

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 Paris, in the bookstore of Etienne de la Forge, an ardent Lutheran, John of Noyon, assembled his hearers, and entertained them with his discourses. Adopting the same principle as maintained by Luther, that "he had God with him," he inflamed his disciples with burning zeal for the new gospel. From these clandestine night meetings issued forth a tribe of impromptu prophets and missionaries, who undertook to regenerate the faith of fifteen centuries. Thence went forth doctors without knowledge, Levites without soubtan, transformed into apostles by the breath of Calvin. To these, no principle of religion or society, was sacred, and they railed equally against the prerogatives of the altar and of the state. In many of the towns of France they excited trouble and dissensions, and rendered it necessary for the civil authority to repress their fanatical zeal.

"Before the magistrates they were full of pride, in prison, they were placidly serene; they believed themselves called by God, and inspired with his word. Calvin, at Paris, had founded a small church where he preached by night, with closed doors, attacking tradition in its Catholic organs, faith in its mysterious dogmas, the church, in the papacy, society, in its religious form, and thus he assailed the constitution of the country, its worship and its laws. Pasquier presents him "in the midst of his books and his studies, with a nature agitating with the greatest possible energy for the progress of his sect. We sometimes behold, says he, our prisons crowded with poor abused people, whom, without having access to them, he exhorted, consoled, and strengthened by letters, and he was in no want of messengers to whom the doors were open, in spite of the illigence and precautions of the jailers. Behold the process by which he succeeded in the beginning to gain, by degrees, a part of our France; so that, after a long period of time, seeing the hearts of men prepared for his efforts, he wished to take further measures, and sent some ministers, who were called by us preachers, to exercise his religion in secret, even in our city of Paris, where the fires were kindled against them." (1)

At first government had recourse to menaces: menaces were useless: it employed the prison: the prison converted nobody. The Lutherans, in pamphlets disseminated by night, devoted the magistrates to the indignation of the people, their judges to the execration of posterity, the prince to the wrath of the Lord, the papists to eternal flames. Were they

1. Pasquier; recherches sur la France, lib. 8 page 766.

banished, they soon re-entered France with an ardour for proselytism, increased by the sufferings they had endured in exile. Was a passage read to them from the bible, wherein the apostle recommends obedience to the civil authority? They exhibited their father in Christ, at the Diet of Worms, hurling his defiance at the Emperor and at the different orders, and preferring rather to obey God than man. Luther, in their eyes, was a new Paul, whose word was to deliver the world from the darkness of superstition. It told that Luther was condemned by the Holy See, they answered, by reciting some verses in Latin which had traversed the Rhine: "If Luther is guilty of heresy, Christ must be condemned." The magistracy, for the most part, must have been ignorant of what occurred in the country, agitated by heresy, else, it might have, shown, at that very hour poor Carlstadt, flying from Luther's anger, and obliged to leave Saxony, and go to beg his bread, because he had trusted to the monk's word, and tried to introduce a new doctrine into the reformed world."

"Recourse was had to violence: stakes were fixed, and some fanatics who perished were eulogised as martyrs! Credulous souls, and more worthy of pity than of anger, who thought to gain heaven by apostasy, and died joyous for the glorification of a letter they did not understand, and in behalf of which not one of Calvin's successors would to day shed a single drop of blood! For the Christ made after Calvin's image, does not at this day resemble the Christ of certain ministers of Geneva. The Christ of John of Noyon had a double nature: he was God and man, and the Christ of the reformer's successors, is no more than a son of Adam, formed from the slime of the earth, and only a little greater than Alexander or Mahomet."

CALVIN AN AUTHOR.

Some Hugonots, who had fallen victims to the troubles of the times, and who, by the outraged authorities, had been selected as a warning to strike terror into others, found a defender in Calvin. He seized his pen, and gave his first book to the public.

"This work," says Mr. Audin, "is entitled *De Clementia*, being a paraphrase of a Latin writer of the epoch of the decline of letters. Moreover, this is the first time that a commentator is ignorant of the life of him whose work he publishes. Calvin has confounded the two Senecas, the father and son, the rhetorician and the philosopher, of whom he has made but one literary personage, living a patriarchal life of 115 years."

"We must pardon Varillas, for having with sufficient bitterness, revealed this error of the biographer of Seneca the philosopher, and not grow angry, as do the historians of the reformation, against the proud words of the French historian. What Protestant would not have done the same as Varillas, had the mistake been committed by a Catholic."

This work of Calvin, not unworthy of the era of the revival of literature, if re-

garded merely as a literary production, gave him some celebrity, and made him known to the learned world. He received various felicitations.

