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ARTICLE VI.

THE NATURE AND INFLUENCE OF THE HISTORIC SPIRIT.

An Inaugural Discourse, by William G. T. Shedd, Professor at Andover.

THE purpose of an Inaugural Discourse is, to give a correct and weighty impression of the importance of some particular department of knowledge. Provided the term be employed in the technical sense of Aristotle and Quintilian, the Inaugural is a demonstrative oration, the aim of which is to justify the existence of a specific professorship, and to magnify the specific discipline which it imparts. It must, consequently, be the general object of the present discourse to praise the department, and recommend the study, of history.

As we enter upon the field which opens out before us, we are bewildered by its immense expanse. The whole hemisphere overwhelms the eye. The riches of the subject embarrass the discussion. For history is the most comprehensive of all departments of human knowledge. In its unrestricted and broad signification, it includes all other branches of human inquiry. Everything in existence has a history, though it may not have a philosophy, or a poetry; and, therefore, history covers and pervades and enfolds all things as the atmosphere does the globe. Its subject-matter is all that man has thought, felt, and done, and the line of Schiller is true even if taken in its literal sense: the final judgment is the history of the world.¹ If it were desirable to bring the whole encyclopaedia of human knowledge under a single term, certainly history would be chosen as the most comprehensive and elastic of all. And if we consider the mental qualifications required for its production, the department whose nature and claims we are considering, still upholds its superiority, in regard to universality and comprehensiveness. The historic talent is inclusive of all other talents. The depth of the philosopher, the truthfulness and solemnity of the theologian, the dramatic and imaginative power of the poet, are all necessary to the perfect historian, and would be found in him, at their height

¹ Resignation, Werke I. 98.

of excellence, did such a being exist. For it has been truly said, that we shall sooner see a perfect philosophy, or a perfect poem, than a perfect history.

We shall, therefore, best succeed in imparting unity to the discourse of an hour, and in making a single and, therefore, stronger impression, by restraining that career which the mind is tempted to make over the whole of this ocean-like arena, and confining our attention to a single theme.

It will be our purpose, then, to speak,

First, Of that peculiar spirit imparted to the mind of an educated man, by historical studies, which may be denominated the *historic spirit*; and

Secondly, Of its influence upon the theologian.

The historic spirit may be defined to be: the spirit of the race as distinguished from that of the individual, and of all time as distinguished from that of one age.

We here assume that the race is as much a reality as the individual; for this is not the time nor place, even if the ability were possessed, to reopen and reargue that great question which once divided the philosophic world into two grand divisions. We assume the reality of both ideas. We postulate the real and distinct, though undivided, being of the common humanity and the particular individuality. We are unable, with the Nominalist, to regard the former as the mere generalization of the latter. The race is more than an aggregate of separate individualities. History is more than a collection of single biographies, as the national debt is more than the sum of individual liabilities. Side by side, in one and the same subject; in every particular human person; exist the common humanity with its universal instincts and tendencies, and the individuality with its particular interests and feelings. The two often come into conflict with an earnestness, and at times in the epic of history with a terrible grandeur, that indicates that neither of them is an abstraction; that both are solid with the substance of an actual being, and throb with the pulses of an intense vitality.

The difference between history and biography involves the distinct entity and reality of both the race and the individual. Biography is the account of the peculiarities of the single person disconnected from the species, and is properly concerned only with that which is characteristic of him as an isolated individual. But that which is national and philanthropic in his nature; that

which is social and political in his conduct and career; all that links him with his species and constitutes a part of the development of man on the globe; all this is historical and not biographic. Speaking generally in order to speak briefly, all that activity which springs up out of the pure individualism of the person, makes up the charm and entertainment of biography, and all that activity which originates in the humanity of the person furnishes the matter and the grandeur of history.

History, then, is the story of the race. It is the exhibition of the common generic nature of man as this is manifested in that great series of individuals which is crowding on, one after another, like the waves of the sea, through the ages and generations of time. History omits and rejects everything in this march and movement of human beings that is peculiar to them as selfish units; everything that has interest for the man, but none for mankind; and inscribes upon her tablet only that which springs out of the common humanity, and hence has interest for all men and all time.

History, therefore, is *continuous* in its nature. It is so because its subject-matter is a continuity. This common human nature is in the process of continuous evolution, and the wounded snake drags its slow length along down the ages and generations. No single individual; no single age or generation; no single nationality, however rich and capacious; shows the whole of man, and so puts a stop to human development. The time will, indeed, come, and the generation and the single man, will one day be, in whom the entire exhibition will close. The number of individuals in the human race is predetermined and fixed by Him who sees the end from the beginning. But until the end of the series comes, the development must go on continuously, and history which is the account of it, must be continuous also. It must be linked with all that has gone before; it must be linked with all that is yet to come. As it requires the whole series of individuals, in order to a complete manifestation of the species, so it requires the whole series of ages and periods, in order to an entire history of it.

