

pulpit. The Sacramental altar demands a central position, and immediately in front of it the baptismal font; there is no meaning in placing this latter at one side, to balance a reading-desk on the other. The reading-desk is a mere convenience for holding the books at the right side of the altar, from which all our worship should ascend to heaven. The pulpit requires a prominent position, either behind the font and the altar, or at their side, in order that the preacher may be able to point the world to the one, and the people of God to the other.

ART. IV.—THE ESSENCE AND THE FORM OF CHRISTIANITY.

Those who hold to the peculiar type of theology which this REVIEW seeks to develop and advance, firmly believe, and would as modestly as possible say, that they have some wholesome things to say to the theological public. From some demonstrations, however, called forth by our former issues, we have reason to doubt whether our common American Protestantism is in a much better temper to hear what we have to say than it was a score of years ago. This does neither alarm nor discourage us. This theology has never professed to be of the same type with that around it. If, as a Church, our theology is not distinctive and peculiar to itself, we have most certainly neither right nor mission to labor and teach as apart from other denominations. It not only differs, but it differs widely from the whole Puritan scheme. Nothing, therefore, is gained either to the reviewers of it, or to us, nor yet to the general cause of sound theology, by merely attempting to show this. All this is already publicly acknowledged and claimed. To us the whole interest is too solemn to allow us, like the bat, to play animal among animals, and fowl among fowls. Our Christological theology is distinctive. Let all understand this fully and finally, and thus save themselves the useless pains of measuring it by their own.

In saying this we do not ask men to let us think and decide for them, but only respectfully invite them to study with us what are regarded as the momentous problems of the times. We are engaged upon the questions which concern the essential nature of Christianity, and these also, as we conceive, lie at the very foundations of Protestantism; and they vitally affect the questions at issue between Protestantism and Romanism. These are the only live questions in theology at the present time. With some this whole matter is already fully and satisfactorily decided. We do not agree with them. For us the present popular theology decides nothing in regard to them. That leading men in the Protestant or Roman Church, should think so, and thus sit in dignified rest, is to us the saddest aspect of the case. To us this whole question appears, just at this time, to press as never before. The pressure which began to be felt by earnest minds, in Germany, England, and this country, more than a quarter of a century ago, increases every day, whether men admit it or not. The charge of Romanizing, as made against those who are alive to this great question, is no argument, decides nothing, defends nothing, condemns nothing, is worn out, and has lost both its novelty and power. We have never cared for it. Like the nursery cry of "a man in the dark," it can only be successfully practised upon theological children. Of the cruelty inflicted upon the unthinking by thus playing with their religious prejudices, we will not speak.

We work at this problem, not for the sake of indulging in theological curiosity, but because we clearly see that God, in History, is working at it. There are times in the history of Christianity, when certain great questions press for a decision. If they cannot be decided by human wisdom and learning, they will be decided by "God in History," awakening and enlisting the co-operation of men.

Of this fact, the history of the world furnishes abundant examples. We have one near us. For several decades before the outbreak of the late Rebellion, the question of human slavery pressed upon the minds of our statesmen with a power that would not be put off. Our wisest men thought, wrote, planned, and

proposed, but no scheme for the settlement of the question could be presented which seemed to meet the case. Our statesmen were at their wit's end. Then war became the mighty word of God! God decided by actual history what no wisdom of our statesmen could decide for the country.

