

THE
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ART. I.—THE REVIEW AND THE QUARTERLY.

At the meeting of the Alumni Association of Marshall College in September last, the following question was proposed for the consideration of that body: Shall the Mercersburg Review be published another year? The more immediate causes, which led to the discussion of this question, were in the first place, the financial condition of the Review, and in the second, the fact that the Rev. Dr. Nevin, its leading contributor, or editor, upon whom it had mainly depended for character and reputation, had expressed his intention to withdraw from its editorial supervision at the close of the year. After the matter had been taken into serious consideration, the general opinion seemed to be in favor of its continuation, in case it could be carried forward without involving the Association in pecuniary difficulty; and the Publishing Committee were accordingly instructed to make provision for its publication during another year, if its accounts should be found to be in a condition to justify them in the undertaking. The withdrawal of the able and learned contributor referred to, who for the last four years had devoted much of his time and attention to its columns from a disinterested love of the truth, and given it a widespread celebrity, occasioned general regret, and some doubt as to the propriety of continuing its publication any longer. It had been called into existence more particularly with the view of providing some suitable organ for the discussion of certain principles, of which he had become the acknowledged representative and defender, and hence under the circumstances it was thought by some, that it was no longer called for, that it had accomplished its object, and performed its mission. There were, however, reasons that were deemed sufficient to justify

the more closely does she cling to it, and prove to those who may choose to observe her struggle, that though her form be slender, and her hand be small, she still has a heroic heart, and a believing grasp!

It may indeed grieve her to find herself the object of unkind suspicions among those whose friendship she desires to merit and enjoy. We do not think that she can be charged with contempt for the confidence and good will of sister Churches. But it is surely better, if it must be, to forego the present favor of misjudging friends, than to forfeit her faith. Conscious of integrity, and convinced that she is falsely accused, and unrighteously suspected, she seems to think it best to bide her time, endure her present wrongs, and patiently await the acquitting vindication of the future. And we are fully confident, that she will then find, in a retrospective view of the unappreciated service she is now, according to her humble means, seeking to render the cause of genuine Protestantism, an abundant recompense for all the reproaches now endured.

Reserving the consideration of the other points involved in this controversy for the next issue of the Review, we herewith close for the present.

J. H. A. B.

ART. VI.—GERMAN THEOLOGY AND THE CHURCH QUESTION.*

[Translated from "*Schaff's Kirchenfreund*," for September, 1852.]

IF we compare the present theological literature of English and American Protestantism, with that of the modern Evangelical school of Germany, we meet with a remarkable difference in their conception of *Catholicism*. Of this we have already had occasion to speak, more fully, in our review of Dr. Ullmann's "Reformers before the Reformation," which rests throughout on the assumption that Protestantism can be properly understood and defended only as the legitimate and necessary product of mediæval Catholicism, and not as an abrupt unhistorical revolution. To unchurch the Catholic Church, to cut her off entirely from the kingdom of God, and

* This essay is the conclusion of a series of articles on the most distinguished cotemporary University-theologians of Germany, which appeared in the May, July, August and September numbers of the *Kirchenfreund*, for 1852.

to identify her with the kingdom of Antichrist, as was almost unanimously done by the General Assembly of the Old School Presbyterian Church, during its sessions at Cincinnati, 1845, and which that Church, notwithstanding the well-founded protest of her able and learned Professors at Princeton, has not yet rescinded,) would, upon German ground, be absolutely impossible. The Evangelical Theology of Germany is indeed also thoroughly Protestant in principle and spirit, and rests upon that freedom of thought, and impartiality of investigation, which we properly owe to the Reformation. But this very freedom and impartiality of research has also led her to conceive and judge of the Catholic Church in a manner totally different from the old Protestant polemics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This, however, does by no means necessarily involve an approach towards Rome, but indicates rather a new and advanced position of Protestantism itself, which we understand to be the progressive principle of modern church history, whilst Romanizing tendencies are retrograde movements and deadly hostile to a proper conception of progressive development, which underlies all living German theology of the present day, especially its best works on church history.

First of all, the modern investigation of ecclesiastical and profane historians have entirely overthrown the earlier views concerning the *Middle Ages*. It may now be received as an established fact, admitted by all learned judges, that the Roman Catholic Church as such, during that age, was, by no means, the great Apostacy or kingdom of Antichrist, but the bearer of true Christianity, with its sacred canon and saving ordinances, the mother of the Romanic and Germanic nations, and of the whole modern European civilization, and notwithstanding her adherent corruption, carried within herself a vast amount of elevated piety and heroic virtue. The Papacy itself is regarded now, by the most distinguished modern church historians, and even by profane historians, such as John von Müller, Leo, Ranke, and Macaulay, as an institution absolutely indispensable for that time, and upon the whole highly beneficial, for the education of the Germanic nations, for the preservation of the unity, and security of the freedom and independence of the Church, over against the encroachments of the secular power. As the law of Moses was a schoolmaster to Christ, so the new Christian legalism of mediæval Catholicism prepared the way for Evangelical Protestantism. "Whatever opinion

we may hold," says the Protestant historian *Ranke*,* "concerning the Popes of former times, they had ever important interests in view—the fostering of an oppressed religion, the contention with Heathenism, the spread of Christianity throughout the Northern nations, and the establishment of an independent hierarchical power; it belongs to the dignity of human nature to will and to accomplish something great: these movements the Popes kept alive, and gave them a higher direction." To what extent similar conceptions have gradually taken root, of late, in English Protestant literature, notwithstanding the opposition of religious prejudices, the highly gifted *Macaulay* bears testimony, who leaves it undecided whether England is not more indebted for her greatness to Catholicism than to Protestantism, and thus frankly speaks concerning the Papacy of the Middle Ages: †

"Even the spiritual supremacy arrogated by the Pope was, in the dark ages, productive of far more good than evil. Its effect was to unite the nations of Western Europe in one great commonwealth. What the Olympian chariot course, and the Pythian oracle were to all the Greek cities, from Trebizond to Marseilles, Rome and her bishop were to all the Christians of the Latin communion, from Calabria to the Hebrides. Thus grew up sentiments of enlarged benevolence. Races separated from each other by seas and mountains acknowledged a fraternal tie, and a common code of public law. Even in war, the cruelty of the conqueror was not seldom mitigated by a recollection that he and his vanquished enemies were all members of one great federation."

