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I. CALVIN'S TRADUCERS—WHO THEY WERE
AND WHAT THEY THOUGHT.

To understand a man should be the honest purpose of all who undertake to write about him. It is acknowledged by those not too friendly to the system known as Calvinistic, that John Calvin is the worst understood of all the men of history, and the best hated. Fairbairn says: "He is one of the best hated men in history; round his name fierce controversies have raged, and still rage. * * There is something imposing in the multitude and variety of aversions that converge on Calvin."

Calvin's doctrine of Election, which he describes as a profound mystery and which must not be curiously examined, but nevertheless is a profitable doctrine, calculated to destroy the very roots of pride and presumption, is the initial cause of the intense hatred of his name. In his system of theology, under this doctrine, occurs the startling statement, that God, for the glory of his righteousness, consigns some to damnation; and the expression, brought against him, "A terror-moving decree." "This celebrated place; *Decretum quidem horribile fateor*, which does honor to his feelings, has also served as the foundation of abuse." (Ancillon, *Melanges Critiques*, p. 37. People accuse Calvin, says that writer, of describing God's decrees as horrible, whereas he simply meant that we ought to tremble at contemplating this mystery; as he himself expresses it in the French version of the "Institutes." Rivett, III, in his treat-

IV.—CHRIST, THE MODEL PREACHER.

There is a wondrous witchery in human eloquence. Among all the heroes of history and romance, there are none that stand higher, or that have wielded a more tremendous influence, than public speakers. "The pen is mightier than the sword," and in one sense the tongue is mightier than the pen. There are some writers who are but ordinary speakers, and there are some orators whose speeches, or whose sermons are but ordinary compositions, looked at as literary productions.

There are certain peculiarities of temperament, certain tones of voice, certain graces of elocution that are needed to make a public speaker effective and magnetic in his influence over an audience. It is said that Jonathan Edwards seldom raised his eyes from his manuscript while he was preaching. But such was the terrific piling up of words and images and figures of speech that on one occasion, while preaching on the text, "Their feet shall slide in due time," a brother minister sitting behind him sprang up involuntarily and exclaimed, "Brother Edwards, is there no mercy in God?" Spurgeon held six thousand people every Sabbath, in the same church, in almost breathless interest by his simple but transcendent eloquence. And at each division of his subject the unconscious change of position in the vast audience would sound like suppressed applause, or like the rustling of forest leaves in autumn. Chalmers, one of the finest pulpit orators that ever lived, read his sermons closely, and so did Guthrie at one time, and then he memorized. But there was such a combination of prose and poetry in both of these marvellous men that it did not need the grace and elegance of a finished delivery for them to hold a complete mastery over the largest and the most turbulent audience.

But in the Gospel by John we have an unwilling tribute to a certain speaker from men who have been sent to arrest

him scandalized at his growing reputation, and fearful of losing their own place and power, the Chief Priests and Pharisees had sent these officers to arrest him and bring him as a prisoner before them. They came back without the criminal, and on being asked, "Why have ye not brought him?" the officers answered, "Never man spake like this man." There was such a supernatural, overwhelming power in his speaking that they dared not lay their hands on him, but came back abashed and ashamed of their ungodly errand. Similar results have sometimes followed where other merely human speakers were sought to be arrested. Officers of the law have been unable to prosecute their calling, and even mobs have been quelled by the firm and fiery eloquence of resolute and courageous statesmen. But never was this expression used of any other speaker, "Never man spake like this man." As a preacher he stood preeminent over any other preacher that ever lived. What, then, was his mode of preaching?