"Bucer, Capito, Ecolampadius congratulated the writer: Calvin had, in September of 1532, from Noyon, addressed a copy to Bucer then at Stratsbourg. The person, who was charged with presenting it to Bucer was a poor young man, suspected of ana-baptism, and was flying from France. Calvin's letter of recommendation is full of meek compassion for the miseries of the sinner. "My dear Bucer," he writes, "you will not be deaf to my prayers, you will have regard to my tears; I beseech you come to the aid of the proscribed, be a father to the orphan."

"This was sending the sick to a sad physician; Bucer, by turns Catholic, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Zuinglian. Besides, whosoever this proselytism of a moral cure? The exile was anabaptist by the same title that Calvin was predestinarian, in virtue of a text of scripture: "Go, whoever shall believe, and be baptized, shall be saved." The anabaptists believed in the inefficacy of baptism, without faith manifested by an exterior act; but was not Calvin, at that moment, as much to be pitied as the anabaptist? He also doubted, interrogated his bible, and believed he had discovered the sense of words which no intelligence before had been able to seize. What then was the truth, a conquest of which inspired him with such dread, that before propagating it, he must sell his charge of the church of Pont-l'Evêque, and even his paternal inheritance?"

In 1531, Calvin and his brother Anthony had united in giving to their brother Charles Calvin, powers to vend the property left them by their deceased father. Sometime after, he resigned his Chapel de la Gesine to Anthony de la Marliere for a stipulated price, *mediante pretio conventionis*, and his church of Pont-l'Evêque, to Caim, for a similar consideration. Up to this date he was fed by Catholics.

CALVIN AT THE COURT OF MARGARET—HIS PSYCHOPANNYCHIA.

The storm was gathering: Calvin wished to expose to its fury some other head than his own, and chose that of Nicholas Cop, rector of the Sorbonne, at Paris. Cop was a German of Bale, who was captivated with the student, because of his ready speech, his airs of virtue, of scriptural knowledge, his raileries against the monks, and his ridicule of the University. As to the rest; he was a man of a dull heavy mind, understood nothing of theological subjects, and would have been much better placed in a refectory than in a learned body; at table, than in the professor's chair. Cop had to pronounce his usual discourse on All Saints day, in presence of the Sorbonne and the University. He had recourse to Calvin, who set to work, and "built him up a discourse," says Beza, "an oration quite different from those which were customary." (2)

2. Beza Hist. de Eccl. t. 1, p. 14.

The Sorbonne and university did not assist at the discourse, but only some Franciscans, who appeared to be scandalized by certain propositions of the orator, and among others, by one concerning justification by faith alone in Christ: an old error, which, for many ages, has been trailed along in all the writings of heretics; often dead and resuscitated, and which Calvin, in Cop's discourse, dressed out in tinsel, in order to give it some appearance of novelty. But our Franciscans had sight and hearing equally good; they detected the heresy easily, and denounced to the parliament the evil sounding propositions, which they had taken pains to note down in writing. Cop was greatly embarrassed by his new glory; he had not expected so much noise. He, however, held up well, and convoked the university at the Mathurins. The University assembled in a body in order to judge the cause. The rector there commences a discourse, drawn up by Calvin, and in which he formally denies having preached the propositions denounced, with the exception of one only, precisely the worst, that concerning justification. Imagine the tumult which the orator excited! Scarcely could he make himself heard, and ask mercy. The old Sorbonnists shuddered on their benches. The unfortunate Cop would have been seized, had he not made his escape to return no more." (3)

It became known that the scholar of Noyon was the author of the archers, under Lieutenant John Morin, were sent after him to the College du Fortet, where he lay concealed.—Having intimation of this, he effected his escape by a window, and hid himself in the Foubourg St. Victor, at the house of a vine dresser.

"He changed his dress for the long gown of the vinedresser, and placing a wallet of white linen, and a harrow on his shoulders, he took the road for Noyon. On the way he was met by a Canon of that city, who was going to Paris, and who recognized the curate of Pont-l'Evêque under his disguise. "Where are you going, master John," he demanded, "with this beautiful accoutrement?"

"Where God pleases," replied Calvin, who began to explain the reasons of his disguise, "And would you not do better to return to Noyon," said the Canon, "and to God?" he added, looking at him with sadness. Calvin was silent for a moment; then taking the priest's hand—"Thank you," said he "but it is too late." Calvin went to the court of Margaret of Navarre, who had sufficient influence to procure his reconciliation with the court and university of Paris. It was the boast of Francis 1st to be the patron of men of letters, and Calvin, under this title, deserved some consideration.

"The little court of Nerac was at that period the asylum of writers, who, like Desperriers, there prepared their *Cymbulum mundi*: of gallant ladies who composed love tales, of which frequently they were themselves the heroines; of poets who extemporized odes after the model of Beza; of clerks and other gentry of the Church, who ridiculed the Virgin and the Saints, and entertained packs of hunting dogs, and courtisans; of players who had come from Italy, and who, in the Queen's

3. Hist. Univ. Par. auctore Bucke, tom. vi. page 329.