A similar burden is upon the Church. The question between Protestantism and Romanism is pressing for adjustment. There seems, however, no probability of a decision of it in the schools alone. We know that nothing is more difficult than to read "the signs of the times," yet one cannot help but feel that the status of the European nations—by no means settled—indicate that "God in History" is about to awaken newly, and irresistibly urge forward the theological mind to a decision. Though the late military movement seems, on the surface, to have been only for civil and political ends, yet it is plain that the Christian element is at the bottom of it, though it may be unconsciously so to many of the actors. It could be easily shown that the cause of the late Prussian-Austrian war lies at least a century back in history. Protestantism on the continent, and with it the German nationality, were demoralized by Rationalism, ever since English Deism, through French sensualism, and French life and manners, had found its way to the Prussian Court of Frederick the Great, through the plausible and skeptical Voltaire, and thence down to all lower court circles, till at last all polite Germany was found talking, dressing, dancing French, and thus had their manners, their thinking, their Christianity, and their nationality, all poisoned by a foreign spirit. Thus the demoralization went forward till Germany, if it did not forget to know, at least almost altogether ceased to feel that it was Germany. During the last decades Rationalism has been fast on the wane, and a revived theology and Christianity have taken hold of the German mind and heart. With this revival in the Protestant consciousness must come back the German nationality to a corresponding consciousness. No nation has ever felt so deeply as the German that their nationality rests in their religion. For

Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?
 So nennen endlich wir das Land!
 So weit die Deutsche Zunge klingt
 Und Gott im Himmel Lieder singt!

This late war was, in its deepest ground, a struggle for the freedom of the revived Protestant consciousness, and with it a strike for the old glorious German nationality. As now partially restored by the success of Prussia, it is a master for France. Its successes have humbled old foggy Austria, and very plainly demoralized the old continental Dictator. That a German power could—that it *dared* twice to say flatly “no” to French suggestions, is a new thing in Europe, and a thing to be thought of. The foundation for a full restoration of the German Protestant nationality is now fairly laid in the success of Prussia. Whether the present difficulty between Prussia and France leads to war or not, is in itself unimportant. If the war occur, it will be the very power that shall consolidate Germany; if France backs out, the humiliation and demoralization of that Roman Catholic power will have the same effect upon the nationality and Protestant spirit of Germany.

Rome sees the ultimate bearing of all these significant signs of the times. Some one writes:

“The Roman Catholics of France, particularly the Ultramontanes, are deeply chagrined by the recent events in Europe. It is not alone the defeat of a Catholic prince, involving the loss of all hope of revolutionizing Italy, that brings them to grief, but they are stung by the cause to which the public sentiment traces the results. The fact is constantly brought forward that, for the last three centuries, Romanism has proved an element of weakness and decline in all the States which have surrendered themselves to its influence; and that, on the other hand, countries which have embraced the doctrines of the Reformation, have grown in strength and prosperity. Spain is compared with England, Sicily with Scotland, Portugal with Holland, etc. When in reply, the case of France is cited, the history of that nation from the time of Francis I., is appealed to, to show that whenever France has been in alliance with Pro-

testants, she has concluded advantageous treaties of peace; but whenever she has taken up arms to support the Papacy, she has been conquered and humiliated. It is further said, that if France occupies an elevated rank among the European Powers, and if her soldiers have gained memorable victories, it is because for eighty years, notwithstanding that they were nominally Roman Catholics, they have, by their laws, their ideas, their tendencies, and their actions, ceased to be so. It is also said of Italy, that she began to be great and strong only when separating her institutions and interests from those of the Vatican. The most influential organs of the French press, among them the *Journal des Debats*, have made this remark: ‘Austria is clerical (that is to say, Popish), she must either undergo a change or die; she can no longer exist as she is.’”

Another extract may show how foreign Romanists themselves view the situation as brought about the late military events in Europe:

“There is an article in the Ultramontanist Journal, the *Monde*, of Paris, of some interest. It states what must be the result, as regards Rome, of the overthrow of Austria. ‘No State will remain depending upon the Vicar of Jesus Christ.’ All will have abjured the official character of the Catholic faith. The mass of the Catholics in France, Spain, and Germany, will let fall the throne of Pío Nono, that visible sign of the Catholicity of the nations. If Austria be vanquished, ‘she will close the Catholic cycle of modern people.’ This is probably a true anticipation. The old Catholic ideal of Church and State is likely soon to be but an idea—the terrible ecclesiastical tyranny that has so long oppressed Christendom, forever disappearing. And the paper says:—‘There are not wanting zealous Protestants in Berlin and elsewhere, who take a grim interest in the fact that by the defeat at Sadowa, the House of Hapsburg “met its doom” on the very ground where, some two hundred and fifty years ago, Ferdinand II. so ruthlessly stamped out the Protestantism and the freedom of Bohemia. It is said, indeed, that a Berlin pastor of rank predicted the victory on that field a fortnight before the event. After the battle of Weissenberg, in

1620, the Emperor systematically labored to extirpate the new religion and its professors.'"