But while history is thus continuous in its nature, paradoxical as it may appear, it is at the same time *complete* in its spirit. Observe that we are speaking of the abstract and ideal character of the science; of that quality by which it differs from other branches of knowledge. We are not speaking of any one par-

ticular history that has actually been composed, or of all histories put together. History as actually written is not the account of a complete process, because, as we have just said, the development is still going on. Still, the *tendency* of the department is to a conclusion. History looks to a winding up. We may say of it, as Bacon says of unfulfilled prophecies: "though not fulfilled punctually and at once, it hath a springing and germinant accomplishment through many ages." History contains and defines general tendencies; it intimates, at every point of the line, a final consummation. The historical processes that have actually taken place, all point at, and join on upon, the future processes that are to be homogeneous with them. That very continuity in the nature of history, of which we have spoken, results in this completeness, or tendency to a conclusion, in its spirit. Like a growing plant, we know what it will come to, though the growth is not ended. For it is characteristic of an evolution, provided it is a genuine one, that seize it when you will, and observe it at any point you please, you virtually seize the whole; you observe it all. Each particular section of a development, exhibits the qualities of the whole process, and the organic part contemplated by itself, throbs with the general life. Hence it is that each particular history; of a nation, or an age, or a form of government, or a school of philosophy, or a Christian doctrine; when conceived in the spirit of history, wears a finished aspect, and sounds a full and fundamental tone. And hence the proverb: man is the same in all ages, and history is the repetition of the same lessons.

So universal and virtually complete in its spirit is history, that a distinguished modern philosopher has asserted that it may become a branch of *à priori* knowledge, and that it actually does become such in proportion as it becomes philosophic. Being the history, not of a dislocation, but of a development, and this of *one* race; being the exhibition of the unfolding of one single idea of the Divine mind; the history of the world, he contends, might be written beforehand by any mind that is master of the idea lying at the bottom of it. The whole course and career of the world, whose history is to be written, is predetermined by its plan, and supposing this to be known, the historian is more than the "prophet looking backward," as Schlegel calls him; he is the literal prophet. He does not merely inferentially foretell, by looking back into the past, but he sees the whole past and

future *simultaneously* present in the Divine idea of the world, of which by the hypothesis he is perfectly possessed.

This philosopher believed in the possibility of such an absolutely perfect and *à priori* history, because he taught that the mind of man and the mind of God are one universal mind, and that the entire knowledge of the one may consequently be possessed by the other. While, however, the philosopher erred fatally in supposing that any being but God the Creator, can be thus perfectly possessed of the organic idea of history, or that man can come into an approximate possession of it except as it is revealed to him by the Supreme mind, in providence and revelation, we must yet admit that the world is constructed according to such an idea or plan, and that for this reason, coherence, completeness and universality are the distinguishing characteristics of its history.

While, therefore, we deny that history as actually written, or as it shall be, comes up to this absolute and metaphysical perfection, it would be folly to deny that it has made any approximation towards it, or that it will make still more. So far as history has been composed under the guiding light of this divine idea, which is manifesting itself in the affairs of men; so far, in other words, as it has been written in the light of providence and revelation; it has been composed with truth, and depth, and power. Historians have been successful in gathering the lessons and solving the problems of history in proportion as they have recognized a providential plan in the career of the world, and have had some clear apprehension of it. The most successful particular histories seem to be parts of a greater whole. They have an easy reference to general history; evidently belong to it; evidently were written in its comprehensive spirit and by its broad lights. So much does history abhor a scattering, isolating and fragmentary method of treating the subject-matter belonging to it, that those histories which have been composed without any historic feeling; with no reference to the Divine plan and no connection with universal history; are the most dry and lifeless productions in literature. Want of connection, and the absence of a unifying principle, are more marked, and more painfully felt, in historical composition, than in any other species of literature. Even when the history is that of a brief period, or mere point, as it were, in universal space, the mind demands that it be rounded and finished in itself; that it exhibit, in little, that

same complete and coherent process, which is going on more grandly, on the wider arena of the world at large.

History, then, is the exhibition of the *species*. Its lessons may be relied upon as the conclusions to which the human race have come. In these historic lessons, the narrowness of individual and local opinions has been exchanged for the breadth and compass of public and common sentiments. The errors to which the single mind; the isolated unit, as distinguished from the organic unity, is exposed, are corrected by the sceptical and critical processes of the general mind.