The proper coryphe of the Papacy, such as Nicholas, Hildebrand, and Innocent III., heretofore regarded as scarcely anything better than incarnate devils, are now looked upon as heroes and benefactors of humanity. Even *Neander*, who is well known to have naturally a great antipathy to every thing priestly and hierarchical, and who zealously endeavors to place the opposers of the ruling Church in the most advantageous light possible, candidly expresses his profound admiration for the moral character and great merits of these popes. In the same manner has the judgment concerning the other prominent phenomena of the Middle Ages—the crusades, the monastic orders and their founders, religious art, scholasticism

* *Roman Popes in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 1 part, p. 44 second edition.

† *History of England*, ch. 1.

and mysticism—assumed a more favorable form, in proportion as they are brought from the dust of the past to light, and understood in their organic connection with the nature and wants of that period. It is impossible, e. g., to read with attention, Neander's Bernard, or Hasse's Anselm, without being filled with profound admiration for the spirit, virtue and piety of these men, although they move throughout in the spirit and mould of the Catholic Church, and belong, as is well known, to her most distinguished teachers and saints.

But this altered conception of the Middle Ages involves an enormous concession to Catholicism, and a fatal blow against a bigoted ultra-Protestantism. A Church, which throughout this whole transition period, from ancient to modern times, sent out such a host of self-denying missionaries to heathen nations, who carried the Gospel to the Germans, Scandinavians, Anglo-Saxons, Picts and Scots, and Sclavonians—a Church, which had power to excite all Europe to a heroic conflict against the false prophet for the recovery of the holy sepulchre of the Redeemer—a Church, which contended vigorously and successfully against the despotism of worldly potentates, slavery, barbarity, and a thousand other evils of society, which gave wholesome laws to the states, raised the female sex to its present dignity, which interested herself in behalf of the poor and suffering of all classes, which established asylums for misery, and institutions of benevolence in all places, which erected unto the Lord numberless churches, chapels, and those Gothic cathedrals, which even yet command the admiration of the world, which gave the first impulse to a general education of the people, which founded and sheltered almost all those European universities, which even to this day exert an immeasurable influence—a Church which has produced within her bosom such an incalculable number of profound minds, elevated characters and devoted saints:—such a Church cannot possibly, in the nature of the case, be the Antichrist and synagogue of Satan, notwithstanding the many anti-Christian elements which she may have included within her bosom, and of which no age and no denomination is entirely free. That extreme representation, which the majority of our popular religious papers continue to repeat from week to week, cannot for one moment maintain itself against the results of later Protestant historical research, and must therefore in due time disappear from the consciousness of all educated and unprejudiced minds.

Moreover, not only the Middle Ages, but also the *first six centuries* of the Christian Church, have been thoroughly re-examined, and documents have been brought to light, which for the most part were unknown even by name, at the time of the Reformation, when historical study, and the publication of ancient works had scarcely begun. Even Luther once calls Tertullian, who lived as late as the end of the second, and beginning of the third centuries, "the *oldest* teacher which we have since the time of the Apostles," (Works, ed. Walch XX, 1063), so that for him, the line of the Apostolical Fathers, and the numerous Apologists of the second century did not exist, with the exception of uncertain fragments which he could not but know from the legends of the martyr Ignatius, Polycarp and Clemens, "for whom," as he once remarks, "a bad boy forged books." The Reformers were best acquainted with Augustine, and their reverence and love for this profoundly pious as well as spirited and highly gifted father, was of immeasurable importance for their theological and moral training and position, as otherwise the Reformation would most probably have assumed a far more radical character. Through the indefatigable diligence and zealous inquiry of modern times, and through the impulse, which more especially Neander has given to historical Monography, we have at present, in the German language, thorough and complete works on Leo, Augustine, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzen, Basil, Athanasius, Origen, Cyprian, Tertullian, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, and even back to the immediate successors of the Apostles; so that the Nicene and Ante-Nicene Christianity, with the corresponding heresies of Arianism, Gnosticism and Ebionism, &c., are as clearly presented to our view, or at least as accessible as the Christianity of the seventeenth century. If we now read impartially those valuable monographies, or similar and more comprehensive works, such as Rothe's *Anfänge der christlichen Kirche*, Dorner's *Geschichte der Christologie*, Möhler's *Patrologie*, &c., and if we, in connection with these, candidly study only some of the more important productions of patristic theology, such as Chrysostom on the Priesthood, Augustine's *Confessions*, Cyprian on the Unity of the Church, Tertullian on the Prescription of Heretics, Irenæus against the Gnostics, and the Epistles of Ignatius, we must inevitably receive the impression that the Church of antiquity was in its predominant spirit and tendency, far more Catholic than Protestant, and that the Middle Ages are only a natural continuation

