

LETTERS OF REV. JOHN CALVIN, compiled from the Original Manuscripts, and Edited with Historical notes by Dr. Jules Bonnet. Vol. I. Translated from the Latin and French Languages by David Constable. Edinburgh: Thomas Constable & Co. Toronto: John C. Gekko. 1855.

We are always glad, when we hear of any treasure brought from earlier generations to us, and as such hail with joy the volume noticed above. The letters of Calvin were, with his manuscripts, his own legacy to the Reformed Churches, bequeathed to them in one of his latest conversations. Various difficulties, however, prevented his friends from fulfilling his wish with regard to them for many years. The great plague which repeatedly desolated Geneva; great public and private disasters; the unsettled state of things everywhere, and the dangerous position of Protestantism in Europe generally seemed alike to conspire against the execution of Calvin's desire. All that could be done was to publish a portion of his Latin correspondence in 1575, and to gather and store up for happier times, as many more of his letters as could be obtained from any source. In this position matters stood until the French Government, a few years since, by an impulse one would have been very slow in expecting at their hands, charged Dr. Bonnet with a scientific mission to collect and publish the whole correspondence from any part in which it might be found. Honour to whom honour is due! M. de Falloux was the calumniator of the Roman Republic under Mazzini, but he was the author of the scheme to give the Great Reformer's Letters to the world.

The English edition of Mr. Bonnet's work is admirably translated by Mr. Constable, a brother of the publisher, and at one time an advocate in the Scottish Court, but now and for long past devoted to the higher walks of literature. It will form four volumes, and will contain at least six hundred letters, the greater part of which are now published for the first time. When it is remembered that to Calvin, Europe and England, and even more especially Scotland was indebted greatly for the extent to which civil and religious liberty was established, and that this correspondence includes many letters to the most illustrious personages of his day, as well as a large number to his ecclesiastical contemporaries, it will at once be seen how much light it throws on the whole era of the Reformation. It is especially interesting at this time when that great movement is so much detracted alike by Romanists and High Churchmen, and when, if ever, it is necessary to be able to justify and defend it.

THE MODERN TACTICS OF INFIDELITY.

Wonderful is the change which time has wrought upon the aspects of Infidelity—it no longer assaults the outworks of Christianity, as in the days of our forefathers; but foiled in every effort, it lies crushed beneath the ponderous folios and dissertations on miracles *et id genus omne*, which were hurled against it.—In our day, taking up its abode in the Word of God, by its pretentious scholarship and slashing criticism, it has

tried to cut up the precious volume into shreds and fragments. But from dark cellars and the deep recesses of monasteries, has MS. after MS. been drawn forth, and given its clear testimony to the integrity of the holy book. Its every objection being thus removed, and infidelity driven from its last stronghold, it turns round in a state of despair, and asks, "What shall I do next against my great foe, Christianity?" After long and earnest thought, it exclaims, "I have found, I have found it!"—"I will go forth and attack Christianity, through one of her noted leaders." Efforts are accordingly made to discover the most suitable.—Let one be found, who, from adventitious circumstances, has attained a more than merited degree of popularity;—one who is somewhat rash in the statements which he makes,—who writes hastily without any great grasp of thought, and who holds outre views about some portions of the word.—If he has written much, mistakes must necessarily be found in his writings; if he has been engaged in any stirring controversy, which has for the time overborne his feelings of Christian love, so much the better. And, if he receives with implicit faith, the mysterious dogmas of our glorious Gospel, numerous points of attack may be found. Such a champion of the truth appears in the person of Dr. Cumming, of London, and so tempting an opportunity was not to be overlooked. It is not therefore astonishing that the *Westminster Review*, the great advocate of spiritual infidelity, has, in its last number, made a most daring and uncharitable attack upon the doughty opponent of Dr. Wiseman. But the real intent of the article is apparent both from its internal contents and from its title, "Evangelical Teaching; Dr. Cumming." It is a most barefaced attack upon the truth. Under the pretence of criticising his writings, and claiming strict impartiality, the character of Dr. C., as an author and preacher, is unsparingly assailed.