Restless desperation is always an evidence of a consciousness of weakness. This was manifested on the part of the Romanists on the occasion of the late defeat of the Roman party in Belgium:

"During the June election of members of the two houses of the Legislature, the Ultramontanes made a desperate effort to secure the control of those bodies, and thus force the Government into illiberal measures toward the Protestants. Parish priests denounced the Liberals from the pulpit, and threatened with everlasting torments those who should vote for them. On the day of election they accompanied their parishioners to the balloting, and watched their voting. As usual, they carried their zeal to the excess which insures a rebound. All the result of their efforts was to bring the cause of religion into contempt, and to leave their party in a minority in both branches. If this madness of Romanism reacted only upon itself, it would be less deplorable. But Belgium is fast becoming the meeting-place for all the schools of infidelity on the continent, and such exhibitions make their unhappy disciples none the fewer."

We know full well that all that appears in the signs of the times, and that seems to make against Rome, is neither pure Protestantism, pure Christianity, nor pure Patriotism. We think of the declarations of the notorious Gavazzi, who, when he preached his crusade of liberty through this country some years ago, said: "I am no Catholic! I am no Protestant! I am no destroyer!" This element deeply flows in the minds of many who are politically pitted against Rome. But it shows that those nationalities which have become effete under Roman forms of Christianity, are earnestly asking whether they must utterly die in their present status, or whether they must strike for some kind of hope, if it even be in the still darker abyss of infidelity.

The question between Romanism and Protestantism as it now presses for a decision, is not a question alone of theology and Christianity in a direct way, but it is also a question of civiliza-

tion, of freedom, of life and progress for the nations—and especially is it such in those nations that are, as a clear fact, pining and dying under the shadow of Roman Christianity. This fact is a more powerful, practical argument against Rome, than any ever presented by universities. Whether they do it as Protestants or as infidels; whether they do it by right or by wrong, the nations will ask, are now earnestly asking, whether by continued papal allegiance their effete and pining nationalities can rise and live again. If neither Romish nor Protestant theologians can answer the question theoretically and practically, they will have an answer still. If not for the sake of those who so earnestly ask, or for the sake of those who are not able to answer the earnest inquiry, still for the sake of Christianity and the Church of the Future, God will answer the question by the "logic of events," by the voice of history.

We believe He will do it soon. The mighty word which David hurled against Saul, is in all ages a true and fitting word, showing how God can open the path of history, and lay bare of accumulated rubbish the true foundations of safety and progress for the Church and for the nations. "The Lord thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice. Yea, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out His lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the *channels* of waters were seen; and the *foundations of the world were discovered* at Thy rebuke. O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils!"

We do not say *how* God will decide this great question. We only say, "Man's necessity is His opportunity;" and that the very pressure of the question indicates that He, and He alone, can and will decide it. The signs now are favorable to Protestantism; at least they indicate that the Romish system must suffer itself to be fundamentally modified, a thing which it has hitherto resisted with inflexible determination. But we need not determine what the "foundations" that He will "discover" shall be, or what the "channel" of the future history of Christianity shall be. Let us only wait, and still pray: "Thy kingdom come;" and while we believe that "the Lord reigneth," we may humbly re-

joice in hope of the glory which shall be revealed in the "Church of the Future."

