

From the Catholic Advocate.

HISTORY

Of the life, works and doctrines of Calvin, by Mr. Audin, Knight of the order of St. Gregory the Great, member of the Academy and literary circle of Lyons, of the Tiberine Academy of Rome, of the Academy of the Catholic Religion of the same city, &c. New edition, revised and corrected. Paris. 1843.

(CONTINUED.)

At Nerac, Calvin seems to have been active in the dissemination of his heretical principles, and made frequent missionary excursions into the country. On one of these he made the acquaintance of Louis du Tillet, register of the parliament of Paris, at whose retired country house at Claix, he found a pleasant and acceptable retreat, where he began his most serious work, *THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS*, (5)

The time he could spare from this literary occupation, he devoted to preaching, in the surrounding towns, and especially at Angouleme.

"He was living on the last benefits of a Church which he had denied, and denounced as 'a stepmother, and a prostitute,' and on the means furnished by a Queen famous for gallantry, whose morals and piety he lauded, continuing to assist at the Catholic offices, and composing latin discourses, which were pronounced out of the assembly of the synod at the temple of Saint Peter."

"He left Margaret, and reappeared at Orleans."

The reformation, in France, as in Germany, wherever it showed itself, produced on all sides disorder and trouble. In place of a uniform symbol, it brought contradictory confessions, which gave rise to interminable disputes. In Germany the Lutheran word caused a thousand sects to spring up, each of which wished to establish a Christian Republic on the ruins of Catholicism. Carlstadt, Schwenkfeld, Ecoampadius, Zwinglius, Munzer, Pockold, begotten by Luther, had denied their father and taught heterogeneous dogmas, of which every one passed for the production of the Holy Ghost. Luther, who no longer concealed himself beneath a monk's robe, who borrowed the ducal sword, drove before him all these rebel angels, and at the gate of Wittemberg stationed an executioner to prohibit their entrance: driven back into the provinces, the dissenters appealed to open force. Germany was, then, inundated with the blood of her noble intelligences born for her glory: Munzer died on the scaffold, and the anabaptists marched to punishment denying and cursing the Saxon who did violence to their faith. Every thing was perishing: painting, sculpture, poetry, letters: The reformation imitated Nero, and sang its triumph over ruins and blood."

"In France it was destined soon to excite similar tempests. It had already troubled the Church. It no longer, as before, sheltered itself beneath the shades of night, to propagate its doctrines. It

erected by the side of the Catholic pulpit another pulpit, from which its dogmas were defended by its disciples; it had its partisans at court, among the clergy, in the Universities and in the parliaments. Calvin's book *de clementia*, gained him a large number of proselytes: his disciples had an austere air, down cast eye, pale face, emaciated cheeks, all the signs of labour and sufferings. They mingled little with the world, avoided female conversation, the court, and shows; the bible was their book of predilection: they spoke, like the Saviour, in apologues. They were termed christians of the primitive Church. To resemble these, they only needed that which constitutes the very essence of christianity, viz; faith, hope and charity. To be convinced that their symbol was as diversified as their faces, it was only necessary to hear them speak; Some taught the sleep of the soul, after this life, would endure till the day of judgment; others, the necessity of a second baptism. Among them, there were Lutherans, who believed in the real presence, and Zwinglians who rejected it; apostles of free will, and defenders of fatalism; Melancthonians, who admitted an ecclesiastical hierarchy; Carlostadians, who maintained that every christian is a priest; realists, chained to the letter; idealists, who bent the letter to the thought; rationalists, who rejected every mystery; mystics, who lost themselves in the clouds, and unitritarians, who, like Servetus, admitted but two persons in God. These doctors all carried with them the same book—the bible."

"Servetus, or Servedus, a Spanish physician, had left his own country and established himself in 1581, at Hegenau, where he had published different treatises against the Trinity. He had disputed at Bale with Ocolampadius, sometime before this renegade from the Lutheran faith, "was strangled by the devil," if we are to believe the account given by Doctor Martin Luther. Servetus boasted that he triumphed over the theologian. Having left Bale in 1532 and crossed the Rhine, he came to hurl a solemn defiance at Calvin: the gauntlet was taken up by the curate of Pont-l'Éveque, the place of combat indicated, the day for the tournament named, but at the appointed hour, "the heart of this unhappy wretch failed," says Bza, "who having agreed to dispute, did not dare appear." Calvin, on his part, in his refutation of the errors of Servetus, published in 1554, boasts of having, in vain, offered the Spanish physician remedies suitable to cure his malady. Servetus pretends that his adversary was laying snares for him, which he had the good fortune to avoid. At a later period he forgot his part, and came to throw himself into the ambush of his enemy." (6)

At this period, the parliament found it necessary to make unusual efforts to arrest the progress of agitation. Calvin was watched, his liberty, and even his life, might be in peril in France, and he therefore resolved the leave the country. Be-

6. The case of Servetus will therefore be examined.

ides, he was disgusted with Francis 1st, for having given to a relation of the Constable, a benefice, for which he had made solicitation.