What, for illustration, is the teaching of history in regard to the presence and relative proportions in a political constitution of the two opposite elements, permanence and progression?

Will not the judgment, in regard to this vexed question, that is formed on *historic* grounds, be, to say the least, safer and truer, than that formed upon the scanty experience of an individual man? Will not the decision of one who has made up his mind after a thoughtful study of the history of the ancient tyrannies and republics of Greece and Rome; of the republican States of Italy in the middle ages; of the political history of Europe since the formation of its modern State-system; be nearer the real truth than that of a pledged and zealous partisan, on either side of the question; than that of the ancient Cleon or Coriolanus; than that of the modern Rousseau or Filmer? And why will it be nearer the truth? Not merely because these men were earnest and zealous. Ardor and zeal are well in their place. But because these minds were individual and local; because they were not historic and general in views and opinions.

Take another illustration from the department of philosophy. A great variety of theories have been projected respecting the nature and operations of the human mind, so that it becomes difficult for the bewildered inquirer to know which he shall adopt. But will he run the hazard of fundamental error, if he assumes that that theory is the truth, so far as truth has been reached in this domain, which he finds substantially present in the philosophic mind in all ages? if he concludes that the historic philosophy is the true philosophy? And will it be safe for the individual to set up in this department, or in the still higher one of religion, doctrines which have either never entered the human mind before, or, if they have, have been only transient residents?

The fact is, no one individual mind is capable of accomplishing, alone and by itself, what the *race* is destined to accomplish only in the slow revolution of its cycle of existence. It is not by the thought of any one individual, though he were as profound as Plato and as intuitive as Shakspeare, that truth is to obtain an exhaustive manifestation. The whole race is to try its power, and, in the end, or rather at every point in the endless career, is to acknowledge that the absolute is not yet fully known; that the knowledge of man is still at an infinite distance from that of God.

Much has been said, and still is, of the spirit of the age; and extravagant expectations have been formed in regard to its insight into truth and its power of applying it for the progress of the species. But a single age is merely an individual of larger growth. There is always something particular, something local, something temporary, in every age, and we must not look here for the generic and universal any more than in the notions of the individual man. No age is historic, in and by itself. Like the individual, it only contributes its portion of investigation and opinion, to the sum total of material which is to undergo the test, not of an age, but of the ages.

Considerations like these go to show, that there is in that which is properly historic, nothing partial, nothing defective, nothing one-sided. It is the individual which has these characteristics; and only in proportion as the individual man becomes historic in his views, opinions and impressions; only as his culture takes on this large and catholic spirit, does he become truly educated. It is the sentiment of mankind at large, it is the opinion of the race, which is to be accepted as truth. This is furnished by history. When, therefore, the mind of the student, in the course of its education, is subjected to the full and legitimate influence of historical studies, it is subjected to a rectifying influence. The individual eye is purged, so that it sees through a crystalline medium. That darkening, distorting matter, composing oftentimes the idiosyncrasy rather than the individuality of the intellect, is drained off.

Having thus briefly discussed the nature of the historic spirit by a reference to the abstract nature of history, let us now seek to obtain a more concrete and lively knowledge of it, by looking at some of its actual influences upon the student. Let us specify some of the characteristics of the historic mind.

1. In the first place, the historic mind is both reverent and vigilant.

The study of history raises the intellect to a loftier eminence than that occupied by the student of the present; the man of the time. The vision of the latter is limited by his own narrow horizon, while that of the former goes round the globe. As a consequence, the historic mind is impressed with the vastness of truth. It knows that it is too vast to be all known by a single mind, or a single age; too immense to be taken in at a single glance; much less to be stated in a single proposition. Historical studies have, moreover, made it aware of the fact that truth is modified by passing through a variety of minds; that each form taken by itself is imperfect, and that, in some instances at least, all forms put together do not constitute a perfect manifestation of the "daughter of time." The posture and bearing of such a mind, therefore, towards all truth, be it human or divine, is at once reverent and vigilant. It is seriously impressed by the immensity of the field of knowledge, and at the same time is adventurous and enterprising in ranging over it. For it was when the human imagination was most impressed by the vastness of the globe, that the spirit of enterprise and adventure was most rife and successful. Before the minds of Columbus and De Gama, before the imagination of the Northmen and the early English navigators, space stretched away westward and southward like the spaces of astronomy, and was invested with the awfulness and grandeur of the spaces of the Miltonic *Pandaemonium*. Yet this sense of space, this mysterious consciousness of a vaster world, was the very stimulation of the navigator; the direct cause of all modern geographical discovery.