Amid these earnest movements of the age, can theology sit still and complacently enjoy its *otium cum dignitate*? Can Protestantism, which, by its divisions, seems so illy ready to take the conduct of history, afford to stand in mere empty wonder before the mountain chewing over and over again its own end, or slipantly enter the fray to welcome the mighty movement with the music of that old wheel upon which it is spinning over again its dry, brittle, and short traditions? Is it ready to meet these new creative momenta of history with its old and finished theology? Not so do we estimate the demands of the times. The theology needed is not finished and at hand. As more or less in all ages, so especially now is theology called to a new travail, that it may bring into the unity of science, and prepare for the demands of history, the full power, capacity, and scope of Christianity, which it has ever been able to apprehend only "in part." To this end it must, as ever, vary its standpoint, in the hope of finding that central, imperial principle, out of which all Christian truth grows forth, to which it is all harmoniously related, and in right adjustment with which it will both illuminate the centre, and be in turn illuminated by it. This is our problem. It is this that constitutes the peculiarity of our views in theology.

It will be our aim in the present article, to attempt an *orientation*—as the Germans say—in our present position,—show what has necessitated such position, and indicate how, as we believe, it throws light upon some of the most important, central, and earnest theological questions of the age.

Two great questions, to which all others are subordinate, are in this age pressing for answer. Two questions which are, however, only different sides of one and the same question. The questions are these: What is the *essence*, and what is the *essential form* of Christianity?

Both these questions will be ultimately decided by the historical development of Christianity itself. It will at last surely realize its essential nature in true form. But it will do this

through the devout and willing co-operation of Christians; and it is both our duty and our privilege to forecast its essential nature and form, in order that we may work truly to facilitate the process of its own self-realization.

Without attempting here at once an answer to the questions proposed in the way of a definition of the essence and form of Christianity, we wish first to attend to a brief historical review, out of which, as we intend, a substantial definition shall grow.

Christianity is *one*. There are many religions, but there are not many Christianities. No view of its essence or form can be for a moment entertained without the appreciation of this primal character of Christianity. Any theological or ecclesiastical antagonisms that will not or cannot subordinate themselves to this essential idea, are false; and any religious movements or tendencies in which this idea is ignored, or not kept consciously in view, are mere fitful and sporadic impulses in the dark—or what the Germans so expressively call "*Einspänneri*"—persons wildly and lawlessly driving their own solitary vehicles.

Christianity is *one*. It is, however, not one as a *unit*, but one as a *unity*. It is an expansive and a progressive unity; not a unit in a point, but a unity in and over *space*; not a unit at rest, but a unity extending through and over *time*, a unity in life and history.

Now, when Christianity first began to extend in space, and to move onward in time, thus to secure ultimate possession of the world in both its conditions of space and time, the great problem arose, How shall the one essence manifest itself in *form*? What shall, and what must be the form of that unity which is ever extending through space, and ever progressing through time? What shall be the form of that unity which can be maintained in the absolutely necessary diversity and manifoldness of space and time, of geography and history?

Gradually the theory grew into power that Christianity, in order to maintain its unity in its extension and perpetuity, must have an ecclesiastical centre in space—Rome; an ecclesiastical head of its own subjects—the Pope. To this fixed centre in space—Rome, and to this infallible perpetual central line of

tactual succession through time in the persons of the popes, the extension of Christianity to its utmost periphery, and every manifold progress of it in its history, was supposed to be inflexibly bound.

The ecclesiastical constitution thus formed claimed for itself to be *jure divino*, first and last, the true, only, and ultimate form of the Body of Christ.

This form of Christianity, and this theory of its unity, maintained itself under more or less pressure upon it by tendencies toward the periphery in the form of sects and heresies more or less powerful, through one thousand years of history. That it became more mere power over human wills, and less a power in human wills, is claimed by Protestants, admitted by many of the most learned and honest Romanists, and is clearly demonstrated by the actual facts of history. It failed to hold the Christian world in unity. For whence did the Reformation come? Did it spring up full-fledged, and at once, like Minerva out of the head of Jupiter? Was it not nursed to life in the bosom of Romanism? Did not Roman life—for there existed no other—create its necessity, and give it existence from its own womb? As a life out of Rome's own life it broke forth from its own bosom, and asserted for itself new rights, cast itself into new forms, and created for itself a new history,—a life, moreover, which was at the time, and has since been identified with the most fresh and vigorous nationalities, has continued to control and advance them, and has in the year just past, on the very soil where the original ecclesiastical battle was fought, by the civil and military power of Prussia, limited, humbled, and in a great degree demoralized, the two ruling nationalities of the Papacy, France and Austria; and even Italy, the seat of the Papacy, itself in semi-antagonism to its long papal nursing, has attained, in some measure at least, its longed-for freedom and expansion of national honor and power, only by the power and influence of its Protestant ally—having exhibited in its own military weakness that demoralization which its national life has suffered in its long bondage under absolute and arbitrary power.