After a short and sharp criticism upon the style of his writings, it is affirmed that one of his most striking characteristics is *unscrupulousness of statement*. In proof of this, we are referred to his description of the Heathen Gods,—the dying verses of Lord Byron, the immorality of Hume, the atheism and death of Voltaire, his harmonising of geological discoveries with the Bible, and the creed of infidels, an admirable satire on their contradictory views—which is here inserted:

"I believe that there is no God, but that matter is God, and God is matter; and that it is no matter whether there is any God or not. I believe also that the world was not made, but that the world made itself; and that it had no beginning, and that it will last for ever. I believe that man is a beast; that the soul is the body, and the body is the soul, and that after death there is neither body nor soul. I believe that there is no religion, that natural religion is the only religion, and all religion unnatural. I believe not in Moses. I believe in the first philosophers. I believe not in the evangelists. I believe in Chubb, Collins, Toland, Tindal, Hobbes. I believe in Lord Bolingbroke. I believe not in St. Paul. I believe not in Revelation. I believe in tradition. I believe in

"the Talmuds. I believe in the Koran. I believe not in the Bible. I believe in Socrates. I believe in Confucius. I believe in Mahomet. I believe not in Christ. And, lastly, I believe in all unbelief."

The *Reviewer* regards this seriously, as the actual creed of infidels, and brings it forward as a proof of Dr. C.'s unscrupulousness of statement.

Notwithstanding the sneers of the critic, it is now generally believed, that Hume did lead an immoral life, and that Voltaire died in great misery. The atheism of the latter is denied on the ground that he merely rejected the Jehovah of the Jews, and not the God of the universe. Shade of Voltaire, wilt thou consent to be turned into a gnostic of the third century, and forsake thy atheism, 'Oh, infidelity' to what absurdities thou art reduced.

The harmonising of the Bible with modern geological discoveries, is admirably managed; the remarks of the *Reviewer* notwithstanding. There remains then the spurious poem attributed to Byron;—and this is all the proof for Dr. C.'s unscrupulousness of statement. Those who write and print much, must necessarily expect to find not a few mistakes in their works from a multitude of concurring causes, which it is needless to mention. Dr. C., too, is proverbial for making rash statements, though we deny that they are unscrupulous. Why did not our impartial friend apply to Mr. Jaffray, of Edinburgh, or Dr. Buchanan, of Glasgow. They could have given far stronger proofs. Were I inclined to retort, I might even in the present number of the *Review* find ample materials for a similar charge against its conductors.

The second charge brought against the reverend Dr. is an absence of genuine charity. The principal grounds for this are his attacks upon Puseyites, Romanists and Infidels, and his adherence to the doctrine of eternal punishment. This charge is proved to be false from the *Reviewer's* own admission, that Dr. C. professes strong feelings of affection and charity—and has evinced them by numerous charitable deeds. It is the state of society in Britain that has led him to attack so strongly the parties specified. We consider the testimony which Dr. C. bears with such power against Romanism, as one of the most useful portions of his works. But if a belief in the eternity of punishment, proves that he is devoid of charity, then the purest and noblest Christians that now live upon the earth—the saintly Noel—the seraphic Spurgeon, and the devoted James, are devoid of this Christian grace. Yea, Paul and Peter, with the company of the apostles and primitive Christians must have been equally uncharitable.

The third charge is his *perverted moral judgment*. And mark the sentence that accompanies this charge that you may detect the cloven foot that is unwittingly disclosed: "Not that this perversion is peculiar to Dr. Cumming; it belongs to the dogmatic system which he shares with all evangelical believers." The principal proof of this is the view of human depravity held by Dr. C.; a view which is scriptural and correctly and clearly stated. Because he states with great