

THE
PRINCETON REVIEW.

JULY, 1850.

No. III.

ART I.—*Die Kirchengeschichte des 18 und 19 Jahrhunderts, aus dem Standpunkte des evangelischen Protestantismus betrachtet, in einer Reihe von Vorlesungen, von Dr. K. R. Hagenbach.* Leipzig. 8vo. Vol. I. 1848. pp. 511. Vol. II. 1849. pp. 467.

OTHER works of Dr. Hagenbach have made him sufficiently known as a writer of comprehensive views and unusual sprightliness. This, rather than what the Germans love to call depth, is at the bottom of his popularity. Yet he is decidedly a German; looking on the world's history and the world's geography as finding their central region in central Europe; but with a kindly, liberal, and even all-embracing welcome to the rest of the earth. Without being a Hegelian, or even in all details a follower of Schleiermacher, he shows both in nomenclature and opinion the influence of the modern philosophy. Without being one of the churchly orthodox, or anything like a Puritan, he has a warm side towards pietism, and even goes to insular Great Britain, to seek and applaud what is good in Methodists. So far as sentiment, feeling and philanthropy are extant in evangelical religion, he gives it his hand, and is

ART. IV.—*The Life of John Calvin, compiled from authentic sources*, by Thomas H. Dyer. New York: Harpers. 1850.

OUR author states in his preface that “the appearance in an English dress of Henry’s *Life of Calvin* from the pen of Dr. Stebbing might seem to supersede the necessity for another work on the same subject, and had that gentleman’s book been published earlier, the present one would probably have never been undertaken.” If an earlier announcement of Dr. Stebbing’s design would really have prevented the appearance of the work before us, we think it is much to be regretted that the important information was so long withheld from the public, and from Mr. Dyer in particular. The public would have lost nothing if this fruit of Mr. Dyer’s literary labours had never seen the light, and we much fear that he will find that his book belongs to that large class which “the world will willingly let die.” We cannot get rid of the suspicion that Mr. Dyer became aware of the intentions of Dr. Stebbing much sooner than the preceding extract of his preface would lead us to suppose, and that the only effect of the information was to infuse fresh activity into his pen, so as to anticipate, if possible, the publication of a rival work. However this may be, the most charitable view which we can take of many of his pages, is, that they were written with uncommon haste.

That a complete and well written life of the Genevan Reformer is a great desideratum there can be no doubt. Dr. Henry’s large work, which has been repeatedly noticed by this journal, composed as it is by one who has a high but not blind admiration of the Reformer’s character, and a cordial sympathy with those great principles, to the exposition and defence of which Calvin devoted all the energies of his noble soul, is very admirable. It contains the rich and ample fruits of the researches of many years; it is a well stored repository of ma-

that, with the full consent of the legal heir, that property has come into the possession of the Seminary; and it, no doubt, once belonged to Dr. Wheelock the elder. Considering his love of learning and sound doctrine on religion, if he could have foreseen that a part of his estate would be available to promote the training of young men for the ministry, in a church which maintains the very same system of doctrine, which was so dear to him, the prospect would have been gratifying to his benevolent heart.

terials, gathered from many sources, but on this very account not so well adapted for general circulation; so that the need for a biography of Calvin for popular use still exists. In undertaking to supply this want Mr. Dyer has attempted a work, for which, if we may judge from the present volume, he does not possess a single qualification. He is an English high churchman of the same school as the late Dr. Tomline, whose now forgotten book entitled "Refutation of Calvinism," he quotes as one of the "authentic sources" of information respecting the principles of the Calvinistic system; to expect a truly candid account either of Calvin's personal history, or of his religious faith from such a writer is manifestly preposterous. Indeed we are at a loss to conceive what motive induced Mr. Dyer to take upon himself the task of preparing a biography of Calvin, unless it be the selfish one of mere pecuniary advantage, or that he was possessed of an invincible desire to appear in print. That he was not prompted by an affectionate regard for the memory of the Reformer, or a desire to honour him for the sake of his great services to the church of God, is abundantly evident from every page. Neither does it appear that he is particularly fond of historical investigations, or that he has been occupied with original researches in regard to the men and events of past ages; for while his work claims to be derived from "authentic sources," a phrase, by the way, of rather dubious import, it is in fact nothing more than a compilation, in which, the author has made a free though not always a fair use of the labours of Beza, Ruchat, Henry and others. On one topic, "the nature and extent of Calvin's intercourse with the Anglican-church, and with the Marian exiles," Mr. Dyer affects to speak with the authority of one who has carefully examined all the original documents bearing upon it, and "ventures to hope" that his readers will find in his volume more information on this subject than in any other biography of Calvin. It is quite certain that this matter fills a larger space in his work than in Dr. Henry's, and if Mr. Dyer's inferences from facts and his observations upon them could properly be placed under the head of "information," his claim, would be well founded. When this additional information

however is thoroughly inspected, we unfortunately find that so much of it as is true is not new, while all of it that is new is not true.