The merely individual mind, on the contrary, seeing but one form of truth, or, at most, but one form at a time, is apt to take this meagre exhibition for the full reality, and to suppose that it has reached the summit of knowledge. It is self-satisfied and therefore irreverent. It is disposed to rest in present acquisitions and therefore is neither vigilant nor enterprising.

2. And this naturally suggests the second characteristic of the historic mind: its productiveness and originality.

Such a mind is open to truth. The first condition to the advancement of learning is fulfilled by it; for it is the fine remark of Bacon, that the kingdom of science, like the kingdom of heaven, is open only to the child; only to the reverent, recipient

and docile understanding. Perhaps nothing contributes more to hinder the progress of truth than self-satisfied ignorance of what the human mind has already achieved. The age that isolates itself from the rest of the race and settles down upon itself, will accomplish but little towards the development of the race or of truth. The individual who neglects to make himself acquainted with the history of men and of opinions, though he may be an intense man within a very narrow circumference, will make no real advance and no new discoveries. Even the ardor and zealous energy, often exhibited by such a mind, and, we may say, characteristic of it, contribute rather to its growing ignorance, than its growing enlightenment. For it is the ardor of a mind exclusively occupied with its own peculiar notions. Its zeal is begotten by individual peculiarities, and expended upon them. Having no humble sense of its own limited ability, in comparison with the vastness of truth, or even in comparison with the power of the universal human mind, it closes itself against the great world of the past, and, as a penalty for this, hears but few of the deeper tones of the "many voiced present." In the midst of colors it is blind; in the midst of sounds it is deaf.

That mind, on the contrary, which is imbued with the enterprising spirit of history, contributes to the progress of truth and knowledge among men, by entering into the great process of inquiry and discovery which the race as such has begun and is carrying on. It moves onward with fellow-minds, in the line of a preceding advance, and consequently receives impulse from all the movement and momentum of the past. It joins on upon the truth which has actually been developed, and is thereby enabled to make a positive and valuable addition to the existing knowledge of the human race.

For the educated man, of all men, should see and constantly remember, that progress in the intellectual world, does not imply the discovery of truth absolutely new; of truth of which the human mind never had even an intimation before, and which came into it by a mortal leap, abrupt and startling, without antecedents and without premonitions. This would be rather of the nature of a Divine revelation than of a human discovery. A revelation from God is different in kind from a discovery of the human reason. It comes down from another sphere, from another mind, than that of man; and, although it is conformed to the wants of the human race, can by no means be regarded as a

natural development out of it; as a merely historical process, like the origination of a new form of government, or a new school of philosophy. A discovery of the human mind, on the contrary, is to be regarded as the pure, spontaneous, product of the human mind; as one fold in its unfolding.

It follows, consequently, that progress in human knowledge, progress in the development of human reason, does not imply the origination of truth absolutely and in all respects unknown before. The human mind has presentiments; dim intimations; which thicken all along the track of human history like the hazy belt of the galaxy among the clear, sparkling, mapped stars. These presentiments are a species and a grade of knowledge. They are not distinct and stated knowledge, it is true, but they are by no means blank ignorance. The nebulae are *visible*, though not yet resolved. Especially is this true in regard to the mind of the race; the general and historic mind. How often is the general mind restless and uneasy with the dim anticipation of the future discovery? This unrest, with its involved longing, and its potential knowledge, comes to its height, it is true, in the mind of some one individual who is most in possession of the spirit of his time, and who is selected by Providence as the immediate instrument of the actual and stated discovery. But such an one is only the secondary cause of an effect, whose first cause lies lower down and more abroad. There were Reformers before the Reformation. Luther articulated himself upon a process that had already begun in the Christian church, and ministered to a want, and a very intelligent want too, that was already in existence. Columbus shared in the enterprising spirit of his time, and differed in degree, and not in kind, from the bold navigators among whom he was born and bred. That vision of the new world from the shores of old Spain; that presentiment of the existence of another continent beyond the deep; a presentiment so strong as almost to justify the poetic extravagance of Schiller's sonnet, in which he says, that the boding mind of the mariner would have *created* a continent, if there had been none in the trackless West to meet his anticipation; that prophetic sentiment, Columbus possessed, not as an isolated individual, but as a man who had grown up with his age and into his age; whose teeming mind had been informed by the traditions of history, and whose active imagination had been fired by the strange narratives of anterior and contemporaneous navigation.