of the Nicene Christianity. Could Ambrosius, Athanasius, Cyprian, Irenæus, Ignatius, Clemens and Polycarp suddenly arise from their graves, and be transferred to Puritan New England, they would scarcely there recognize the Christianity of those venerable Martyrs and Confessors, for which they lived and suffered; but, on the contrary, would much sooner discover, not only amongst the Universalists and Unitarians, but amongst the Baptists and Puritans themselves, distinct traces of a congeniality of spirit with the heretics and schismatics of their own days. We state this, however, without any disrespect whatever, but simply as the impression received from an impartial comparison of historical facts. The most striking difference between the Primitive Church and Protestantism, lies in the doctrine of the Rule of Faith, of the Relation of the Scriptures to Tradition, of the Church, her Unity, her Catholicity, her Exclusiveness, and of the Sacraments. Even of the material principle of Protestantism, the doctrine of Justification by Faith *alone*, in *Luther's* sense, the Fathers know nothing, not even Augustine;* and instead of making this the article of the standing and falling Church, they assign rather to the Christology, to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the Holy Trinity, the central position in the Christian system, and the confession or denial of Christ's real humanity, is with them, according to 1 John, 4, the sure criterion of orthodoxy or heterodoxy.† In all these points of

* *Neander*, for instance, clearly shows, that Augustine's conception of justification is not a forensic outward imputation, (however important this may be) but a really making just, and hence substantially the same with sanctification. This by no means interferes necessarily with the doctrine of free grace, of which the same father is well known to have been one of the most zealous defenders. We may indeed say, that the substance of the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith properly understood is salvation by free grace, and in this general form it underlies no doubt the piety of all ages and of all true Christians.

† We cannot refrain from citing here a remarkable confession of Dr. *W. J. Tiersch*, in his valuable work on the New Testament Canon, (1845, p. 280) as it serves to illustrate, in a most impartial manner, the impression of this contrast between Patristic and Protestant Theology, even in its most churchly and orthodox form:—"What a strange impression do the Church Fathers, for the most part, make upon him who, filled with a strictly Protestant conscientiousness, betakes himself for the first time to their study. Thus it happened with the author of these discussions. Nourished by the best devotional works of the older Protestant writers, and educated theologically in the Dogmatics and Exegesis of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he turned to the Church Fathers. He remembers well how strange it appeared to him from the beginning, in not being able to find here anything of those truths which formed the well-springs of his entire religious life; nothing of that

doctrine, as well as in the hierarchical constitution, the sacrificial worship, and the ascetic conception of Christian virtue and piety, we clearly discover, in the Church Fathers, from Gregory and Leo up to Cyprian, Irenæus and Ignatius, at least the germs of that system, which afterwards completed itself in the Roman Catholic Church. This is continually becoming acknowledged the more in proportion as researches are extended in this sphere, and their results produced in a popular form. Without this resemblance, it would be absolutely impossible to account for the fact, that the Roman Catholic Church

[Protestant] way, which the sinner must tread in order to obtain peace, and become assured of divine grace; nothing of the merit of Christ as the only ground of pardon [?], nothing of an unceasing repentance, and continually fresh drawings from the fountain of free grace, and nothing of that lofty assurance of a justified Christian. Instead of this, he found that all stress was laid upon the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, upon a correct knowledge of this sublime object of worship, upon the objective mystery of the Trinity and Incarnation, upon the connection of creation, redemption and the future restoration of the creature in the glorification even of the human corporeality, upon the freedom of man, and upon the reality of the divine workings of grace in the Sacraments. Yet it was not too much for him to live himself into this whole method of thought, and, without giving up anything that is true and inalienable in the Protestant, especially the Lutheran Protestant consciousness, to conquer its oneness by means of a living appropriation of the theology of the Fathers. He soon learned that the Christian Church, over against the errors of the present, the Pantheism and Fatalism, the Spiritualism, and misapprehension of the significance of corporeality, stood in need of a decided re-assumption of the truths preserved in the Patristic Theology, and of an assimilation of her entire existence to the peculiar character of the ancient Church, at least internally, since the Reformation of external circumstances lies not within the reach of human power. The Primitive Christian Church appeared to him more and more in her full splendor and exalted beauty, of which only fragmentary lineaments are to be recognized in the churches, confessions and sects of the present. But the knowledge of this truly Apostolic-Catholic Church, which is neither identical with the Greek nor the Roman Church—but which differs still *far more* from Protestantism—this it is which gradually emancipated him from all polemical and denominational fanaticism, and afforded him the happiness of a disposition as decided and uncompromising against that which is unchristian and anticristian, as irenic and liberal towards that which is true and Christian in the manifold confessions of the present.—Those who wish to convince themselves that the views of the Fathers from Ignatius down to Augustine on the nature of the Church, which in some respects is the most important and comprehensive point of difference between Romanism and Protestantism, are essentially Catholic, and that the article of the creed, *Credo unam sanctam apostolicam ecclesiam*, with them, did not refer to an invisible abstraction, but to a visible historical reality, are respectfully referred to the third book in Dr. Rothe's masterly work on the early Church. The articles of Dr. Nevin on Early Christianity, and on Cyprian too, with which the readers of the Mercersburg Review are familiar, are quite to the point, and bring out a great many facts in clear and strong light which are worthy of the most serious attention, and cannot be put aside by mere categorical protests or ungentlemanly insinuations.

has canonized the most distinguished and pious of the fathers and cherishes their memory with filial veneration and gratitude to this day. It is only through want of knowledge, or a singular delusion, that any section of Protestantism could ever imagine itself to be a simple restoration of the Nicene or ante-Nicene age.

If however we concede this much, from a mere historical standpoint, it is easy to see what an enormous influence such an admission must have upon the final solution of the *Church Question*. For whoever despises the judgment of History, robs himself at the same time of all foundation and basis. If the fifteen centuries prior to the Reformation are deserving of no confidence, neither are the last three centuries entitled to any respect. "If any one neglect to hear the voice of the Church," saith our Lord, "let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." (Matt. 18: 17). In proportion as we undermine and reject the testimony of Church History, in theological and religious questions, do we also open the door to skepticism and nihilism. Herein precisely lies the great ecclesiastical and religious importance of modern church-historical research, even if this should not yet be duly acknowledged by many German theologians. The time will and must come, when the practical conclusions will be drawn from the theory.