It might seem uncharitable to affirm that Mr. Dyer wrote his book for the express purpose of disparaging the reputation of Calvin, especially as he closes it with some fine words about the "mellowing" influence of time and "the impartiality and moderation which the lapse of three centuries should produce." We will not assert that he intended to take up his position by the side of such men as Bolsec and Audin; but this much we may say that every candid reader will rise from the perusal of the book with the decided conviction that its author has a most cordial dislike of the Reformer whose history he has undertaken to relate, and that he often writes against the system of doctrine and discipline associated with that Reformer's name, "with the virulence of a man who does not understand it." Such a reader will ask the question without getting a satisfactory reply, what could have induced a person who evinces such profound ignorance of the nature of evangelical religion, and such lukewarm sympathy for the Reformation in any phase of it, to attempt a task for which he was so unfit, as that of the biographer of a man who was confessedly one of the greatest champions of divine truth, and with all his faults, one of the noblest examples of true piety. However we are under no apprehensions that the name and memory of Calvin will be injuriously affected by the appearance of this book; nor would we have felt much alarmed if Mr. Dyer's pen had been as vigorous as his prejudices, which happily is not the case. In common with other men who have fulfilled high destinies, and whose lives, if they have not formed, at least have been intimately connected with great eras in the world's history, Calvin has been forced to bear a vast amount of obloquy; but there are many delightful indications that the mists of ignorance and prejudice are dispersing and that the world is beginning to discern his real features, and to form a just estimate of his services. Mr. Dyer's work has not one redeeming quality to save it from the fate which has overtaken so many others breathing a like spirit. We cannot point out a single page in which the author rises to any thing like eloquence, nor can we

quote one passage that bears the impress of a really vigorous mind. Indeed we should not have deemed it necessary to notice the book, were it not that our readers may be tempted to purchase a volume, which bears the imprint of one of our principal publishers, and which received the endorsement of one of our respectable religious papers, as a valuable contribution to our biographical literature.*

We should require a great deal more space than we can spare, if we noticed everything in the volume which invites criticism; or should undertake to correct all its abounding misrepresentations and mistakes. The author looks at every thing not merely from a false position, but with a jaundiced eye, so that whatever may be his point of view, the object of vision becomes discolored or distorted; and accordingly there is not one important event in the life of Calvin the narrative of which is perfectly fair and candid. As we have already given in our successive notices of Dr. Henry's admirable volumes, a large account of the life and labours of Calvin, we do not deem it necessary to go over the ground again, and therefore in our remarks on Mr. Dyer's performance we shall not confine ourselves to the historical order of events. Our main design is not so much to defend Calvin against the attacks of a prejudiced biographer, as to guard our readers against the purchase of a worthless book; and this end will be sufficiently attained by giving a few illustrations of Mr. Dyer's manner of dealing with the character, the actions and the doctrinal system of Calvin.

The work opens naturally enough with some observations on the Reformation in general, and on the early division of its friends into certain parties which still exist. From these introductory remarks we cull a few sentences, which will serve to give our readers a taste of the literary qualities of the book, and to show forth Mr. Dyer's competency to discuss topics belonging to the domain of historical philosophy. "The grand

* From the second "notice" of Dyer in the N. Y. Observer it appeared that the critic had not read the book which he so highly lauded, but seems to have taken it for granted that as it was a *Life of Calvin* it must be excellent. On examining it however, he found he had gone too fast; but as he valued consistency more than candour, he comes out with a "second notice," resembling, at least in one feature, those Delphic oracles which the priestess uttered when she knew not which side to take.

and manifold blessings attending the Reformation were not unalloyed with serious evils, the chief of which were the dissensions that arose among the reformers themselves. The pretended infallibility of the Romish church had, at least secured unity. The right of *private judgment, the active principle of the Reformation*, was a standard that necessarily varied according to the temper, the understanding, or the knowledge of different men, and hence arose a variety of sects." "The same principle that produced these excrescences, though not pushed to such extravagant results, ultimately divided the Protestant church into three main denominations of Lutherans, Anglicans and Calvinists." "It was indeed, impossible that the spirit of the Reformation should be bounded by the views of Luther. Notwithstanding his personal boldness, in matters of doctrine and discipline, Luther was a timid and cautious innovator. The establishment of *his doctrine* of justification seems to have been at first his only object." "Before Luther began his career, another reformer had already started up in Switzerland possessing bolder views and a more philosophical method. Zwingli began by laying down the abstract general principle that the Scriptures contain the sole rule of faith and practice." "Out of these two churches were developed the Anglican and the Calvinistic—Calvin, pushing both the doctrine and practice of Zwingli to a rigid extreme, succeeded nevertheless in incorporating the Zwinglian church with his own." "Hence Calvin's title to be regarded as an original reformer is *eclipsed, in point of priority as well as in some other particulars* by those of Luther and Zwingli. Calvin's influence flowed mainly *from his literary abilities.*"