Another proof of the position that the individual mind owes much of its inventiveness and originality to its ability to join on upon the invention and origination already in existence, is found in the fact, that some of the most marked discoveries in science have occurred simultaneously to different minds. The dispute between the adherents of Newton and Leibnitz respecting priority of discovery in the science of Fluxions, is hardly yet settled; but the candid mind on either side will acknowledge that, be the mere matter of priority of detailed discovery and publication as it may, neither of these great minds was a servile plagiarist. The Englishman, in regard to the German, thought alone and by himself; and the German, in regard to the Englishman, thought alone and by himself. But both thought in the light of past discoveries, and of all then existing mathematical knowledge. Both were under the laws and impulse of the general scientific mind, as that mind had manifested itself historically in preceding discoveries, and was now using them *both* as its organ of investigation and medium of distinct announced discovery. The dispute between the English and French chemists, respecting the comparative merits of Black and Lavoisier, is still kept up; but here, too, candor must acknowledge that both were original investigators, and that an earlier death of either would not have prevented the discovery.

Now in both of these instances the minds of individuals had been set upon the trail of the new discovery by history; by a knowledge of the then present state and wants of science. They had kept up with the history of science; they knew what had actually been achieved; they saw what was still needed. They felt the wants of science, and these felt wants were dim anticipations of the supply, and finally led to it. It was because Newton and Leibnitz both labored in a historical line of direction, that they labored in the same line, and came to the same result, each of and by himself. For this historical basis for inquiry and discovery is common to all. And as there is but one truth to be discovered, and but one high and royal road to it, it is not surprising that often several minds should reach the goal *simultaneously*.

A striking instance of the productive power imparted to the individual mind by its taking the central position of history, is seen in the department of philosophy. In this department it is simply impossible, for the individual thinker to make any ad-

vance unless he first make himself acquainted with what the human mind has already accomplished in this sphere of investigation. Without some adequate knowledge of the course which philosophic thought has already taken, the individual inquirer in this oceanic region is all afloat. He does not even know where to begin, because he knows not where others have left off; and the system of such a philosopher, if it contain truth, is most commonly but the dry repetition of some previous system. Originality and true progress here, as elsewhere, are impossible without history. Only when the individual has made his mind historic by working his way into that great main current of philosophic thought, which may be traced from Pythagoras to Plato and Aristotle, from Aristotle to the Schoolmen, and from the Schoolmen to Kant, and moving onward with it up to the point where the next stage of true progress and normal development is to join on; only when he has thus found the proper point of departure in the present state of the science, is he prepared to depart, and to move forward on the straight but limitless line of philosophic inquiry. It is for this reason that the speculative systems of Germany exhibit such productiveness and originality. Whatever opinion may be held respecting the correctness of the Germanic mind in this department, no one can deny its fertility. The Teutonic philosopher first prepares for the appearance of his system, by a history of philosophy in the past, and then aims to make his own system the crown and completion of the entire historic process; the last link of the long chain. It is true that, in every instance thus far in the movement of this philosophy, the intended last link has only served as the support of another and still other links, yet only in this way of historic preparation could such a productive method of philosophizing have been attained. Only from the position of history, even though it be falsely conceived, can the speculative reason construct new and original systems.

A good illustration of the defectiveness which must attach to a system of philosophy, when it is not conceived and constructed in the light of the history of philosophy, is seen in the so-called Scotch school. A candid mind must admit that the spirit and general aim of this system was sound and correct. It was a reaction against the sensual school, especially as that system had been run out to its logical extreme in France. It recognized and made much of first truths, and that faculty of the mind which

the ablest teacher of this school loosely denominated Common Sense, and still more loosely defined, was unquestionably meant to be a power higher than that which "judges according to sense." But it was not an original system, in the sense of grasping with a stronger and more *scientific* grasp than had ever been done before, upon the standing problems of philosophy. It is true that it addressed itself to the solution of the old problems, in the main, in the right spirit and from a deep interest in the truth, but it did not go low enough down, and did not get near enough to the heart of the difficulty, to constitute it an original and powerful system of speculation. Its great defect is the lack of a *scientific* spirit, which is indicated in the fact that, although it has exerted a wide influence upon the popular mind, it has exerted but little influence upon the philosophic mind, either of Great Britain or the Continent.

