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I.

THE LITERARY HISTORY OF CALVIN'S "INSTITUTES."

THE *Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin might well claim attention, merely on the score of its position in the history of Christian thinking on the themes of the Gospel, even though it were as dull and as alien from our own modes of thought as the Zend-Avesta. It is, on the contrary, however, the fundamental treatise in the development of that evangelical theology to which the Reformed Churches are committed, and it is to it that they must look back as the first serious attempt to cast into a system the body of truth to which they adhere as taught in the Holy Scriptures. And from the point of view of mere literary standing, the *Institutes* of John Calvin holds a position so supreme in its class that every one who would profess to know the world's best literature must perforce make himself acquainted with it. It is saying too little to say that, in reading this work, we are brought into contact with a great book: would we justly express its eminence, we must say that it is one of the world's greatest books—absolutely the greatest book of its class. What Thucydides is among Greek, or Gibbon among eighteenth-century English historians, what Shakespeare is among dramatists, or the *Iliad* among epics, that Calvin's *Institutes* is among dogmatic treatises. "The *Institutio* of Calvin," says Dr. William Cunningham,* to whom will be conceded a right to an opinion in such a matter, "is the most important work in the history of theological science, that which is more than any other creditable

* *Reformers*, etc., p. 295.

ology : of these, however, there are only underlying hints in this good book. — *Christ Our Penal Substitute*. By Robert L. Dabney, D.D., LL.D. 12mo, pp. 115. (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication [1898].) This useful little book will be valued not only as a legacy from Dr. Dabney, now gone to his reward, but also for its own sake as a clear, strong and incisively written defense of the central principle of the Gospel. Dr. Dabney saw with surprise and pain the inroads which the Socinianizing unwillingness to accept the Biblical doctrine of the substitutional sacrifice of Christ is making in our modern Church life and thought, and gave some of his latest hours on earth to writing this defense of the Gospel of the blood of Christ. Of course it is well done : no one could have done it better : all of Dr. Dabney's keenness of logical analysis, vigor of expression and firmness of handling are here. Special attention is given to the irrationality and inconsistency of the assault and to its roots in a utilitarian theory of punishments and a misunderstanding of the doctrine of imputation. It should be added that the contents of the volume represent the second course of "Ott's Lectures," delivered at Davidson College, North Carolina.

V.—PRACTICAL THEOLOGY.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH. By REV. W. H. H. MARSH. With Introduction by Franklin Johnson, D.D., University of Chicago. Philadelphia : American Baptist Publication Society, 1898. Pp. 544.

This vigorous polemic is a reminder of the serious differences that exist to-day among evangelical Christians. That our author is evangelical, no one can doubt. His estimate of the Scriptures as a complete revelation of the will of God, of the atonement of Jesus Christ, of the dependence of the Church upon the Holy Spirit, of the need of individual regeneration, and of the dangers of error and corruption which confront the modern Church, indicates a firm hold upon the fundamental verities of our common faith and wins our warmest approbation. But when he passes to the discussion of his theme and sets forth his views upon the Church, the Ministry and the Sacraments, his divergence goes far to neutralize his accord with us. His doctrine is set forth under the stress of intense personal conviction, with no effort at harmony, and in rather sharp conflict with not only the Reformed, but the Lutheran, the Anglican and the Methodist conceptions of the Church and her Ministry and Sacraments. One is obliged regretfully to concede that the forces of evangelical Christendom are divided upon issues which, if not fundamental, are for practical purposes of first importance. The perusal of Mr. Marsh's book has deepened in us the conviction that in the pending controversy with Ritualism the issue is really a three-sided one, and that while in some phases, such as regeneration, we rejoice to own the fellowship of our Baptist brethren, there are others, such as the Church, in which, as between the two, we must accord that fellowship to the Ritualist. The Ritualist exaggerates the visible Church, but the Baptist disintegrates it. For ourselves, if we must choose, we prefer exaggeration to disintegration.

An initial difficulty appears in the terminology adopted. This is great enough in the volume proper, but is accentuated by the opening sentences of the Introduction, in which it is announced that (p. xi) "there are three great types of church government in the Christian world : they are monarchy, oligarchy and autonomy." Somewhere within these three terms, Dr. Johnson must intend to place the Presbyterian polity ; and yet not one of them covers our representative system of government. The division, therefore, is