But some will at once ask, Of what concern is the testimony of history to me, if I have the *Word of God* in my favor, which is, after all, the only certain Rule of Faith and Life; whilst the greatest schoolmen and Church Fathers, according to their own confession, were themselves sinful men, and liable to err? Very true! But who has made you an infallible *interpreter* of this Word? Has not this Word already existed in the Church before the sixteenth century, and as such been highly honored, read, transcribed, translated and commented upon? Whence then have you the canon, save directly from the faithful collection and transmission of the Catholic Church? Who furnishes you the proof of the genuineness and integrity of the apostolical writings, except the testimonies of the ancient ecclesiastical authors? If already the immediate disciples of the Apostles, if Ignatius, Clemens and Polycarp, if the fathers and martyrs of the second and third centuries, have radically misunderstood the New Testament, what guaranty have we then that *you*, in the nineteenth century, understand it properly throughout, wherever you may differ from them? Are you then made of better stuff than the Confessors and Martyrs

of the blooming period of the Church? Have you done and suffered more for Christ? You say: The clear letter of Paul and John condemns the Catholic Church as Antichrist, as the Man of Sin, the Beast from the abyss, as the Babylon destined to be destroyed. But whence do you know that this interpretation is correct? Since you totally reject the infallibility of the Pope, and perhaps also of the Church in general, you will certainly not be so inconsistent, and ridiculously presumptuous, as to claim it for yourself or any other Protestant interpreter? Moreover, such an application of the passages in question was wholly unheard of until within the later period of the Middle Ages, when it was invented by certain fanatical sects, to suit their polemical ends. The Church Fathers, without exception, even Irenæus, who through Polycarp stood in close relation to the Apostle John himself, have referred them to Gnosticism and to the World-Empire of *heathen* Rome. At all events, the Reformers could not have used consistently the Revelation of John for any polemical purpose, since Luther and Zwingli denied its Apostolical origin, and Calvin, with all his masterly skill as a commentator, wisely suffered it to remain unexplained. Later Protestant interpreters, such as Hammond and Grotius, and all modern expounders of Scripture, (quite lately the orthodox Hengstenberg, in his Commentary on the Apocalypse, and even the Puritan Stuart,) have, almost without exception, rejected the Anti-Roman interpretation, as entirely untenable, and again returned to the explanation of the Church Fathers.*

However this may be, there are, at all events, many more *clear* and *distinct* passages in Scripture, which, according to the unanimous explanation of Catholic and Protestant commentators, promise to the Church of Christ an *indestructible continuation and an uninterrupted presence of her divine Head, even to the end of the world*. Of this there cannot be the least doubt, and therefore must we above all, build our theory of Church History upon *such* declarations, and not upon a very doubtful interpretation of the darkest passages in the most mysterious book of the Bible—which, not without reason, stands last in our canon. But if it should appear as the result of the modern thorough and impartial investigations

* We must remark, however, that the *exclusive* reference of the 18th and 17th chapters of the Apocalypse does not seem to do justice to the inspired vision of John, which seems to include several successive world-powers opposed to the kingdom of Christ. Still less can we adopt Hengstenberg's view of the Millennium.

of the greatest Protestant Historians, that the Christian Church, before the Reformation, even back to the days of the Apostolic Fathers, was not in her predominant spirit and character Protestant, but essentially Catholic, in most of those points where the two systems are at war with each other, and that the protesting sects, from the Ebionites and Gnostics, down to the Cathari and Albigenses present a confused mixture of contradictory opinions, and as such cannot possibly constitute the uninterrupted continuation of the Life of Christ and evangelical truth: it necessarily follows that such a defense of Protestantism, which rests upon an entire rejection of Catholicism,—as a system of falsehood,—be it Baptist, Puritanic, Presbyterian or Anglican—stands in direct contradiction to the testimony of history and those unequivocal sayings of Christ and his Apostles, and must therefore be abandoned.

This is the deciding point, to which the controversy between Protestantism and Catholicism, which has lately arisen with renewed zeal and energy in Germany, England and the United States, is forced, and should some German theologians, who have aided in bringing about this issue, in their predominantly theoretical tendency and scientific self-complacency, concern themselves little about the practical consequences, there are many divines in practical England and America, who will draw the final conclusions. Examples might readily be pointed out, which in reality confirm this. It is a remarkable and interesting fact, that German evangelical theology, becomes far more practical and serious in its consequences, upon English ground, than in Germany itself. For the Englishman seldom contents himself with naked theories and speculations, but endeavors directly to bring them into practical life, to organize them externally and realize them in some concrete form. This can easily be seen in Methodism, compared with the congenial, but unorganized Pietism. Puseyism exhibits the same tendency, though in an opposite direction; for in it, the idea of the Church has long since emerged from the sphere of theological research, and has become a solemn practical life-question, which has already driven a considerable number of the Clergy and Laity, from the Protestant into the Roman camp. Neither would it greatly surprise us, should we live to see also in America, a larger secession of educated men towards Rome, arising partly at least from an earnest but one-sided study of Church history. For here such a step could be more easily accounted