And this defect is to be traced chiefly to the lack of an extensive and profound knowledge of the history of philosophic speculation. The individual mind, in this instance, attempted a refutation of the acute arguments of scepticism, without much knowledge of the previous developments of the sceptical understanding and the counter-statements of true philosophy. A comprehensive and reproductive study of the ancient Grecian philosophies, together with the more elaborate and profound of the modern systems, would have been a preparatory discipline for the Scottish reason that would have armed it with a far more scientific and original power. Its aim, in the first place, would have been higher, because its sense of the difficulty to be overcome would have been far more just and adequate. With more knowledge of what the human intellect had already accomplished, both on the side of truth and of error, its reflection would have been more profound; its point of view more central; its distinctions and definitions more philosophical and scientific; and its refutations more conclusive and unanswerable.¹

¹ This deficiency in scientific character, in the Scotch philosophy, is felt by its present and ablest defender, Sir William Hamilton. Far more deeply imbued himself with the spirit of the department than either Reid or Stewart was, because of a much wider and more thorough scholarship than either of them possessed, he has been laboring to give it what it lacks. But it is more than doubtful whether any mind that denies the possibility of metaphysics as distinguished from psychology, will be able to do much towards imparting a necessary and scientific character either to philosophy generally, or to a system which is popular rather than philosophic, in its foundations and superstructure.

Thus we might examine all the departments of human knowledge, singly by themselves, and we should find that, in regard to each of them, the individual mind is made at once recipient and original by the preparatory discipline of historical studies and the possession of the historic spirit. Even in the domain of Literature and Fine Art, the mind that keeps up with the progress of the nation or the race; the mind that is able to go along with the great process of national or human development in this department; is the original and originant mind. Although in Poetry and Fine Art, freshness and originality seem to depend more upon the impulse of individual genius and less upon the general movement of the national or the universal mind, yet here, too, it is a fact, that the founders of particular schools; we mean schools of eminent and historic merit; have been men of extensive study, and liberal, universal sympathies. The great masters of the several schools of Italian Art, were diligent students of the Antique, and had minds open to truth and nature in all the schools that preceded them. They, moreover, cherished a historic feeling and spirit, by a most intimate and general intercourse with each other. The generous rivalry that prevailed, sprung up from a close and genial study of each other's productions. The view which Celleni presents us of the relations of the Italian artists to each other, and of the general spirit that prevailed among them, shows that there was very little that was bigoted and individual in those minds so remarkable for originality and productiveness.

A very fine and instructive illustration of the truth we are endeavoring to establish, is found in the department of Literature in the poet Wordsworth. This man was a *student*. He cultivated the poetic faculty within him as sedulously as Newton cultivated the scientific genius within him. He retired up into the mountains, when he had once determined to make poetry the aim of his literary life, and by the thoughtful perusal of the English poets, as much as by his brooding contemplation of external nature, enlarged and strengthened his poetic power. By familiarizing himself with the spirit and principle; the *inward history*, of English poetry, he became largely imbued with the national spirit. And he was thorough in this course of study. He not only devoted himself to the works of the first English poets, the Chaucers, Spensers, Skakspeares and Miltons; but he patiently studied the productions of the second class, so much

neglected by Englishmen, the Draytons, the Daniels, and the Donnes. The works of these latter are not distinguished for passion in sentiment or beauty in form, but they are remarkable for that thoroughly English property, thoughtful sterling sense. Wordsworth was undoubtedly attracted to these poets, not merely because he believed, with that most philosophic of English critics who was his friend and contemporary, that good sense is the body of poetry, but because he saw that an acquaintance with them was necessary to a thorough knowledge of English poetry considered as a historic process of development, as one phase of the English mind. For, although a poem like the *Polyolbion* of Drayton can by no means be put into the first class with the *Faery Queen* of Spenser, it yet contains far more of the English temper and exhibits far more of the flesh and muscle of the native mind. These critics Wordsworth had patiently studied, as is indicated by that vein of strong sense which runs like a muscular cord through the more light and airy texture of his musings. It was because of this historical training as a poet, that Wordsworth's poetry breathes a far loftier and ampler spirit than it would have done had it been like that of Byron, for example, the product of an intense, but ignorant and narrow, individualism. And it was also because of this training, that Wordsworth, while preserving as original an individuality, certainly, as any poet of his time, acquired a much more national and universal poetic spirit than any other poet of his time, and was the most productive poet of his time.

The result, then, of the discussion of the subject under this head is, that the individual mind acquires power of discernment and power of statement only by entering into a process already going on; into the great main movement of the common human mind. In no way can the educated man become genially recipient, and at the same time richly productive, but by a profound study of the development which truth has already attained in the history of man and the world.

