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Editorial

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Editorial

In his book, The Teaching of Calvin for Today (Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), Harold J. Whitney introduces John Calvin in these very descriptive words:

Enigma to many of his associates, John Calvin continues something of a mystery even to his admirers today. Self-concentrated, austere, logical he was a leader who commanded respect by the clarity and tenacity of his ideas reinforced by a resolute, unyielding spirit. His was a mind that did not flame with human passion but rather glowed with white heat almost like ice aflame.

Logical consistency, penetrating yet comprehensive intellectual powers, cold courage, unswerving rectitude of character and marvelous capacity for system made him the natural leader of the second generation of the reformers—the man above all others who gathered up the Reformation teachings and wove them into a coherent system. (p. 17)

No one can be indifferent to such a man. Very few people have been indifferent to John Calvin. During his life time he was loved or hated, greatly appreciated or vigorously opposed. And so it has continued since his death in 1564. Calvin's disciples are usually enthusiastic in their praise; his critics are often vehement in their denunciations.

It should be obvious, also to those of us who proudly bear the name "Calvinist," that there are errors and resultant dangers involved in both extremes. One can be so

zealous in his devotion to John Calvin that he is unable to detect Calvin's faults and errors. On the other hand, one can be so forceful in his criticism of Calvin that he cannot appreciate the power of Calvin's person and position.

But, in spite of these obvious errors and dangers, there have been these extreme reactions to the person and teachings of Calvin. This is especially true in the case of Calvin's teachings in regard to missions. To some mission enthusiasts the word "Calvinist" is a theological swear word. At the same time, there are those who make bold to speak of Calvin as though he were the Reformation's Director of Missions.

James De Jong, in "John Calvin in Mission Literature," avoids the errors and dangers of such extremism. He obviously appreciates many aspects of Calvin's stance regarding the mission of the church. Nevertheless he also points out weaknesses in Calvin's position.

It is not our intention to place De Jong's article in a place which is beyond the reach of legitimate and proper criticism. However, what he writes gives evidence of a balance which, it seems to us, is only possible when our evaluation of people and positions is normed by the standards of Scripture. It seems to us, further, that such biblically-normed balance is a mark of Christian scholarship, which Calvin himself would have noted with approval; it is a mark which should characterize the instruction given at Dordt College and the articles (including those of this issue) which appear in Pro Rege.

J.B.H.