

The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus.

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AMICABLE DISCUSSION.

Continued.

APPENDIX II.

An Historical Account of the Opinions that the First Reformers have given of one another, and of the effects of their preaching.

LUTHER.

About 1538, appeared in London, a work written, or at least approved by the English bishops, against the calvanistic sect of puritans. Calvin & Beza are there described [a] as intolergent & proud men who by open rebellion against their prince, & founded their gospel, and pretended to rule the churches with a more odious tyranny, than that, with which they had reproached the sovereign pontiffs. They protest in the presence of the Almighty God, that "amongst all the texts of Scripture quoted by Calvin or his disciples, in favour of the Church of Geneva against the Church of England, there is not a single one, that is not turned to a sense unknown to the Church and to all the Fathers, since the time of the apostles; so that were Augustin, Ambrose, Jerom, Chrysostom, &c. to return again to life and to see in what manner the scripture had been cited by these Genevese doctors, they would be astonished that the world should ever have met with a man, so audacious and extravagant as to dare, without the least colour of truth, to ill-treat in such a way the word of God, himself, his readers and the whole world." And after declaring that from this Genevese source an im poisoned, seditious and Catilvarian doctrine had been spread over England, they add; "Happy, a thousand times happy our island, if neither English nor Scot had ever put foot in Geneva, if they had never become acquainted with a single individual of these Genevese doctors!"

The partizans of Calvin have attempted, and for his credit, I wish they had succeeded in their attempt, to rescue his memory from the crime and disgrace of having the mark of infamy branded on his shoulder. "What must pass as an indisputable proof of the crimes imputed to Calvin, is that, after the accusation had been prepared against him, the Church of Geneva, not only did not shew the contrary, but did not even contradict the information, which Berthelier, commissioned by the persons of the same town, gave at Noyon. This information was signed by the most respectable inhabitants of Noyon, and was drawn up with all the accustomed forms of the law. And in the same information we see that this heresiarch having been convicted of an abominable sin, which was always

punished by fire, the punishment that he had deserved was at the intercession of his bishop, mitigated into that of the *fleur-de-lis*—Add to this, that Boiseque, having given the same information, Berthelier, who was still living in the time of Boiseque did not contradict it, as undoubtedly, he would have done, had he been able to do so, without going against the conviction of his conscience, and opposing the public belief. Thus the silence both of the whole town interested in the affair and also of his secretary, is, on this occasion, an infallible proof of the disorders imputed to Calvin." They were at that time so uncontested, that a Catholic writer, speaking of the scandalous life of Calvin, advances as a fact well known in England, that, "the leader of the Calvinists had been branded with the *fleur-de-lis* and had fled from his native town; and that his antagonist Wittaker, acknowledging the fact, merely replied by the following shameful comparison: Calvin has been stigmatized, so has St. Paul, so have others also." I find also that the grave and learned Doctor Stapleton, who had every opportunity of gaining information on this subject, having spent his life in the neighbourhood of Noyon, speaks of this adventure of Calvin's in the terms of one who was certain of the fact. "Inspiciuntur etiam adhuc hodie civitatis Noviodunensis in Picardia scrinia et rerum gestarum monumenta: in illis adhuc hodie legitur Joannem hunc Calvinum sodomice convictum, ex Episcopi et magistratus indulgentia, solo stigmate in tergo notatum, urbe excessisse; nec ejus familiaris honestissimi viri, adhuc superstites, impetrare hactenus potuerunt, ut hujus facti memoria, quæ toti familie notam aliquam inurit, e civicis illis monumentis ac scriniis eraderetur." Moreover the Lutherans, of Germany equally speak of it as of a fact: "De Calvini variis flagitiis et sodomiticis libidinis, ob quas stigma Joannis Calvini dorso impressum fuit a magistratu, sub quo vixit." "And as for the affected silence of Beza, it is replied, that the disciple having acquired notoriety by the same crimes and the same heresy as his master, he merits not the confidence of any one on this point."

It is very possible and most easy to dissemble like Beza and others after him; but surely, it is hardly possible to fabricate at pleasure the account that an eye-witness and that contemporaries have given us of the death of this man—an account which must excite compassion and terror in all who hear it. An eye witness, who was then his disciple gives the following information: "Calvanus in desperatione finiens vitam obiit turpissimo et scdissimo morbo, quem Deus rebellibus et maledictis com-

minatus est, prius exerceatus et consumptus. Quod ego verissime attestari audeo, qui funestum et tragicum illius exitum his meis oculis presens aspexi." The Lutherans of Germany testify, "Deum etiam in hoc sæculo judicium suum in Calvinum patefecisse, quem in virga furoris visitavit, atque horribiliter punivit, ante mortis infelicis horam. Deus enim manu sua potenti adeo hunc hereticum percussit, ut, desperata salute, dæmombus invocatis, jurans execrans, et blasphemans miserum, animam malignam exhalavit; verbis circa pudeuda in aposthenate seu ulcere scetentissime crescentibus, ita ut nullus assistentium scetorem amplius ferre posset."

On this subject I find an account too curious to be omitted here. "The Dean told me that an old Canon, a familiar friend of Calvin's, had formerly related to him the manner in which John Calvin died, and that he had learnt it from a man called Petit Jean, who was Calvin's valet and who attended on him to his last expiring breath. This man after his master's death, left Geneva, and went to reside again at Noyon. He related to this canon that Calvin on his death-bed made much lamentation, and that oftentimes he heard him cry out aloud and bitterly bewail his condition, and that one day he called him to him and said; Go to my study; and bring from such a part, 'The Office of our Lady according to the use at Noyon.' He went and brought it; and Calvin continued a long time praying to God from this office; he mentioned that the people of Geneva were unwilling to let many persons visit him in his illness, and said that he laboured under many complaints, such as imposthumes, the rash, the piles, the stone, the gravel, the gout, consumption, shortness of breath, and spitting of blood; and that he was struck by God as those of whom the Prophet speaks, *Telligit eos in posteriora; opprobrium sempiternum debet eis.*"(a)

This recital agrees with that of Boise, who also cites the testimony of those who attended upon Calvin in his last illness. For after having spoken of

(a) Remarques sur la vie de J. Calvin, taken from the records of the chapter at Noyon, the personal examination that took place in 1614; by James Desmay, Doctor of Sorbonne, vic. gen. of Rouen. This little work, dedicated to Lord Kay, earl of Arceaster, 1621, is to be found in the Bibliothèque du Roi.

It is the part of candour to signify that I have not seen a word about the famous *fleur-de-lis* in the work of M. Desmay, although he carefully made his enquiries in these places. I should be glad if that silence carried sufficient weight with it to destroy the very positive and public assertions of authors who wrote more than forty or fifty years before him. It appears that M. Desmay only examined the records of the Chapter and not those of the town. Moreover, it was then eighty years after the sentence had been passed upon Calvin, and we are assured that his friends had succeeded in removing it from the records of the town.