There must have been something striking in the personal appearance of our Saviour, Not that this was necessary to make him an effective orator. Paul, who was himself no mean orator, confesses that his "bodily appearance was weak and his speech contemptible." But from the very nature of the case we must regard this God-man as perfect in his physical form and features. He was the second Adam" in every sense, and as such, with a body miraculously born of a virgin, he must have been perfect in all his features and in all his organs. We read of his being weary and thirsty and hungry, but we never read of his being sick. We take it then that he had a perfect human body, one exactly adapted to all the work for which God sent him into the world. But a part of that work was preaching the gospel. And so he must have had a bright, sparkling eye, a commanding person, attractive features, a clear, silver, toned, magnetic voice, that could whisper pardon to a penitent outcast, or that could still the tempest on stormy Genesaret. He must have had a mind quick in its intuitions, clear and forcible in its logical powers, impulsive and sym-

pathetic, imaginative and poetical as it caught image from all of his environment. The snow of Lebanon, the lily of the valley, the rose of Sharon, the sower, the fisherman, the vinedresser, the shepherd, the sparrow, the serpent, the dove, all these seemed to catch his attention and were utilized, in the way, not merely of ornament, but of illustration and improvement.

But, along with this, there was another element which at times made a very deep impression on his audience. "He spake as one having authority and not as the Scribes." It is an element of success in any speaker to be persuaded in his own mind that his cause is a just one. "Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just," in the forum as well as on the battlefield. A lawyer, defending a cause which he believes in his conscience to be unjust, is always speaking against his own convictions and he can not defend it in such a way as to do justice to himself. But let his judgment fall in with the interests of his client and he will speak in such a manner as to convince the court and the jury that he believes what he says, and whether he succeeds or not they will give him credit for honesty and sincerity in all that he says.

Let a preacher feel sure of his footing, be honest in his convictions and thoroughly impressed with the truth and importance of his subject and he will show it by his very manner as well as by all that he says. But let him get hold of a subject of speculative theology, on which honest men may differ, and there will be a stammering hesitancy, a halting uncertainty, indicating that his own mind is not fully made up on such a subject.

But Jesus always spake with authority. He felt all the time that he knew all that could be known about every subject he discussed. He knew what was in God, for he was God. As God he knew what God had a right to demand. As a man he knew what man ought to render. He knew all about nature, for he had made nature. It was just as easy for him to change water into wine as it was to make these same elements grow up, out of earth and air, into a vine, into grapes, into juice, into wine. In the one

case the process was simpler and quicker than the other, that was all. It was as easy for him to quiet the winds as to stir them up, to bring back the spirit of Lazarus as to command it away from the body.

He knew all about the Ten Commandments, for he had written them with his own finger on the tables of stone and handed them to Moses. The moral law was but a reprint of his own holy nature; and of course he knew what he meant when he made it. He knew all about the Temple service, sacrifices, oblation, and all that, because he had given Moses a pattern of all these things on the Mount, and he had been there all the time "on the mercy-seat." He knew all the prophecies, for it was he who had spoken, through Moses, and Daniel, and Isaiah, and Elijah, and Elisha, and all the rest. He had a right, then, to speak by authority, to contradict all false traditions, and to tear away that tinsel mask that hid away the precious spiritual truths embodied in all these forms and ceremonies; as well as all that genuine truth which they had superseded by their false traditions. Hence, we find such dogmatic language as this: The Scribe says this; the Pharisee says this; the Sadducee says this. "But I say unto you." I, who have a right to speak, who know what I say; who am not speculating, but asserting what I know. "I say unto you." Here was authority, rightful authority, divine authority, unquestionable authority. And it was an authority which he had a right to maintain, and which he knew he had a right to maintain in the face of all the world.

And what was true of the law, is just as true of the gospel. Of course he knew all about that. He came to preach the gospel, and in a sense he was the gospel, the impersonation, the embodiment of this good news from God to man, from heaven to earth. He knew what sin was, what it deserved, what it demanded; and he came as a "ransom for sinners," as the "Redeemer of God's elect." And hence, in regard to all this, he had a right to speak by authority. Hence, his denunciation of sin, of Phariseeism, of self-righteousness. And hence, all those sayings of his: "Except

ye repent, ye shall likewise perish ;" " Ye must be born again ;" " No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him ;" " He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned ;" " He spake as one having authority."