The results reached—the status effected, by this sudden, quick, and significant demonstration in the history of Europe, is not a fixed status. The end is not yet. We know full well that nothing is more difficult to read than “the signs of the times.” Nor have we any capacity or call to prophecy. Yet we need not look forward into the enigmatical future, but only back into history, to learn and see that there are great questions, which philosophy and theology can, indeed, earnestly ask and discuss, but which, as we have already intimated, Christ in History alone can decide. History proves abundantly, in all its long annals, that war is also a mighty word of God. By it He not only breaks stubborn nations, but also stubborn systems. By it He sets free human thoughts and human hearts from colossal and overshadowing forms of error. In war God enlightens and blinds cabinets, commands and confounds armies. By its overturnings He removes the rubbish with which human ambition has barricaded the path of history, and lays bare to view again the foundations of human progress.

Such terrible intervention of God in the affairs of earth, is only a last resort. It comes in when human power and human wisdom fail, and when problems of human history, before which the wisest and most earnest stand confounded, *must be resolved*. Of such interventions, at such crises, the history of the world is full.

Such a burden is now upon the world's history. The Church is in travail. It has a question before it which its own wisdom and councils fail to answer. The question is a fundamental one. What is the *essence*, and what is the *form* of Christianity? This is substantially the question between Romanism and Protestantism. It presses for a decision. It will not be put off. It rests not only on the earnest theological mind, it involves in it the peace and progress of the nations; it is, as we have said, a question of civilization and civil freedom, as well as of theoretical and practical theology. The vigorous Protestant nationalities, on the other hand, stand alarmed at their very success in “subduing” and ruling the earth. Floating on the high tide of material prosperity, carrying a crusade of freedom against almost

every form of authority, dashing forward as by steam and lightning, making antiquated to-day what was but yesterday new, casting Christianity and Christian society into new forms, and giving free play to individual wills—no wonder that the most earnest in Church and State lift up their hands in fear and warning, and ask whether these rapids do not betoken an abyss near at hand, where all may be dashed to pieces.

In short, such is the position of things in Europe especially, and in the whole Christian world generally, that history, and God in history, must soon decide the question between Romanism and Protestantism. In their present position of antagonism they cannot long continue, in their present form, side by side. Can history go back three hundred years, and stultify itself? Shall the main flow of the world's life be remanded back under the inflexible rule of Rome, whose lust for civil power, in its most arbitrary form, is as great now as it ever was; and which, in its religious dogmas, instead of having been modified and moulded by the protests of Protestantism, have only been further elaborated in the direction of stronger and sharper antagonisms? Does Romanism, fastened as it is to the effete life of the world—a state of the nations effected in its own bosom—show that it can take care of the world and the Church, both of which it still proposes to rule from its old centre—Rome? To us it is not given so to believe.

The signs of the times seem to indicate that, whatever may be its faults and present inadequacies, history will yet vindicate the great movement of the sixteenth century as a legitimate growth from the true root of Christianity, and which will yet modify, if not draw into itself, the remaining life of the old trunk, which still stands in uncompromising antagonistic intolerance by its side. If it be so that Protestantism shall stand the test in the arbitrament of God in history, as being substantially the main bearer of the Christian life, it is plain that it cannot do so on the sole basis on which it started, or on the basis of what it has since been or now is, but alone on the basis of what it has the power of yet becoming, by virtue of that very free-

dom and flexibility of life and form which it has itself so powerfully asserted as over against Rome.