3. The third characteristic of the historic mind is its union of moderation and enthusiasm.

One of the most distinct and impressive teachings of history is, that not every opinion which springs up and has currency in a particular age, is true for all time. History records the rise and great popularity, for a while, of many a theory which succeeding ages have consigned to oblivion, and which has exerted no per-

manent influence upon human progress. There always are, among the opinions and theories prevalent in any particular period, some, and perhaps many, that have not truth enough in them to preserve them. And yet these may be the very ones that seize upon the individual and local mind with most violence and most immediate effect. Because they are partial and narrow, they for this reason grasp the popular mind more fiercely and violently. Were they broader and more universal in their character, their immediate influence might be less visible, because it would extend over a far wider surface, and go down to a much lower depth. A blow upon a single point makes a deep dint, but displaces very few particles of matter, while a steady heavy pressure over the whole surface, changes the position of every atom, with but little superficial change.

The proper posture, therefore, of the individual mind, and, especially, of the educated mind, towards the current opinions of the age in which he lives, is, that of moderation. The educated man should keep his mind equable, and, in some degree, aloof from passing views and theories. He ought not to allow theories that have just come into existence to seize upon his understanding with all that assault and onset with which they take captive the uneducated, and, especially, the unhistoric mind. Of what use are the teachings of history if they do not serve to render the mind prudently distrustful in regard to new-born opinions, at the same time that they throw it wide open and fill it with a strong confidence towards all that has historically *proved* itself to be true? Is it for the cultivated man, the man of broad and general views, to throw himself without reserve and with all his weight, into what, for aught he yet knows, may be only a cross-current and eddy, instead of the main stream of truth?

Now it is only by the possession of a historic spirit that the individual can keep himself sufficiently above the course of things about him, to enable him to judge correctly concerning them. Knowing what the human mind has already accomplished in a particular direction, in art or science, in philosophy or religion, he very soon sees whether the particular movement of the time in any one of these directions, will or will not coincide with the preceding movement and be concurrent with it. He occupies a height, a vantage ground, by virtue of his extensive historical knowledge, and he stands upon it, not with the tremor and fervor of a partisan, but with the calmness and insight of a judge.

Suppose the activity of an age, or of an individual, manifests itself in the production of a new theory in religion; of some new statement of Christian doctrine; the mind that is well versed in the history of the Christian church, and of Christian doctrine, will very quickly see whether the new joins on upon the old; whether it is an advance in the line of progress or a deviation from it. And his attitude will be accordingly. He will not be led astray with the multitude or even with the age. Through all the fervor and zeal of the period, he will preserve a moderate and temperate tone of mind; committing himself to current opinions no faster than he sees they will amalgamate with the truth which the human mind has already and confessedly discovered in past ages; with historic truth.

This moderation in adopting and maintaining current opinions is an infallible characteristic of a true scholar, of a ripe culture. And it is the fruit of that criticism and scepticism which is generated by historical study. For it is one of the effects of history to render the mind critical and sceptical; not, indeed, in respect to truth that has stood the test of time, but to truth that has just made its appearance. It would be untrue to say that the study of history genders absolute doubt and unbelief in the mind; that it tends generally and by its very nature to unsettle faith in the good and the true. This would be the case if there were no truth in history; if history were substantially the record of dissension and disagreement; if, above the din and uproar of discordant voices, one clear and clarion-like voice did not make itself heard as the voice of universal history. We are all familiar with the story told of Raleigh, who is said to have destroyed the unpublished half of his history, because of several persons who professed to describe an occurrence in the Tower Court, which he had also witnessed from his prison window; each gave a different version of it, and his own differed from theirs. But history is not thus uncertain and unreliable. It teaches but one lesson. It reveals but one truth. Down through the ages and generations it traces one straight line, and in this one line of direction lies truth, and out of it lies error. Its record of the successes and triumphs of truth certainly teaches a correct lesson, and its record of the successes and triumphs of error is but the dark background from which truth stands out in still more bold and impressive reality. Whatever may be the case with particular histories by particular individuals, the main current of his-

tory runs in one direction, and the great lesson of history is in favor of truth and righteousness.