for, than in Germany, as a necessary reaction against extreme forms of anti-catholic theology. To do this, we need only consider that the Protestant Press of America, with few honorable exceptions, from the city papers, with their ten and twenty thousand subscribers, down to the most obscure country sheets, rests upon this totally anti-scriptural and anti-historical theory; that it contends against the Roman Church with weapons of the blindest fanaticism, and that it suffers itself to make use of such rude and uncharitable misrepresentations, which we should be obliged to stigmatize directly as barefaced lies, could they not be accounted for, on the ground of ignorance and prejudice, and did not the otherwise religious character of these Intelligencers and non-Intelligencers, compel us to adopt the latter expedient. He who has ever thoroughly and impartially studied the history of the Church before the Reformation and the classical productions of Roman Divines, such as Bellarmine, Bossuet, Möhler, Wiseman, Ballmes and Newman, must possess a more than ordinary amount of patience and stoical tranquility of mind, if he can behold those caricatures which are circulated from week to week, without being filled with indignation against the conscious or unconscious calumniators, and with an increasing sympathy for the slandered party. Add to this, the growing confusion in Protestantism, which notwithstanding its great advantages in many other respects is, precisely in this country, more than in any other, split into numberless denominations and sects, without any human prospect for a consolidation or union, and presents a confused mixture of private opinions and subjective, ever changing notions, which threaten finally to wash away all the solid ground of real supernatural faith and fixed doctrine from under our feet, unless important conservative powers should stay the wild stream. The most trifling cause is considered sufficient to mangle the Body of Christ, and to transgress the Apostle's command: "Forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." And along with this, there is such an abuse made of the Word of God, that it must furnish proof texts for the wildest dreams, as if it were a nose of wax and a book of all sorts of contradictions. If then we have any idea of the Church, its inherent unity and catholicity, of law and authority, and regard Christianity as a supernatural power, to which we must humbly submit, instead of fashioning it according to a rationalistic common sense, and the conceptions of modern times, until it

is finally sunk to the sphere of Nature, and becomes the product of our reason and imagination; we must have an unusually strong confidence in History, and continually look to the past, and with hope to the future, so as not to become disheartened sometimes by the present Babel of Protestant sects. Without such a confidence in God—who, as a Portuguese proverb says, writes also on a crooked line, and can call a beautiful creation out of chaos; without the virtue of patient expectation and hope, there is a strong inducement for serious minds, which have become fully conscious of the weight and difficulties of this subject, to cast themselves into the arms of Roman uniformity, if only for the purpose of escaping this eternal fluctuation, and experimenting to acquire a firm foundation and basis, and to enjoy as they hope at least, the feeling of comfortable rest and security.

If therefore Protestantism is to be defended, without surrendering the thoroughly scriptural idea of an indestructible Church, and an uninterrupted indwelling presence of Christ, and without doing violence to the clear testimony of History, prior to the Reformation, it can only be done by conceding, at the same time, a relative title to Catholicism, and allowing it to have been the chief, if not the only bearer of Christianity, down to the sixteenth century, and that it even yet constitutes a vital member of the Body of Christ. Dr. *Rothe* says in his learned and not sufficiently appreciated work, entitled *Die Anfänge der christlichen Kirche*, (Preface, p. ix.): "There can be no more powerful apology for Protestantism, than the acknowledgment, yea even the positive affirmation of the fact, that in the *past*, Catholicism, according to its substance, has had full historical reality and necessity, deep inward truth, and high moral excellence and power." So we say also: The noblest and most efficient way of defending Protestantism, is not to run down and abuse, but rather to glorify and defend Catholicism, as the bearer of mediæval Christianity, and as a necessary preparation for Protestantism itself, without which the latter could as little have made its appearance, as Christianity without Judaism, or as liberty without the school of authority and obedience. In the same way we may say, that the honor of the New Testament is not diminished, but increased rather and properly guarded, by giving the Old Testament all due credit and importance as a preparatory dispensation of the gospel.

But even this alone is not sufficient. For a Church, which,

in spite of the tremendous shock experienced in the sixteenth century, depriving her of the most vigorous nations, has yet power to revive herself, and replace, at least to a great extent, the lost territory by means of important conquests in the heathen world; which has since been able to reproduce in the sphere of theology, a Bellarmine, a Baronio, a Peteau, a Bossuet, a Möhler,—in the sphere of missions and Christian Life, a Xavier, a Borromeo, a Filippo of Neri, a Vincens of Paula, a Paschal, a Fenelon, a Sailer; which in later times has attracted talented men so differently constituted, such as Haller, Stolberg, Novalis, Schlegel, Hurter, Florencourt, Newman, Manning, Wilberforce and Brownson; which subsequent to the Revolutionary storm of 1848, has elevated herself with renewed energy, extended her arms towards the North and West, into the very heart of Protestant civilization, and the bulwark of Protestant power, and wherever she goes, throws the Government, Clergy and Laity into a feverish agitation, and sets a thousand tongues and pens in motion against her:—such a Church cannot have her significance in the past *alone*, but must possess even yet an important life-power, a relative necessity for the present, and a significant mission for the future. This is, of course, at once to confess that Protestantism does not describe the entire circumference of the Church, even since the time of the Reformation,—although it is evidently the chief bearer of modern civilization,—but that it is in its own nature, onesided, that it suffers from imperfections, as well as its adversary, although of an opposite character, that it, on this account, again stands in need of a Reformation, that it has, in Catholicism its necessary complement, and that it can never complete itself without it. The signs of the times

* There is only too much truth in the following remarks of the distinguished Anglican convert, Dr. *Newman*, in the preface to his lectures to Anglicans: “There is an instinctive feeling of curiosity, interest, anxiety, and awe, mingled together in various proportions, according to the tempers and opinions of individuals, when the Catholic Church makes her appearance in any neighborhood, rich or poor, in the person of her missionary or her religious communities. Do what they will, denounce her as they may, her enemies cannot quench this emotion in the breasts of others, or in their own. It is their involuntary homage to the Notes of the Church; it is their spontaneous recognition of her royal descent and her imperial claim; it is a specific feeling, which no other religion tends to excite. Judaism, Mahometanism, Anglicanism, Methodism, old religions and young, romantic and common-place, have not the spell. The presence of the Church creates a discomposure and restlessness, or a thrill of exultation, wherever she comes. Meetings are held, denunciations launched, calumnies spread abroad, and hearts beat secretly the while.”