Again, his sermons were eminently practical. There was no speaking for the mere sake of speaking. He never spoke merely to pass away the time, or merely to tickle the fancy, or please the ear of his hearers. He seemed to feel that three years was a very short time for such a work as he had before him, and that his words should be few and well chosen. It is not pretended that we have here in the gospels all that he spoke, even in the way of public preaching. But taking these sermons as a sample of the whole, we find every sermon, and every truth spoken, one of the greatest practical importance. There is no concerning of himself, or of his hearers, with matters that did not concern them. They tried once to turn him aside, as to the time of the second coming and the judgment, but he put a stop to the useless discussion, with these practical words : " But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man ; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed ; watch and pray ; for ye know not when the time is. And what I say unto you, I say unto all. Watch."

At another time, it is written : " Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved ? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Thus, there was always a practical turn given to every question that sprang up for discussion ; and he would never allow himself to be turned aside from that one prominent purpose that had brought him into the world.

Sometimes we listen to sermons that are beautiful compositions, chaste and elegant in style, faultless in rhetorical finish, abounding in all the luxuriant ornaments of fancy and imagination, and delivered with the most finished grace of elocution. But after all there is no practical point to them, no intentional stirring up of the conscience, no im-

parting of useful information. Our Saviour never preached such a sermon as that. He came, not to lull men, but to startle them ; not to soothe the sinner, but to awaken him ; not to flatter men, but to denounce their sin, and thus to save them ; not to seek personal popularity, but to tell them plain, practical, wholesome truths, such as he knew would excite their animosity, and provoke their jealousy, and arouse their resentment, until, "in their folly and madness, they would put him to death on the cross. The men who have seemed most like him in this respect, are such as Paul, and Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and Wesley, and Whitfield. Men who did not fear the face of man, but tried, through evil and through good report, in spite of all opposition and persecution, to preach the plain, simple, cutting, startling truth, in the plainest, simplest, and most practical way. Not indifferent to ornament, nor ignoring any of the graces of oratory ; but anxious to press upon the conscience and upon the heart, that which would, under God's grace, enlighten the one, and regenerate the other.

This is one of the most striking characteristic of our Saviour's preaching. With a mind such as he had, a memory, a fancy, an imagination, that had inspired all the beauties of David, and Isaiah, and Solomon, and Job, what a series of sermons, filled with poetic prose, he might have left upon record ! And knowing, as he did, all about the mysteries of election and decrees, of the millennium and resurrection, of the inter-mediate state, and the general judgment, of the employments and enjoyments of heaven, knowing all that is ever to be known of all these mysteries, what a wonderful book of sermons, he might have left for us, to answer all these vague questions, that cause us so much concern and so much anxiety ! But instead of this, he seems to take hold of the most common, every day, practical subjects, and without one redundant expression, or superfluous image, he presses these home upon the consciences of his hearers. Sitting down upon a well, he took that water as a text and preached to a woman, "which was a sinner," one of the richest and most beautiful sermons

that ever was delivered. Collecting his twelve disciples around him he gives "the sermon on the mount," the most spiritual, the most exhaustive, the most comprehensive commentary on the moral law that ever was written. And so it was everywhere. All his sermons were practical; theological in a certain sense, of necessity, but practical, pointed, pungent, directed to a certain object, and intended, all cases, for a specific purpose. "Never man spake like that man."

Once more. Our Saviour preached with a great deal of emotion. His was not a cold phlegmatic temperament: nor was his style that of a mere abstract logician, a mere philosophizing reasoner on these questions of such vast importance to the human soul. He was always calm, self-possessed, deliberate, but there must have been upon his features the play of constant emotion. When he looked at Pharisees, and said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" We must believe that his eyes flashed fire and his voice trembled with suppressed emotion. When he pictured the scenes of the final judgment, he must have mounted to the grandeur of that august scene, and his soul must have thrilled with victory as he looked forward to that triumphant procession of all the redeemed. We know that he wept at the grave of Lazarus, and that he wept on the Mount of Olives, as he looked down on doomed Jerusalem. When he stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," we must believe that there was emotion in all this, deep, true, tender-hearted emotion. His voice, his features, his gestures, all must have shown that his heart was deeply moved, his whole emotional nature excited to its deepest depths, when he uttered these words.