The rhetorical elegance of these extracts is about equal to their historical accuracy. It is undeniable, that as Luther and Zwingli began the work of Reformation while Calvin was yet a mere child, his title to be regarded as an original reformer is "eclipsed in point of priority"—to use Mr. Dyer's original figure—by theirs. But when he asserts that Calvin's influence "flowed mainly from his literary abilities," "that Calvin pushed the doctrine and practice of Zwingli to a rigid extreme," he makes statements which he would find it not so easy to substantiate. Indeed the last of these assertions is

not only contrary to historical fact, but on his own showing absurd, for on the previous page he informs us that the distinguishing doctrine of Zwingli was "the abstract general principle that the Scriptures contain, the sole rule of faith and practice;" and how this principle could be "pushed" to any more rigid extreme than that to which Zwingli himself "pushed" it we are at a loss to conceive. Apparently forgetful of what he had said on this subject, he assures his readers, in his closing chapter, that "Calvin's best claim to originality with regard to any single part of his doctrine, rests on that of the Lord's Supper." Now whether Calvin's doctrine on the subject of the Lord's Supper be original or not, every one acquainted with the history of the sacramentarian controversy knows that so far from "pushing" Zwingli's view on this point to a rigid extreme, he never even reached the Zwinglian position. Again, the statement that the naked right of private judgment was "the active principle of the Reformation," "a standard that necessarily varied according to the temper of different men" is scarcely more accurate than those which we have just noticed. If Mr. Dyer had said that the sufficiency and supremacy of Scripture as the rule of faith and manners, was the active principle of the Reformation he would have come much nearer the truth. The right to read and interpret the word of God, was asserted and exercised by the reformers, and though each one of them studied the lively oracles for himself, the results thus independently reached, are to a surprising extent identical; on all those points of doctrine which are immediately connected with the way of salvation, they saw eye to eye, as the various confessions of the Protestant churches abundantly prove. The right of private judgment for which the reformers contended was not the right to think as men pleased, to adopt any system of faith that whim or caprice might dictate; but a right, which, in its exercise must be governed by the paramount and absolute authority of the word of God.

But there is another subject of far higher importance than the rules of elegant writing, or even than a knowledge of the earlier developments of Protestantism, in reference to which Mr. Dyer manifests, as we have already intimated—a lamentable

ignorance; we refer to the nature of evangelical religion. Simple ignorance on this subject, unaccompanied by prejudice against the distinctive truths of the Gospel and those who profess them, would disqualify a man however accomplished in other respects, for writing a proper biography of Calvin. There is much in the character and labours of the Reformer which he could neither appreciate nor understand; there are many things which, with the fixed purpose to be impartial, he would be sure to misrepresent; for the working of the spiritual life can be discerned only by the spiritual mind. In Mr. Dyer's case, however, there is not merely ignorance, but positive aversion; there are many passages in his work which show that he fully shares those feelings of intense dislike of the evangelical system which have so long characterised the prevailing party in the church of England. Thus, in speaking of the vital doctrine of Justification, which holds so prominent a place in all the confessions of the Reformed churches—he describes it as Luther's, "*his doctrine of justification.*" Calvin, is said "to have been converted by a sudden call, *like the new birth of the Methodists;*" and then he adds in a scarcely less sneering tone "there will be occasion to relate other instances of the unexpected intervention of Providence in Calvin's spiritual history." The doctrine that "every thing must be subordinate to the glory of God" is represented in very much the same spirit as being one of the peculiar and prominent truths of Calvinism. In his account of the social and political condition of Geneva at the time of the Reformation, after giving a most deplorable picture of the moral state of the people among whom "reckless gaming, drunkenness, adultery, blasphemy, and all sorts of vice and wickedness abounded," he assures us that "*the worship, such as it was, showed the cheerful side of religion, no eternal fiat of reprobation haunting the sinner with the thoughts of a doom which it was impossible to escape.*" While he thinks "it cannot be disputed that these vices and disorders demanded a large measure of reform" yet he is very severe on the "evangelical ministers" for going beyond the bounds of discretion, "confounding what was really innocent in the same anathema with what was fundamentally vicious;

cards, and dancing, plays and masquerades being absolutely prohibited as well as the graver vices before enumerated." We very much fear, by the way, that, if Mr. Dyer had had the reforming of Geneva, these "graver vices," and "the worship such as it was, showing the cheerful side of religion" would have continued until this day. Then we have such phrases as "the jargon peculiar to the elect," and "the nasal melody of our tabernacles," and others of like character, which every person of refined taste, whatever may be his theological views, will feel, are bad enough in a party pamphlet, but in a grave biography are utterly intolerable.