also, point clearly enough to this issue. Protestantism is just at this time undergoing a thorough examination and sifting in Germany, England and North America, and it is to be hoped that the sermon of repentance, which is thus delivered unto it, may not be overheard, but that it may reap similar benefits from the progress of its old hereditary enemy, whilst the Roman Church has evidently gained to a great extent, in activity and zeal, by means of the reacting and arousing influence of Protestantism. For wherever they have come into contact, it can easily be seen, that Romanism is in a far more living and hopeful condition, than where it sways the sceptre of undisturbed dominion, e. g., in the spiritually dead Mexico, Brazil, Portugal and Croatia.

This liberal position towards Rome is, at all events, more generous, far more consistent with the spirit of Christian charity, and much better calculated to gain over the adversary, than that harsh and repulsive fanaticism, which hesitates not even to make common cause with Rationalists, Pantheists, Atheists, Socialists and impure Revolutionary spirits of every possible character, over against Catholicism, as is too frequently the case with many of our religious sheets. Only think of the many Protestant patrons, such miserable apostates and unprincipled slanderers as Maria Monk, Ronge, Leahy, (who lately turned out a murderer!) Achilli, etc., have found in our midst! "What communion hath Christ with Belial, or light with darkness?" But the main point here is, that this mild and moderate polemic is more in keeping with *truth*, the Word of God, and the testimony of History, than the other, which rests purely on historical suppositions, caricatures and perversions.

But now it may be asked, How can one remain a Protestant any longer, with a good conscience, if he makes such significant concessions to the Catholic Church, regarding her as the only true Church down to the Reformation, and attributing to her even to this day such an important position and mission? Is not that which was once the true Church, always the true Church? How can Christianity be first Catholic, then Protestant, without contradicting itself? Of course, from the standpoint of a mechanical conception of Christianity and History, this difficulty is not easily solved. Just as soon as we conceive of ecclesiastical Christianity as a system, pre-concluded from the start, and completed in its outward form, for all time, so soon must we consistently become either Roman Catholic or Ultra-Protestant. There is no middle ground. But far otherwise is it from the standpoint of *historical devel-*

opment, which underlies all the more important German historical works of modern times, although the thing itself is as old as history, and has a firm foundation in the Bible. The only merit which German theology can claim in this respect is, that it has brought out the idea in a scientific form and applied it to the treatment of history. This conception, it seems to us, affords the only tenable foundation upon which to justify the Reformation and Protestantism, without doing violence to preceding history, and destroying the nature of an uninterrupted Church. Hence its vast practical importance for the solution of the Church question. We speak here, of course, only of the *theological* and *scientific* defense of Protestantism. For the plain practical Christian is not and ought not to be troubled with these historical difficulties; he bases his faith in Protestantism very properly on the Word of God, as he understands it, on his own religious experience, and on the practical fruits of the system which he finds to compare very favorably on the whole with those of the opposite system. But the theologian must battle with the solemn problem of the Church question, as it stares him in the face from the pages of history. To him, it cannot possibly be indifferent what Christianity has been in the different ages of the world, and what relation his own view of it sustains to the great and good men of bygone days who have suffered all for Christ.

Development is properly identical with history itself; for history is life, and all life involves growth, evolution and progress. Our bodily existence, all our mental faculties, the Christian life, and the sanctification of every individual, constitute such a process of development from the lower to the higher. Why should not the same law hold, when applied to the whole, the communion which is made up of individuals? Any reasonable person will allow a progress in trade, business, in politics, arts, science and civilization; why not also in the Church? Why should she alone, which is a communion of individual believers, and something historical, yea the greatest fact and phenomenon of history, be made an exception to the laws of all organic life and development? The New Testament itself distinctly applies this law to the Church. For Christ compares his kingdom to a mustard seed which groweth into a mighty tree, and to a leaven which gradually leaveneth the whole lump, and the Apostles, especially St. Paul, speak continually of the growth of the body of Christ as well as of individual believers.

Even Roman Catholic Divines, such as Möhler and Newman, must resort to the idea of development in some form—whether

this naturally follows from the Roman standpoint of stability or not, is another question*—in order to understand and explain the history of their own Church. Much less can a Protestant historian advance a single step, and justify the Reformation, without the torchlight of this idea. It is now determined, as before remarked, that Protestantism in those doctrines differing from Catholicism, is not the Christianity of the Schoolmen and Mystics, not the Christianity of the Church Fathers of the Nicene age, not the Christianity of the Apologists, of the Apostolic Fathers, of the Martyrs and Confessors of the second and third centuries, but that all these are substantially more closely related to the Catholic standpoint, although this itself had only gradually developed and perfected itself. This is placed beyond doubt already, by the character of the Greek Church, which remains stationary at the point of the Ancient Church, and is evidently far more Catholic than Protestant. The doctrine of the Trinity, of the Divinity of Christ, of the Relation of the two Natures in Christ, of the Atonement, in short all the articles of the Apostolic and Nicene creeds, are here not brought into view; for these are not specifically and exclusively Protestant, but in their origin and substance Catholic, and manifestly inherited from an earlier Catholicism, fully as much so as the canon of Scripture and the doctrine of Inspiration. They constitute the primitive foundation common to all orthodox Churches, in opposition to all heretical sects. If then the Reformation is not a work of Satan, but a divine fact, which we for good reasons believe, it must be viewed and defended as a *new phase* in the progressive development of Protestantism, as an *advance* on the earlier periods of the history of the Church.