"If you wish me to weep, you must weep yourself," is a

classic maxim, and it is true. If a speaker wishes to excite sympathy, or to arouse the emotion of his hearers, he must show that there is emotion in his own heart. This was evidently, and eminently the case with our Saviour. Not mere sentimentalism, or sham and assumed emotion. But pathos, leashed on love, and tenderness, and genuine sympathy. Denunciation, loud and pointed and deep, based on hatred to sin, and the highest regard for the law of God, and the true welfare of man.

Indeed, in him, there was all the loveliest traits of God and man, blended into perfect harmony. And when he spoke, his voice was but the utterance of a heart full of emotion. He must have shown it, in the play of his features, in the sparkle of his eye, in the tones of his voice, in every gesture, in every movement. He could electrify an audience as no other man ever did—for "never man spake like this man."

Once more Our Saviour was deeply in earnest and hence he always used the simplest language. This is always the case with a man who is really in earnest. An objection was made to the preaching of Dr. Archibald Alexander by a good old Christian woman that she could understand every word he spoke. Her idea was, that wisdom always uses the longest and most difficult words, and she did not know that in conveying truth the simplest language is always the best. But this is so, and it is a curious fact, that wherever we find a record of the words of Jesus, we find the most remarkable simplicity. It is not often the case that there is any obscurity in what he said, and the meaning is just as plain and simple as such truths can be made. In some of his teachings there are truths hard for the human mind to understand. But the difficulty lies in the truth itself and not in his mode of expressing it. He always seemed to be trying to bring himself down to the mind of the weakest hearer, and his earnestness made him use the simplest figures and the simplest words. That is very apt to be the case with a man whose soul is on fire with some truth, which he is trying to impress on others. What

are known as the mere graces of oratory. will do well enough as a display of rhetoric. But when a man is in earnest. is anxious to do good, to get people to think as he thinks, and to believe as he believes, he will trouble himself very little with these mere ornaments, these classic elaborations of style. Men who use good English are educated and cultivated as writers, or speakers, will always use language suited to convey the thought. But a man who is in earnest, thoroughly in earnest, will care very little about the style. The simplest will be the best.

And now, in this respect, as in all others, it may be said of our Saviour, "Never man spake like this man." He used the most familiar, everyday, common, homely images. He spoke in the simplest language, even while discussing the most abstruse subjects. But he felt every word that he uttered, knowing that eternity was hanging on every sermon and that what he spoke was to be "a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death." Nobody ever thought that he was assuming a sentiment he did not feel, or feigning an emotion that was not real. Everyone who came under the magic spell of his voice, or who saw what he was aiming at, in all his words, must have felt, Here is an earnest man, a man thoroughly imbued with his subject, perfectly sincere in what he says, and speaking with a purpose. with a motive, with a burning desire to do good, to glorify God, to save souls from death and hell. "Never man spake like this man."

And now, let us ask, What was the effect, and what were the results of his preaching? It would seem that such a speaker, such an orator, such a preacher as this, would sweep away all opposition and compel men to believe what he said by the very power of his eloquence. In a certain sense his sermon did make what reporters now call a profound impression. That is to say, the learned casuist was startled, the self-righteous Pharisee was insulted and enraged. Those who "looked and longed for his appearing," were delighted, and "the common people heard him gladly." Different sects were rejoiced beyond measure, as

antagonistic sects were put to silence. Multitudes collected to hear him preach, and during the sermon were held spell-bound by the witchery of his eloquence.