Let us now see in what colours our biographer paints the character of Calvin. Besides numberless inuendos of a most derogatory kind, there are positive charges brought against him, affecting his reputation, not only as a public man but also as a christian—charges which no one has hitherto ventured to make, unless such foul-mouthed calumniators as Bolsec and Balduin, who themselves had no character to lose. For example he accuses Calvin of aiming to become a party leader, he "*seems at this time (in 1532, when only twenty-three years old, and before he had published a single page) to have indulged the ambitious hope of becoming the head of the Reformed party in France.*" Unlike the bold and masculine Luther, he "*was more inclined to propagate his doctrines by stealth, and at a safe distance; though continually exhorting others to behave like martyrs, he was himself always disposed to fly at the first appearance of danger.*" Another "trait in his character which strongly contrasts with the bold and open conduct of Luther" was "the many disguises" in the shape of fictitious names to which Calvin resorted. Having occasion to refer a favour formerly conferred on one who had shamefully entreated him, Mr. Dyer sets this down to the score of "*meanness.*" Perhaps it was the bias derived from the discovery of this trait that induced him to regard Calvin's salary of about fifty dollars a year as on the whole "respectable," and to omit all mention of the fact that when the council sent him supplementary donations of money, wheat, wood and wine, he always sent back the first and insisted upon paying for the latter articles. Another point of difference be-

tween Luther and Calvin, consisted in the amount of "personal importance which the latter arrogated to himself. The respect and submission exacted by him far exceeded that claimed by other spiritual guides. The most *trifling slights* and *insults* such as most men would overlook with contempt, he *pursued with bitterness and acrimony.*" Again, we are told that "if Calvin was not *exactly Pope,*" he was "at least the Bishop of Geneva," having "usurped the perpetual presidency of the consistory" and offered to make Beza his successor—a story that comes through a very suspicious channel, the pages of the veracious Brandt. More than this—"he did not scruple to place the leaders of the Reformation, among whom he claimed a place, *on a level* with the Evangelists."

Dark and repulsive as are the traits of character enumerated above—ambition, cowardice, meanness, jealous sense of personal importance, usurpation of authority, there are worse features still. Not only did he eagerly grasp at absolute power, but he "determined to uphold his scheme of ecclesiastical discipline *without much regard to the means* which he used for that purpose." Among these were "mean subterfuges," "duplicity," "mental reservation" in the matter of oaths, "a rather pliant conscience," "disingenuousness" on so many occasions that it seems to have become a sort of incurable habit. Nay more, so thoroughly had his relentless logic or his towering ambition banished from his nature all the gentler virtues that he could relish the burning of heretics at Geneva with a *gouai* not inferior to that of an inquisitor at Rome; he could out of pure personal revenge pursue his enemies to the death; he could even participate in the plots and persecutions of other lands. Our biographer goes into what he would have his readers consider as a historical argument, to prove the high probability, that Calvin had a hand in the death of Joan of Kent, during the Protectorate of Somerset, in 1552, and the almost certainty, that he was in some way implicated in the assassination of the Duke of Guise in 1563.

Such are the colours in which Mr. Dyer paints the character of Calvin. We have transferred them to our pages simply because they will enable our readers to judge of the spirit by which the book before us is pervaded. If it were in the least

necessary, and our limits allowed of it, we might add other illustrations of the animus of Mr. Dyer, derived from the manner in which he deals with the notoriously false and the foul calumnies published by such men as Bolsec. Thus, for instance, he is at pains to record that Bolsec had charged Calvin with having made an attempt upon the chastity of a Madame De Fallais, and the bald conclusion of his tedious logic that fills the greater part of a page is, that the charge is not proven! As Bolsec was not only a bitter enemy of Calvin, but a convicted liar, we are gravely assured that "his authority must not be lightly taken; nevertheless it *seems probable* that such a report was in circulation at the time!" No man could write in this style, on such a topic, who has a proper respect for Calvin. We deem it quite a needless task to discuss in detail these affirmations respecting the character of the Reformer, for in most cases they are the mere dicta of the biographer which he does not pretend to support by historical proof; while in the few instances in which he does attempt to confirm his charges, as of Calvin's complicity in the assassination of the Duke of Guise and the judicial murder of Joan of Kent, every candid reader of the letters on which his argument is based, will see that there is not a shadow of evidence.