This is then the last but safe anchor for a Protestant divine of the German historical school. To this position has, for example, Dr. *Nevin* been forced, who is thoroughly acquainted with all the forms of English and German Protestantism. The Puritan, Presbyterian and Anglican historical hypotheses, have proved wholly untenable to him, and in his late articles

* Brownson, in several articles of his Review, violently opposes Newman's theory of development as subversive to Catholicism and Christianity, and predicts that a new and dangerous heresy will spring out of this view of the Anglican converts, unless it be speedily condemned by the authorities of the Roman Church. We believe that Brownson is very unjust to Newman, personally and perhaps unconsciously influenced by jealousy against his most distinguished fellow-convert; at the same time, however, we agree with him, that the idea of development is not congenial to the genuine spirit of Romanism, but essentially of Protestant growth.

on "Early Christianity" and "Cyprian," in the *Mercersburg Review*, he has produced arguments against them, which none of his many dissatisfied opponents have attempted to refute, and which indeed, in a historical view, so far as the main facts are concerned, can scarcely ever be refuted.* Consequently there remains for him nothing except the German theory of Development, which, in the mean time, is held in reproach by almost all English theologians. As long as he adheres to this theory, an exodus to Rome will be impossible, as it would be a retrogression, and consequently a nullification of the fundamental law of historical development. For this, in the nature of the case, implies progress, an advance from the lower to the higher, and this must hold good when applied to the Church, although in the individual parts of all the divisions of the Church, retrogressive movements and temporary stagnation may occur.

For the purpose, however, of justifying Protestantism satisfactorily, on the ground of the development theory, two important points must be settled. First, it must be proved that it was not a *radical* rupture with the religious life of the early, i. e., the Catholic Church, but that it has, *in common with her a primitive Christian and a primitive Church basis*, which we, in our opposition, should never lose sight of. For, in the course of her development, the Church must yet continually remain identical in her nature, and dare not advance beyond herself, without falling into heresy, and thus make the promise of Christ to her of none effect. Thus man from childhood to old age still remains man, and each successive step is but a higher evolution of the idea contained already in the infant. Hence it is of immense importance, that the Reformers with-

* It is a fact by no means creditable to our American theology, that the many and earnest writings of this distinguished divine on the Church question, in its various aspects, have been met almost on every side with misrepresentation, slander and abuse, instead of earnest, solid argument. The only respectable articles, which have thus far appeared against Dr. Nevin, are Dr. Hodge's review of the "Mystical Presence," and two articles of Dr. Proudfit in the *Princeton Review*, and even the latter ones are by no means free from misrepresentation, and escape the real points at issue. We hope for the honor of Puritanism, Presbyterianism and Anglicanism, that they will be able and willing to defend themselves in a truly scholarly and gentlemanly way against the powerful attacks made upon them from that quarter, which, however, in our estimation, could only be done by assuming a much more historical and at the same time far less bigoted and exclusive position than they have occupied heretofore. Unhistorical and unchurchly Protestantism, we apprehend, cannot stand ultimately against the powerful strides of Romanism, which has now fairly entered into the very heart of Anglo-American Protestantism, with renewed energy and the boldest hopes of final success.

out exception retained the Catholic Canon of Scripture, the ancient oecumenical symbols, and especially the Apostle's Creed, and incorporated them in their own confessions, and that they stood in direct opposition to the ultra Protestant sects of their times. Certain portions of modern Protestantism manifest, indeed, a fearful tendency in their bitter hostility against Rome, to separate themselves from this fundamental basis, and in like proportion sink into the character of heresies and sects. But the main branches of Protestantism will, by no means, surrender this Apostolic symbol, which connects them with the Ancient Church, and never cease to claim an interest in the Christianity before the Reformation, especially in the Patristic literature. Indeed there are evidently manifold strivings to recover numerous treasures, which have been cast overboard, and particularly to reconstruct, enlarge and conform their worship to the Church principle.

Then again it must be proved that Protestantism has its foundation substantially in *Apostolical* Christianity. For the New Testament, the Word of Christ and his inspired organs, is, after all, the final resort in all religious questions, and whatever has no connecting point with it cannot be sustained in the end. The germs of all legitimate stages of progress must already appear in the Apostolic Church, whilst a development beyond Christ himself and his Apostles, in the sense of Rationalists and Free-thinkers of all classes, must naturally assume the character of a degeneration, and a relapse into Heathenism or Judaism. With *such* development we, of course, have not the least sympathy whatever, but abhor it as essentially antichristian. But the Reformers, we all know, without exception placed themselves on the Bible as the only infallible rule of Christian faith and practice. Now it would indeed be an inextricable historical riddle, if the close association which Protestantism has from the start formed with the Bible, and if the zeal with which it continually devotes itself to its translation, interpretation and promulgation throughout the world, should rest finally upon a mere delusion. It is, indeed, manifestly impossible for the Bible to contain *all* that the various denominations and sects imagine to find in it—but which, in truth, they force into it, by means of their private interpretation—or it would contradict itself, and cease to be the truth any longer. It cannot possibly contain at once the contrary doctrines of Episcopalianism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Zuinglianism, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, Methodism, the Baptists and Quakers, (if by special indulgence, we

should still number the last two with orthodox Protestantism); it cannot, at the same time, teach and condemn the doctrine of Predestination, or both affirm and deny the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; it cannot at one time declare Baptismal Regeneration, and yet degrade the Sacrament to the level of an empty sign; it cannot enjoin the baptism of Infants, and yet reject it as unchristian; it cannot establish three orders in the Ministry, and then again, but one, or teach no peculiar spiritual office at all, but only a universal Priesthood, and favor whatever other points of difference there may be in Doctrine, Constitution and Cultus, partly essential, partly non-essential, concerning which Protestants have quarreled already for three hundred years, with equally zealous appeal to the Bible, without advancing a single step towards each other. Still justice requires us to allow, that they agree, we will not say in all—as this would evidently be saying too much—but in most of the fundamental articles of the Gospel; for if it were otherwise, we would, according to the incontrovertible maxim, “out of the Church, no salvation,” be compelled to deny the possibility of salvation in one or the other of these communions, to which extent, even the extreme Puseyites, and Old-Lutherans will not venture.