Who that assumes in good faith the divine right of this movement, and has the firmest confidence in its legitimacy, can hold at the same time that it has as yet attained to its ultimate form? History makes haste slowly. More than five hundred years passed by before Christianity was moulded into the Roman type; and those centuries are crowded with struggles, tendencies, divisions, and multitudinous aberrations. If Romanism required such length of time to reach its own approved form, there need be no impatience with the Protestant movement, if, in three hundred years, it as yet presents no finally satisfactory or conclusive results.

The history of Protestantism shows abundantly, that it has not, in any stage of its history, been satisfied with its own results. But it has shown itself to be an earnest and a free power—earnest in grappling with weighty problems in theology and philosophy, and free to discard and rid itself of any vicious elements, which have sought to mingle with and shape its progress. In its apprehension of the essence of Christianity, it has shown itself a master for Rationalism, as the spirit of a vicious freedom. It has also surmounted antichristian Pantheism. It has also always had power to save itself from being evaporated by an unchurchly spiritualistic pietism. Though all these elements of lurking mischief and threatening danger are still widely at work in its bosom, especially in practical forms, they have all been theologically surmounted and left behind.

In its efforts at recovery from these fundamentally false tendencies in its own bosom, it has partially fallen into opposite tendencies—tendencies which, instead of seeking a higher and surer form for Protestantism by pushing forward, have been disposed to surrender the interest, and go back. Thus, we have in Germany, a tendency which hopes to find a solution for the afflictions of Protestantism in the forms of primal Lutheranism—the school of Stahl and Hengstenberg, at present again most vigorously at work in the Prussian Church. In England, we have the Tractarian, or the Puseyistic School, which hopes in

a repristination of the essence of Christianity into the forms of the first five centuries of Christendom. These two have their echoes in America; the one in High-Church Episcopalianism, and the other in what, for want of a better name, we may call Old Lutheran Ecclesiasticism. The same tendency, in a less prominent way, and with feebler power, runs through almost all Protestant denominations. Thus Presbyterianism has its *old school*. Methodism has a side, which leans toward the primitive. Free Congregationalism, Unitarianism, and Universalism, have their primitive and conservative sides, the advocates of which think that these forms have not become better, but worse, by progress. Even Quakers have their orthodox conservatives, who seek to bridle back the progressives; the Mennonites have their old school; and the Dunkards their ancient men, who fear modernization.

In fact, it is evident that learned Tractarianism, and equally learned German repristinating High Lutheranism, are merely scientific exponents of a tendency that runs through Protestantism in all its forms and departments—a tendency more or less clearly felt and apprehended. But if we hold, as we surely must, that the early period of Protestantism was the period of its infancy, and not its full and ultimate form, then it is clear that all such movements toward repristination are candidates for petrification and fossil cabinets. Life has no such movement. All forms of history that begin to stagger backward, are in search of graves. The true heroes of history are those who keep facing forward, and not those who seek safety and rest by flight from the battle.

Such schemes of Protestant repristination are the veriest pedantry. That they are a vain refuge, is shown by the fact that the most earnest and most deeply thinking men, who have fallen into this current, have found in the end that logical consistency requires them to carry their repristination still farther back, and demands an actual going over into Romanism.

All such churchism in Protestantism, just like Roman churchism itself, must fail to furnish an ultimate solution of the problem in regard to the essential essence and form of Christianity, simply

because it is churchism, and nothing more. It stops in the *form* of Christianity, and does not apprehend its essence as it lies back of the form. It rests in a churchly Christianity, instead of going back to its ultimate Christological basis. This ecclesiasticism heads in a Pope, cardinals, and bishops—in a Luther, Calvin, or Henry the VIII., instead of heading in the living Christ. In its zeal for a pope, it forgets that Christ is still alive. In its listening to cardinals and bishops, it forgets that the apostolic word is still the heritage of Christianity; and in its ardent desire for the rest of a fixed Christianity, in the primitive form of Protestantism of whatever type, it forgets that in all forms of life, and in all developments of history, the more perfect is always toward the end, and not toward the beginning.