We are not as we have before stated in the least apprehensive as to the effect of these disparaging statements, in modifying the high estimate which the Protestant world at large is beginning to form of the merits of the Genevan reformer; they will damage Mr. Dyer's volume, far more than the memory of Calvin. Besides revealing the strong prejudices of the biographer, they evince a degree of ignorance very ill becoming one who presumes to correct the mistakes and supply the deficiencies of a work like Dr. Henry's—the fruit of the labours and researches of many years. If, for example, he had examined as closely as he should have done, the matter of Calvin's assumption of fictitious names, he would have found that Luther himself did the same thing on one occasion, the only one during his public career when he was exposed to personal danger; he would have discovered that in most cases Calvin resorted to this disguise from a considerate regard for the welfare of others rather than to secure himself from peril. During his

journey into Italy he no doubt took the name of Espeville as a safe-guard against the myrmidons of the Inquisition; but the publication of the first edition of his Institutes under the name of Aleuin could have had no other motive than the wish that it might reach and be read by persons, who would perhaps have turned from it in disgust, had they known who was its author. The other names are appended to letters written long after his settlement at Geneva, where Calvin himself was in no danger; but many of his correspondents resided in countries where Romanism was still dominant, and they would have been subjected to very serious trouble, if it had been known that they were in communication with the Reformer. But let us pass from these subordinate incidents, and see how Mr. Dyer handles the more important facts of Calvin's life.

One of the earliest contests into which Calvin was drawn after his settlement at Geneva was that with Caroli. This man was at one time a doctor of the Sorbonne, but having been charged with heresy, he fled from Paris, and joined the Protestants. Becoming speedily discontented with his new position, he reconciles himself to the Romish church, again relapses, escapes into Switzerland, and after a temporary settlement at Geneva and at Neufchatel, is chosen one of the Pastors of Berne. Here he soon proved himself to be a vain-fickle, ambitious hypocrite, eager in the pursuit of popularity and power. Having been thwarted in some of his schemes, and knowing that Farel and Viret were aware of his real character, he began to meditate schemes of vengeance. An opportunity soon occurred for the display of his malice. In one of his sermons he insisted upon the necessity of prayers for the dead, an offence for which he was summoned before the consistory of Berne. Though Calvin and Viret who were present interposed on his behalf, he arose, and to the surprise of every one charged them and Farel with Arianism. To investigate this accusation a Synod was summoned to meet at Lausanne, and a few months later a still larger one assembled at Berne: by both of which Caroli was condemned and by the latter, deposed. Calvin, in the name of his brethren gave in a confession of their faith, which was declared to be satisfactory, but Caroli objected to it because the terms Trinity and Person

were not used, and insisted that they should subscribe the Nicene and Athanasian creeds—a demand with which they refused to comply, not from any objection to the creeds, but because they could not recognise the right of Caroli to make the requisition, and as they had already given ample satisfaction to the Synod as to their soundness in the faith.

The conclusion of this affair we will give in Mr. Dyer's own words. "It must, however, be confessed that Farel and Calvin's subsequent conduct with regard to the doctrine was not only amenable to the charge of obstinacy and self-will but even of duplicity. They still continued to object to the use of the words Trinity and Person, and even wished to force their views on some of the ministers." On this, we have to observe that the whole story is told by our biographer in a manner so confused and bungling as to make it impossible for his reader to conceive how Farel and Calvin could have laid themselves open to such charges. On one page we find them exculpated by acclamation, and their accuser deposed as a base calumniator, on the very next they are guilty of obstinacy and duplicity for holding views as to certain words, against which not a whisper had been heard in the Synod. In the next place we observe that Mr. Dyer lays himself open to a charge as heavy as that which he so gratuitously brings against Calvin. He talks about Calvin's views, and forcing his views upon others, when he knew perfectly well that he held no peculiar views respecting the technicalities in question. Farel had some difficulty in regard to them, but Calvin never objected to their use; what he did object to is thus stated by himself in a letter dated 30th August, 1537—"Tantum nolebamus hoc tyrannidis exemplum in ecclesiam induci, ut is haereticus haberetur qui non ad alterius praescriptionem loqueretur. Cum ille (Caroli) strenue contenderet neminem Christianum esse sine tribus symbolis."

To avoid the censure inflicted upon him Caroli fled from Berne, and continuing to propagate his impudent calumnies, he for a time succeeded in awakening suspicions of the orthodoxy of the Genevan ministers, in various parts of Switzerland and Germany, which occasioned Calvin no little trouble. But of all this our candid and impartial biographer says not a word.