Some such relation then must evidently exist between the Bible and orthodox Protestantism in order to explain intelligently their close connection for three hundred years. In this dilemma, German Theology again comes to our relief and transfers us, to what appears to us, the only correct point of view.

Modern exegetical investigations, in which sphere, as is well known, it has displayed an extraordinary activity, place it beyond all doubt for us at least, that we must distinguish three stages of development and types of doctrine in the apostolic Church, which of course, in no way, contradict or exclude each other, as the school of Dr. Baur in Tübingen, after the precedence of the ancient Gnostics, maintains, but mutually complete each other, to wit:—*Jewish Christianity*, represented by the Apostles, Peter and James, *Gentile Christianity*, represented by the Gentile Apostle Paul and his co-laborers, and *the higher union of both* by John, the beloved disciple, who, surviving all his colleagues, exhibits the third and last period and completion of the Apostolic Church, and looks forward, at the same time, as the Prophet of the new covenant, through the most distant future, to the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness and peace for evermore. If this view be correct—and we find it more and more confirmed the longer

we study the New Testament in its proper connection—we have a polar star to guide us through the entire labyrinth of Church History, in her manifold phases and stages of development. According to this view then, the history of the Catholic Church, which stays herself on Peter as her rock,* and derives her doctrine on justification, faith and good works chiefly from the first two Gospels and from the Epistle of James, corresponds to Apostolic Jewish Christianity, and with it lays stress principally on authority, law and the closest possible connection with the theocracy of the Old Testament. Protestantism, which originally proceeded from a renewed study of the Epistles of Paul, is a onesided enforcing of the paulino-Gentile Christianity with its spirit of evangelical freedom and independence, over against the Jewish Christian excesses. In its relation to Catholicism it has thus far imitated St. Paul far more in his temporary inimical collision with Peter at Antioch, (Gal. 2: 11, 19,) than in his subsequent friendly co-operation with him, and has frequently given occasion to his antagonist to repeat the warning of Peter against the abuse of the writings of Paul “in which there are some things hard to be understood.” (2 Peter 3: 16.) Then again Protestantism has unfolded thus far almost exclusively the anthropological and soteriological doctrines of Paul, his Epistles to the Galatians and Romans; whilst the later Epistles of the same Apostle, especially his profound doctrine of the Church, as the one, undivided body of Christ, the fulness of him that filleth all in all, have evidently not yet received their full share of attention. As soon as this shall be done, there will be at the same time a certain approximation to the Catholic, church-principle, and the way become prepared for the third and last Period of the Christian Church, in which the great truths of Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism, with the exclusion of their mutual errors, may become united in a higher union and harmony, through the renewal and complete appropriation of the spirit of John, especially of his doctrine of the person of Christ, and the living communion of the faithful with Him and with each other. But this union must be preceded by a universal

* We may admit with Count Zinzendorf, and Dr. Stahl, in his late address to the German Church Diet in Bremen, that “the Pope is not the Antichrist, but the legitimate chief of the Roman Church,” as Peter was the head of Jewish Christianity, without surrendering thereby the true interests of Protestantism. For the Roman Church is not the Catholic Church, but only a part of it. The Greek Church in her best days never disputed the authority and even primacy of the Bishop of Rome for the Latin Church, but refused to submit to it in the absolute and universal sense.

repentance, and we may here appropriate to ourselves the significant words of the great and generous Catholic Divine, Möhler (Symbolik, Page 353, sq. 6 Ed.) who, after frankly acknowledging the unwarrantable lack of principle in so many priests, bishops and Popes, "whom hell has swallowed up," as the cause of corruption in his Church and of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, adds—"This is the point (the consciousness of guilt) at which Catholics and Protestants will in great multitudes one day meet and give each other the hand of friendship. Both, conscious of guilt, must exclaim, We *all* have erred—it is the Church only—as an institution of Christ—which cannot err; we *all* have sinned—the Church alone is spotless on earth. This open confession of mutual guilt will be followed by the festival of reconciliation."

Herewith we bring the series of essays on German Theology to a close. We have rendered it high praise, and joined bright hopes with it. But we would not be so misunderstood, as though we were blind to its manifold wants and imperfections; we have rather distinctly stated the contrary, and intimated that its principle practical task has by no means yet been accomplished. We know also full well that salvation comes not from theology, science or learning, under any form, as many German closet-scholars imagine, but from *life*, from those *divine-human powers*, those aged, yet ever youthful *supernatural facts*, which alone have founded and which alone can renew and complete the Church. But if the evangelical theology of Germany, in connection with the other instruments of the age, should, in the hands of a merciful God, serve the purpose of preparing the way, from the Protestant side, through the inward, quiet, yet deeply working "power of thought," for such a reconciliation between Catholicism and Protestantism, and aid in bringing to an end the great schism of the sixteenth century by a greater and more difficult act of reunion: it would truly deserve the praise and gratitude of all true friends of the kingdom of God, which is a kingdom of love, harmony and peace. For what can be more grand and glorious than to heal the bleeding wounds of the body of Christ, and to labor for the realization of the last prayer of our Eternal High Priest: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me!"

W.

Mercersburg, December 6th, 1852.