forbearance, Letters xxv. And xxvii., p. 78, 87, 90—92, 113, 117, 126, 135, 158-9, 163, 175, 188—9, 194, 204, 211, 243, 257, 266, 270, 290, 306, 315, 356, 380, 396, 409, 417, 430; vol. ii., p. 20—1, 47—9, 106, 177, 192, 212, 224, 233, 258, 270, 286, 815, 333, 346, 353, 894, 418, 428, 432.

¹⁰*Literature of Europe*, vol. i. pp. 547.

¹¹Vol. i. pp. 442—6.

¹²Vol. i. p. 444.

¹³Vol. i. p. 446.

¹⁴Augusti Corpus Lib. Symb. Diss. that., pp. 590-2.

¹⁵Burnet, after narrating (*History of the Reformation*, P. II. B. I., under the year 1549) Cranmer's very prominent and influential share in bringing about these two burnings,—the one that of an Anabaptist woman, the other that of an Arian Dutchman,—adds, "One thing was certain, that what he did in this matter flowed from no cruelty of temper in him, no man being further from that black disposition of mind; but it was truly the effect of those principles by which he governed himself."

¹⁶Armand de la Chapelle, whose review of Allwoerden's *Historia Michaelis Serveti* in the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée* for 1728—9, tom. i. and ii., is characterised by great ability and fairness, thus describes the conduct of some of Calvin's accusers in his time, and they do not seem to be much improved yet:—"Je soutiens qu'il n'y a que malice noire, et qu'aigre intolerance dans l'animosité personnelle que certaines gens font paroître contre cet illustre Reformateur. —(*Bib. Rais.*, torn. i. p. 400.)

¹⁷Vol. i. pp. 432—4.

¹⁸Vol. i. p. 446.

¹⁹Vol. i. p. 433.

²⁰"Bibliothèque Anglaise," torn. ii. 1717.

²¹"Bolsec," p.11.

²²"Bibl. Rais.," tom. i. p. 390.

²³*Historia Anti-trinitariorum*, tom. ii. p. 355.

²⁴*Leaders of the Reformation*, pp. 101, 188, 144.

²⁵Pp. 138—9.

²⁶Dyer's *Life of John Calvin*, p. 314.

²⁷P. 362.

²⁸P. 361.

²⁹Dyer, p. 316.

³⁰Pp. 319-325.

³¹We have already intimated that we consider the Art. "Servetus," in the 4th volume of Chauffepie's "Nouveau Dictionnaire," or Continuation of Bayle, as giving the best and fairest view of the whole case. The fullest collection of the materials bearing upon his trial at Geneva, is to be found in Rilliets' work, entitled "Relation de Proces Criminel," etc., published in 1844; or, still better, in a translation of this work, published at Edinburgh, in 1846, under the title "Calvin and Servetus," with an excellent Introduction, consisting chiefly of a fine sketch of Calvin's life, by the Rev. Dr Tweedie, who has also contributed a valuable article to the "*North British Review*," vol. xiii., exhibiting a very successful appreciation of Calvin himself, and of his modern biographers, Henry, Dyer, and Audin.

³²Coleridge tells us of a friend of his, "a stern humorist," who bound up a number of Unitarian

tracts into a volume, and titled it upon the back, "Salvation made easy, or, Every man his own redeemer."