But when the rebound came many a time they were inflamed with the deepest indignation, and threatened his life in the way of retaliation, for his cutting rebuke and his withering sarcasm. In other cases, there was a melting down of hard hearts, under the sweet influence of truth; a softening of bitter asperities, a toning down of harsh judgments. But on the whole, there was nothing like the immediate effects that have since resulted from far inferior agents. The very men who heard him preach were ready to betray and crucify him. Judas Iscariot was a constant listener, and there never was a man who showed less of the power of truth upon his heart. The fact is, the most of his hearers were filled with crude notions of the temporal Messiah, and never seemed to take in the conception of a "Spiritual Kingdom." The most of them seemed to infer, from his words and works, that he was more than an ordinary man, that he was inspired, and had a double portion of the Spirit. But few of them, if any, seemed to have a clear conception of his divinity. And it was not until after the resurrection that Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God."

In all the ministry of our Saviour there were not as many conversions as there have been under the preaching of a single sermon by a human preacher. We never hear of more than five hundred disciples together at one time until the day of Pentecost. How many there were in all we can not tell. But we must infer there were very few, even with all the preaching of John the Baptist, of the twelve Apostles, and of the seventy who went out two by two, added to the incomparable sermons that for three years had been preached by him who spake as never man had spoken, or has spoken since.

But we are not to imagine from this want of immediate results that our Saviour's was a barren ministry. Not by a great deal. The most of those who were converts under his

ministry, unlike many of the professed converts of the present day, became active preachers themselves. Eleven of them were his own Apostles, and any one of these was worth a thousand ordinary converts in the way of active agency toward the spread of the Gospel. Many others, no doubt, went to work in the ministry after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. There were many pious women too, who, under his influence, were made zealous and useful agents in the spread of truth, and labored with Paul and the other Apostles in the Gospel! Seeds of truth were also planted by him in many a heart which did not spring into life until after Pentecost. Saul of Tarsus may have gotten his impression of Gospel truth from some sermon of Jesus. Those thousands who were converted under the preaching of Peter and Stephen and Philip and others had been taught by the parables of Christ, awakened by his sermons' aroused by his miracles, startled and confounded by his death and his resurrection; and were just waiting for his Spirit, without whose influence even the preaching of the Son of God was utterly without avail.

Even now it is often the case that a faithful pastor, during a long and apparently fruitless ministry, is sowing seeds of truth. He leaves the field or dies, feeling that his life and his ministry are failures. But by and by the Spirit is poured out and scores of souls are quickened into life who had been impressed and almost saved under the ministry of one who may have died with a broken heart, or left the field in hopeless dejection and depression. Just so, in one sense, it was with our Saviour. "Never man spake like this man," and yet he died on the cross, with only a few weeping women to attest their sincerity and their affection. Judas had betrayed him, Peter had denied him and they all forsook him and fled. One hundred and twenty were all that met in the upper chamber, with one accord waiting and praying for the promise of the Spirit. But when these started out with "the gift of tongues," and every man's tongue set on fire by "the cloven tongues as of fire," thousands who had heard the Master preach, without a radical change of heart, were

now "cut to the heart," convicted, converted by his wondrous and irresistible grace.

And what is more, these very sermons which he spake as never man spake, were left on record. Many of them we have in our Bibles. We have read them and our fathers and mothers read them; and all down the centuries generation after generation has read them and studied them and commented on them. They have been woven into all our literature, sacred and profane. They are to a large extent the basis of all the sermons that have been preached from Paul to the present day. It is doubtful whether there ever lived a Gospel minister who did not preach from one to a dozen sermons on the "Parable of the Prodigal Son." And what is true of that is just as true of other sermons preached by our Saviour. They have been the basis of millions of sermons and millions of tracts and religious articles that have been preached with all the graces of human eloquence, or written with all the ability and devotion of earnest piety.

Of him it may be emphatically said, "He being dead, yet speaketh," and he will continue to speak in his own words, and as these are expounded and enforced by others, until the last sinner is redeemed and ushered into that everlasting home which is the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that is now waiting for his saints.

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