Having disposed of Caroli's affair, Mr. Dyer reverts to a subject on which he had already expended a number of pages, viz: "the efforts made by Farel and Calvin to establish their schemes of Church Government at Geneva. These proved very unpalatable to the great body of the people. As early as September, 1536, many of the principal citizens protested to the Council against the reproofs of the ministers." To substantiate this latter statement he is at particular pains to quote in a foot note, the Registers of date 4th September, 1536. It would have been much more to the purpose if he had condescended to explain to his readers what these "schemes of church government" were; this he neglects to do, perhaps for the very good reason that he had not a clear understanding of them himself. All that he says on the subject, in this connexion is, that Farel with the help of Calvin had drawn up a confession of 21 articles, comprising some regulations respecting church government, and that "among the latter the *right of excommunication* was the most important, as it subsequently became the *chief instrument of Calvin's spiritual domination*." From this statement the reader might naturally infer that Calvin had succeeded in getting "the right of excommunication" vested in himself. But we refer to this part of the narrative mainly, because it shows how determined Mr. Dyer is, to make Calvin the author of all the troubles at Geneva, in palpable violation of dates recorded on his own pages. Dates are dangerous things for a careless historian to deal with. In a note, in which our author's desire to display a little historic lore seems to have got the better of his discretion, the date of the popular protest against the schemes and reproofs of Calvin and Farel is 4 September, 1536. Now Calvin came to Geneva in the latter part of August 1536; for many months after his arrival there he refused to accept of any office which would have tied him to the place; his first sermon—as Mr. Dyer himself tells us in an earlier part of his book—awakened such enthusiasm that vast numbers attended him from the church to his lodging. How a man who could hardly be induced to listen to the call from Geneva, whose mind, for many months, was in a state of anxious suspense as to his duty, could be at the very same time

concocting schemes of spiritual domination, and within the first week after his arrival could excite such lively enthusiasm, and such earnest opposition, is a problem which we are quite unable to solve.

The limits of this article forbid a minute examination of Mr. Dyer's account of Calvin's controversy with Bolsec on the subject of Predestination. In the whole course of the narrative it is very manifest on the one hand, that the author's sympathies are decidedly on the side of Bolsec, and on the other, that his fitness to discuss the merits of the Calvinistic system is precisely such as might be looked for in one who belongs to the Tomline school of theologians. Bolsec was originally a Carmelite monk, but having been forced to leave Paris, his place of abode—on account of a rather free expression of his opinion on matters of religion, he repaired to Italy, and for a short time was under the patronage of the Duchess of Ferrara. Here he married, and entered the medical profession. Beza asserts that he was expelled from Ferrara for having practised some deception upon his patroness: but as Beza's authority does not stand high with our author, while Bolsec, either on the score of his enmity to Calvin, or to the doctrine of Predestination is somewhat of a favourite, he deems the fact of the expulsion quite doubtful. Bolsec, on quitting Ferrara, established himself at Geneva, as a physician; and as he succeeded in gaining the acquaintance of some of the leading people there, our logical biographer infers that "his character must have been fair." He forgets, however, that in that age as in this a man moving from place to place, might easily keep in advance of his character, and that as physicians were not so numerous as now, it is not likely that those who needed Bolsec's services would stop to inquire about his morals. Be this as it may, he was not long in Geneva "before he began to question *Calvin's doctrine* of Predestination. He could scarcely have committed a more unpardonable offence."

The matter was taken up by the consistory, and as Bolsec at first tried to hide his errors under a cloud of ambiguous terms, a set of questions was proposed to him, bearing directly on the subject in dispute, and calculated to draw from him his real sentiments respecting it. In the whole process.

Calvin is exhibited as the only antagonist of Bolsec, and he is denounced as guilty of gross inconsistency for subjecting the latter to a kind of inquisition, which, he had stoutly opposed when applied to himself by Caroli. Yet the documents from which Mr. Dyer quotes, bear upon their very face the proof that the two cases of Caroli and Bolsec were entirely unlike. In the former, a captious question about a technical term is put by a single individual; by a man convicted of grave offences, to another who had already furnished the most satisfactory evidence of soundness in the faith. In the latter, a set of queries on an important doctrine, and prepared with great care is proposed to a man of doubtful orthodoxy, not by Calvin, but by the supreme ecclesiastical judicatory of Geneva. Of these questions, three are quoted by Mr. Dyer, which, says he "will serve by way of specimen of *the spiritual tyranny* exercised by Calvin." The answers of Bolsec, are described as "breathing a more humble and Christian-spirit." The absurdity of illustrating the spiritual tyranny of Calvin in this way, will be obvious to any one who inspects the paper of queries as given by Dr. Henry. There are seventeen questions in all, following each other in close logical order. It is quite easy to make the doctrine of the queries to assume a most repulsive aspect, by quoting two or three of the questions at random. And this is precisely what Mr. Dyer has done, with the evident design of inducing his readers to believe that the doctrine which Calvin taught, and for rejecting which Bolsec was condemned, was just this, that God created men simply to damn them.