Having, in 1534, published at Orleans his "*Psychopannychia*," he determined to visit Bale, then the Athens of Switzerland. On his way, in company with Louis du Tillit, he met with a sad mishap. The domestic who attended them decamped with their baggage, leaving them to seek their way to Strasbourg, almost without clothing, and with only about thirty francs in their purse.

Had Calvin been an unprejudiced and impartial observer, Strasbourg would have taught him the folly of reform. Already the city, since 1521, had become Lutheran, Anabaptist, Zuinglian, and was then dreaming of a new transfiguration to be effected by Bucer, one of Calvin's new hosts.

At Bale, so long the abode of Erasmus, Calvin had an interview with his great philologist. Bucer, who was present, sought afterwards to know the opinion of the caustic old man, concerning his protego.

"Master," said he, "what think you of the new comer?"

"Erasmus smiled, and answered not. Bucer insisted; 'I behold,' said the author of the Colloquies, a 'great pest which is about to be born within the church, against the church.'"

"Calvin's *Psychopannychia*, is his first polemical work, and was designed to refute the sect of Anabaptists, vanquished, but not subdued, by the bloody day of Frankenhause. The spirit of Munzer revived in his disciples, who throughout Holland, Flanders, and France, were spreading their mystic reveries. Luther had exhorted himself to crush Munzer, imagining, that with the aid of his colored language, his pinuaric wrath, his flames and thunders, he would smite the chief of the ninners, as he had, they say all those dwarfs of theology, who were unable to stand before his face. From the summit of the mountain he had reappeared to Munzer, in the midst of lightnings, but these lightnings did not terrify his adversary, who looked him fixedly and boldly in the eye. Munzer also had a fiery language, of which he availed himself admirably to arouse the peasants; this time victory remained with the man of the sledge hammer. And Luther, who wished to terminate the matter at any cost, was reduced, as is well known, to avail himself of the sword of one of his electors. The wrecks, which escaped from the funeral obsequies of Thuringia, took refuge in a new land. France received, and listened to the prophets of Anabaptism."

"These Anabaptists maintained seducing doctrines. They dreamed of a sort of Jerusalem very different from the Jewish Jerusalem: Jerusalem quite spiritual, without sword, soldiers, or civil magistracy; the true city of the elect. Their speech was impeded with Pelagianism and Arianism; on several points of dogma they agreed with Catholics; on predestination, for example, and on the merits of works. Some

of them taught the sleep of the soul till the day of judgment. It was against these "sleepers" that Calvin determined to measure himself."

His treatise on clemency was a rhetorical declamation, whose elegant Latin was to bespeak favour for the writer, among the Ciceros of the epoch. In the *Psychopannychia*, Calvin should have become the rival of the pamphleter of Germany, of Luther himself. But we must laud his prudence, in not venturing to enter the list with a spirit of the temper of the Saxon.

He chose a different style, and in place of attempting the sallies, the play upon words, the conceits of Luther, he wrote like a skilful, biting disputant, but without warmth or enthusiasm.

"Sober by nature, he could not, like the Saxon monk, fertilize his brain in enormous pots of beer; moreover, beer was not as yet in use beyond the Rhine. Nor had he at his service, those German smoking houses, where of an evening, among the companions of gay science, his wearied mind could have revived its energies; the monks in France did not frequent the taverns.

"At this epoch, the great agitator of society, was, first, society itself, then Luther the great pamphleter, "whose books are quite full of Demons," who drove humanity into the paths of revolution, all the elements of which had been for a length of years prepared. Luther had sown the wind, Calvin came to reap the whirlwind. Not that he does not sometimes rise even to wrath, but it is a wrath, which savours of labour, and which he pursues as a rhymster would a rebellious epithet."

In writing against the Anabaptists, he could even offer some kind of apology for his harsh language. Would you know why? Because the Anabaptists, had thrown off "the papism." But when he came to deal with Catholics, or Catholic priests, he had no kind of misgiving, as may be seen in his writings against Gabriel de Sacconay, the preceptor of Lyons; He can then pour forth his dirty flood of vituperation and abuse, nor blush to pretend to the title of Christian minister.

Luther never cared much for the disputes concerning which Calvin wrote his *Psychopannychia*. He terms them "picked nutshells." Even Calvin said of these disputes, "I have reprov'd the foolish curiosity of those, who debate these questions, which, in fact, are but vexations of mind." He passed a just judgment upon his own work.

In a later addition of this work, published at Bale in 1535, Calvin resumes courage. Having no longer dread of Lieutenant Morin, he insults the papacy, in an epistle to his readers, which serves as preface to the work. According to him, France marches amid darkness. He calumniate the intelligence and the faith of his country.

To be continued.)