Finding no solution for our problem in these repristinating tendencies, shall we find it in a purely opposite direction? Must we hope in the disintegrating, unmoored, floating, and dwindling impulses, on the extreme left of Protestantism? God forbid! These are not fresh currents of history, but only stagnating pools by its side, whose progress is the sending forth of pestilential breath, and the breeding of vile and useless things of life. Or to use another figure, they are the bewildered eddies, which, by their very wildness, prove the powerful sweep of the stream that moves majestically by.

What, then, does our own position offer? It is the peculiarity of Mercersburg Theology, that it alike refuses surrender to both the tendencies now briefly reviewed. It professes to have found, and to hold, a ground that can conserve the truth, and cast off the error inherent in both tendencies. It claims that its system is emphatically old, and just as emphatically new. It is highly conservative, and yet truly radical and progressive. It is truly catholic, and as truly protestant. It is bound by authority, and yet free. It looks back and forward, and professes to find in the womb of the old past the potencies and elements for the history and Church of the future.

The harmony of these antinomies, the unity of these paradoxes, it finds in its views of the essence of Christianity. This it finds, not in law, not in truth primarily, not in feeling, nor

in form of any kind, but in the idea of life. To it, Christianity is primarily and essentially a life. It is the divine-human life of Jesus Christ, the God-man. As Christianity begins in Him, so it stands perennially in Him. He is its perpetual fountain and principle. He did not leave our humanity, nor the world, in His ascension, so as to be away from it; but, on the other hand, only the more really, widely, and perennially to enter into it, in and through the Holy Ghost. As He is the life of Christianity and the Church, so He is also the perpetual Head, and centre, and bond of unity. Himself the central life of humanity, which is to be renewed and glorified in Him, that life furnishes a presence and a unity for all extension in space, and for all progress in history. He needs no Rome and no Vicar, because He is neither dead nor absent. He is the *Æon* of all *æons*—the Unity of all unities—the perennial Presence and Fulness of all manifoldness and diversity—the perpetual and absolute Source of all authority, and the Principle of universal freedom and progress.

Regarding the essence of Christianity as a life, it holds that it is not absolutely outwardly dependent on fixed forms—that these are not created to its hand *ad extra*, but that it perennially creates its own forms. Though it does not sunder life and form, it holds that the life is master over the form. Hence it may and does change its form by its own free presence, even as all life, in its onwardly progressing stages, requires one form to pass forward into another. It will, therefore, know of no fixed and finished ecclesiasticism. It requires no tactual handling down of the life in fixed form; it leaves the free life to provide for its own perpetual self-attestation, and sees in the changing forms of Christianity only the free, self-adjusting power of the Christian life, and its truly catholic aptitude for almost unlimited individualization and adaptation to that manifoldness and diversity, which always characterizes life.

It holds that the Church, as His body, is the form of the presence of His life—that it is a mediation of His life, not a vicarate of it—and that in any form it may assume, its legitimacy is to be attested, not so much by any outward chain of

witnesses, as by the self-attesting presence of the life of Christ. Christianity attests the Church, not the Church Christianity. When it reads lists purporting to be lines of successions, and which propose to furnish us with evidence of a legitimate line of the Christian life, it doubts and fears; but when it sees the grand fact of Christianity as it lies before it through the ages of Christian history, a living, continuous life in the world, it feels assured that the presence of such a fact is a better witness than any records of tactual succession can furnish. The logic of life is to it the highest and surest logic. When the full-grown oak of a thousand years stands before it, it accepts the fact none the less because it has not at hand outward witnesses of the subordinate fact, that it has actually passed, in unbroken continuity of life, through all the stages which lie between the acorn and its present majestic form and proportions.