Besides the account of the personal controversy between Calvin and Bolsec, our biographer favours us with a kind of natural history of the doctrine of Predestination, "the founder" of which, was Augustine. "Hume" says he, "has somewhere traced the doctrine of absolute decrees to a spirit of enthusiasm" an opinion, which, Mr. Dyer cordially adopts, though he does not condescend to give the grounds of his and Mr. Hume's sentiment, nor does he explain the nature of the connexion between the spirit of enthusiasm and the doctrine of decrees. Now this is a very serious omission, especially as the authority of Mr. Hume, on such a point as the genesis of

a religious doctrine, does not stand very high among Christians. The necessity of such an explanation becomes quite imperative after advancing a little in our history; for while at the outset Mr. Hume and Mr. Dyer jointly declare that the doctrine of decrees is the product of the spirit of enthusiasm, we are soon after assured by Mr. Dyer that "Calvin was singularly *free from superstition and enthusiasm*, and probably it was to this quality of mind that we must ascribe the adoption of the doctrine."

Without following our author through his history, let us come at once to his view of the doctrine itself as maintained by Calvin. "Minds equally pious and acute as his own," says he "viewed with horror its incompatibility with the attributes of God, as known to us both from reason and revelation." "That God should call all, yet elect only a few; that he should send his Son into the world to suffer an ignominious death for the purpose of saving those whose fate had been decided before the foundation of the world, and thus to effect a redemption by which nobody was redeemed; that he who is essentially just and merciful should consign one portion of his creation to eternal misery solely from caprice, or at all events, for sins which he would have necessitated them to commit, as if he were the cause of guilt and evil," &c. By penning such a passage, and gravely proposing it as a condensed summary of Calvin's scheme of Predestination, Mr. Dyer shows, either that he has never read the writings of Calvin, or that if he has examined them, it has been to very little purpose. It were a pure waste of time, to discuss such a palpable caricature of the Calvinistic doctrine. And yet with all "these horrible and revolting" features of Calvin's scheme, and beset as it is with difficulties, Mr. Dyer confesses that "*it afforded him an opportunity to insist on the duty of humility and entire submission to the will of God*,"—"there was nothing positively incomprehensible about it, nor were there wanting many texts of Scripture, and especially in the writings of St. Paul, which he could quote in its support and justification."

If Mr. Dyer had studied Calvin's own writings, with the simple aim to ascertain his opinions, instead of trusting to the accuracy of Tomline's account of them, it is barely possi-

ble that even he might have suggested objections, not unworthy the consideration of those who regard the Calvinistic system as accordant with the word of God. But the preceding extracts exhibit the old and oft repeated caricature of the doctrine of Predestination, and for this reason we should not deem it deserving of serious discussion, even if we had ample room to expound and defend the views of the Reformer. No sensible man can assent to the self contradictory proposition that "God sent his Son for the purpose of saving those whose fate had been decided before the foundation of the world;" and whoever else may have taught that "God consigns one portion of his creation to eternal misery solely from caprice," it is very certain that Calvin never did. We can pardon the ignorant declaimer who has never seen a volume of Calvin, and who could not read a page of one, if it were put into his hands, for asserting that this is Calvinism; but we shall leave it to our readers to determine for themselves, in what light a biographer should be viewed, who can gravely write such obviously absurd statements, and deliberately publish them.

From what has been already said, our readers will be prepared to judge in advance of the way in which Mr. Dyer tells the melancholy story of Servetus. In his hands, it certainly loses none of those horrid features, which the enemies of Calvin have been so careful to give it. He addresses himself to the task of narrating it with a manifest and hearty good will, the history of the affair fills a large portion of his book, and its most minute details are laboriously spread out before us. He represents Calvin as holding sentiments on the subject of the punishment of heretics pre-eminent for "their atrocity" even in that age, and as far as he can, he keeps out of sight the notorious fact that all the distinguished men of that day held the dogma that gross heresy was deserving of death. No one in these days pretends to vindicate the conduct of Calvin in this affair; but to hold him up as a special object of indignation, while unjust in any one, is monstrous injustice in a member of the church of which Cranmer was one of the fathers and founders.

Mr. Dyer professes to derive his account of Calvin's inter-

course with Servetus from Mosheim's "Ketzer Geschichte" and Trechsel's "Anti Trinitarier," both of which works if not dictated by avowed hostility to Calvin, were written by men who had an antipathy to his doctrinal opinions, and which are necessarily imperfect, because the documentary evidence which the authors had before them was not complete. The more recent work of M. Rilliet published in 1844,* Mr. Dyer says—and we must confess to some surprise at the statement—he was unable to procure. Its author is not a Calvinist, but he is a man of candour; his work is based upon original documents, some of which were long supposed to be lost; and he has given from unquestionable and authentic sources, all the circumstances connected with the melancholy event of Servetus' trial, which the impartial student of history needs in order to determine the measure of blame belonging to the several parties concerned in it. M. Rilliet exhausts this much disputed topic; and though our readers will find in an earlier volume an article expressly devoted to it, we would gladly, if our limits allowed it, lay before them the results at some length, brought out in the small but masterly volume of the author just named. He shows most conclusively that Calvin was, at this time, very far from being "the almost Pope of Geneva," as Mr. Dyer asserts. The government of Geneva was then composed of men belonging to the two extreme parties, at the head of which were Perrin and Calvin, and the magistrates who held an intermediate position. These neutral councillors without being as openly hostile to the Reformer as the Perrinists, were by no means strongly attached to him. "They had not so eagerly," says M. Rilliet, "espoused the cause of the Captain-general as to forget that of the republic. These masters of the majority (the neutrals) were less occupied with what might promote or thwart the wishes of Calvin, than with what menaced the vital interests of the republic. The unanimity of the Swiss churches in condemning Servetus—his attacks against doctrines till then held sacred in every communion—the promises of justice

* Its title is, "Relation du Procès Criminel Intente a Genève en 1553, contre Michel Servet, redigée d' apres les Documents originaux, par A. Rilliet."

given to the magistrates of Vienne—the exhortation to severity from those of Zurich and Berne—the troubles which the partisans of novel opinions had already produced in the churches of the Reformation—all these contributed to separate the guilt of Servetus from his rivalry with Calvin in the minds of his judges—to make them forget the theologian, and think only of the criminal.” After examining all existing documents with the dispassionate accuracy of a judge, M. Rilliet declares with reference to the final action of the council, that Calvin was not only not the instigator, he was not even consulted. “Local considerations disappeared before the general welfare; or if they had any influence, it was to make the council comprehend that after having punished the heretic they would be placed in *better circumstances for resisting the ecclesiastical pretensions of the Reformer.*” If any confirmation of this view were necessary, it is to be found in the fact that Calvin and his colleagues in vain put forth all their efforts to change the nature of the punishment of Servetus. “The judicial usage triumphed over the request of Calvin. It is to him notwithstanding, that men have always imputed the guilt of that funeral pile, which he wished had never been reared!”

In the true spirit of that “moderation and impartiality” by which, says Mr. Dyer the present age should be distinguished, but of which, as we think we have shown, his own volume evinces a sad deficiency, M. Rilliet closes his discussion with an observation which we must not omit. “Viewed by our own consciences, which the faults of the past have enlightened, the sentence is odious; according to law it is just.—Let us deplore the sentence of the judges, without attacking their motives; for we could not do so except by profiting by a privilege which was refused to them—*the benefit of time.*” We shall only add that these conclusions arrived at by a man who has no sympathy for the creed of Calvin, after diligent and impartial examination of all the original documents, are just the reverse of those which Mr. Dyer has been pleased to put forth. He labours throughout the whole of his long chapter on this subject, to show that Calvin was the ruling spirit of the scene—prompted by a desire for personal revenge as much as by a

zeal for theological truth—stimulating the flagging efforts of the councillors—acting with doubtful sincerity when seeking to commute the punishment—and finally exciting the horror even of Farel by his bloody bigotry; we apprehend that our readers will not find it a difficult matter to decide which of these opposite conclusions bear the stamp of truth.

As we stated in the outset of this article, our aim has been not so much to defend the character of Calvin, as to show that the volume before us, as a biography of the Reformer is worthless, that it is pervaded by a spirit of prejudice against him, and that its apparent if not real object is to disparage his reputation. Calvin was neither infallible nor faultless; he was not exempt from error in opinion, nor from mistakes in conduct. He had his infirmities like other men and other Christians. Strange indeed would it have been if amid his incessant labours, and his almost incessant sickness, his earnest struggles against the libertines of Geneva and his many contests with the opposers of God's truth, he had never uttered a hasty word, nor displayed a ruffled temper. It is idle to look anywhere on earth for such a miracle of equanimity. But those who knew him best loved him most; the bitter tears shed by men unused to weep, as they stood around his dying bed, and heard the last echoes of his potent yet kind voice, were the tokens of an affection of no common tenderness. He was hailed by his own age—"the great divine"—"the theologian;" and there are in our own days, many indications that the time is not distant when the predictive poetry of Buchanan respecting him, shall be completely fulfilled.

Non tamen omnino potuit mors invida totum
 Tollere Calvinum terris; aeterna manebunt
 Ingenii monumenta tui; et livoris iniqui
 Linguida paulatim cum flamma residerit, omnes
 Religio qua pura nitet se fundet in oras
 Fama tua.