It sees, in all forms of life, how free life is, and yet how bound. Nothing so free as life, and yet nothing so bound. The life creates the form, shapes the form, changes the form, and yet binds itself to the form in unbroken identity and continuity. It recognizes the same phenomena in the life of Christ. Hence it has no sympathy with the Roman theory of holding up its finished and fixed forms as the only medium and measure of the Christian life, attempting to compress its growing development into moulds of other ages, which its free life has long since outgrown, ever putting new wine into old bottles—thus making the form a bondage to the life. Nor, on the other hand, can it go with those who propose to emancipate the Christian life from its forms, giving it the intangibility and frightful freedom of a ghost.

It holds Christianity to be catholic—catholic in space, and catholic in time. Catholic, because it is the absolute life of the world. Catholic, not because it has one inflexible form, in all space and in all time, but catholic because it is the same life in manifoldness and diversity of form in all lands and in all ages, approaching man and communities on their own level and in their own estate, not as a patronizing Pharisee in starched attitude, presenting a fixed pattern for his moulding, but ever like

Christ Himself, taking the form of a servant, and, like St. Paul, ready to become all things to all men. This is its catholicity. It does not appear in the Sunday dress of theory, but in the substantial every day working garments of theological and practical life.

Thus it is to the honor of our Theology, that, on the one hand, it is charged with a backward tendency toward Rome; and, on the other hand, it is characterized as a bold and free movement forward beyond the traditionary bounds of all that is called orthodoxy in Protestantism. It is branded, now as a conspiracy with Rome, and now as in league with the boldest dash of pantheism. While some see in it the resurrection of antiquated dogmas, others see in it only the wildest vagaries of modern German speculation. This apparent contradiction is all explained by the fact that it holds Christianity as a life, in which this same antinomic phenomenon appears. Life is the unity of antagonisms. The root-life and the fruit-life are opposite movements. But the antagonism only proves the high character of the unity. As the root-life extends, the fruit-life extends. The vigor and health of the one depend upon the vigor and health of the other. As we grow backward in history, so may we grow forward into history. As the fruit-life needs the root-life, so does true progress need the past. In proportion as our theology is old, has it the power, the right, and the call to be new. As far as it reverences the old does it fulfil the fifth commandment, honoring its father and mother, and has, therefore, also its promise, which is that its days shall be long in the land which the Lord our God hath given it.

In this one central Christological truth our theology substantially stands. Upon those, who, leaving this out of view, are controverting about subordinate matters, we look as being engaged in small and fruitless quarrels. What are the questions about government and polity, which have divided Protestantism, and now still keep it apart?—and the very names of which are the banners of battle—as Episcopacy, Papacy, Presbytery, Congregationalism? What are all these, but a stirring among the shells of the nut, after the kernel is gone? These peripheric

forms of Christianity, like all shells, are all good, if the kernel be in them; they are all bad, if the essence of the Christian life has not formed them, and is still filling them out with its essence and life. We can have no interest in this vain battology.

To us the first question is concerning the essence of Christianity, assured that it will perennially create its own forms. If we have the acorn to plant, we know that its life will present the proper form through all the stages of its development. If we have the true Christological principle of theology, we may be sure that we have our light in the centre which radiates upon all. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He filleth all in all. His divine-human person is the centre of all theological science; for in Him is life, and that life is the light of men.

ART. V.—THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE.

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There are periods in every man's life, when the lines of thought, or duty, on which he has moved, cross one another, and he stands at the intersection, not knowing which he ought to follow.

In matters where moral duty is involved, cases arise, which cannot be governed by the laws or rules he is habitually and usually guided by; and the art of casuistry has been digested into method, that by its helping rules cases of conscience may be decided. Whenever any case of conscience arises the moral faculty is placed at the intersection of two rules or laws, and the difficulty is to determine which rule or law we ought to follow in the instance before us. But difficulties of a like kind may arise, not only in matters of moral obligation, but also in questions of speculative interest. And in no case of speculative interest, does there arise anything like the difficulty which besets the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The question, which, at first sight, would seem to command our