Not, then, towards well-trying and well-established truth, but towards apparent and newly-discovered truth, does history engender criticism and scepticism. The past is secure. That which has verified itself by the lapse of time, and the course of experiment, and the sifting of investigation, is commended as absolute and universal truth to the individual mind, and history bids it to believe and doubt not. But that which is current merely; that which in the novelty and youth of its existence is carrying all men away, must stand trial; must be brought to test, as all its predecessors have been. Towards the opinions and theories of the present, so far as they differ from those of the past, history is inquisitive, and critical, and sceptical, not for the purpose, be it remembered, of proving them to be false, but with the generous hope of evincing them to be true. For the scepticism of history is very different from scepticism in religion. The latter is always in some way biassed and interested. It springs out of a desire, conscious or unconscious, to overthrow that which the general mind has found to be true, and is resting in as truth. Scepticism in religion has always been in the minority; at war with the received opinions of the race, and consequently with all that is historic. There never was an individual sceptic, from Pyrrho to Strauss, who was not unhistoric; who did not take his stand outside of the great travelled road of human opinion; who did not try to disturb the human race in the possession of opinions that had come down from the beginning, besides having all the instincts of reason to corroborate them. But the scepticism of history has no desire to overthrow any opinion that has verified itself in the course of ages, and been organically assimilated, in the course of human development. All such opinion and all such truth constitutes the very substance of history itself; its very vitality and charm for the human mind; and, therefore, can never be the object of doubt or attack for genuine historic scepticism. On the contrary, the sifting and critical methods of history have no other end or aim but to make a real addition to the existing stock of well-ascertained truth, and to prevent any erroneous opinion or theory from going into this sum-total, and thus receiving the stamp and endorsement of history. This criticism and scepticism which history employs is simply for self-protection. These sceptical and sifting processes are gone through with, to

preserve history pure from the individual, the local, and the temporary, and to keep it universal and absolute in its contents and spirit.

Now it might seem at first glance, that this moderation of mind towards current opinions would preclude all earnestness and enthusiasm in the educated man; that the historic spirit must necessarily be cold and phlegmatic. It might seem that it would be impossible for such a mind to take an active and vigorous interest in the age in which it lived, and that it would be out of its element amid the stir and motion going on all around it. This is substantially the objection which the half-educated disciple of the present brings against history and historical views and opinions.

But this is a view that is false from defect; from not containing the *whole* truth. It arises from not taking the full idea of history into the mind. This idea, like all strictly so-called ideas, contains two opposites, which, to the superficial glance, look like irreconcilable contraries, but to a deeper and more adequate intuition, are not only perfectly reconcilable, but are opposites in whose conciliation consists the vitality and fertility of the idea, and of the science founded upon it. History, as we have seen, is both continuous and complete; and continuity and completeness are opposite conceptions. It is, in the first place, the record of a development that must uninterruptedly go on, and cannot cease, until the final consummation. And it is, in the second place, complete in its spirit, because at every point in the continuous process there are indications of the consummation; tendencies to an ultimate end. No part of history is irrelative. Even when it is but the history of a particular period, a small section of the great historic process, it exhibits this complete and universal spirit by clinging to what precedes and pointing to what succeeds; by its large discourse of reason looking before and after. But the objector does not reconcile these opposites in his own mind; he does not take this comprehensive and full view of history. Whether he acknowledges it or not, his view really is, that the many several ages of which history takes cognizance, have no inward connection with each other, nor any common tendency, and consequently that the whole entire past, in relation to the present, is a nonentity. It is gone, with all that it was and did, into "the dark backward and abysm" of time, and the present age, like every other, starts independent and

alone upon its particular mission. His view of history is atomic. On his theory, there is no such thing as either connected evolution or explanatory termination, in the course of the world. There is no human race, no common humanity, to be manifested in the millions of individuals, and the multitudes of ages and epochs. On this theory, there is and can be nothing in the past, in which the present has any *vital* interest; nothing in the past which has any *authority* for the present; nothing in the past which constitutes the root of the present, and nothing in the present which constitutes the germ of the future. History, on this theory, has no principle; no organization. It is a mere catalogue of events; a mere list of occurrences.

It is because the imperfectly educated disciple of the present, really takes this view of history, that he asserts that historic views and opinions are deadening in their influence upon the mind, and that the historic spirit is a lifeless spirit. If he believed in a living concatenation of events and a vital propagation of influences in history, he would not say that that which is truly historical, is virtually dead and buried. If he believed that no one age, any more than any one individual, contains the whole of human development within itself, but is only one fold of the great unfolding, he would suspect, at least, that there might be elements in the past so assimilated and wrought into the history of universal man that they are matters of living interest for every present age. If he believed that truth is reached only by the successive and consentaneous endeavors of many individual minds, each making use of all the labors of its predecessors, and each taking up the standing problem where its predecessors had dropped it; if the too zealous disciple of the present believed that truth is thus reached only by the efforts of the race; of the universal mind in distinction from the individual; he would find life all along the line of human history; he would see that in taking into his mind a historic view or opinion he was lodging there the highest intensity of mental life; the very purest and densest reason of the race.

Instead, therefore, of being cold, phlegmatical and lifeless, the historic mind is really the only truly living and enthusiastic mind. It is the only mind that is in communication. It is the only mind that is not isolated. And in the world of mind, inter-communication is not more necessary to a vital process, and isolation or breaking off is not more destructive of a vital process.

than in the world of nature. That zeal, begotten by the narrow views of an individual, or a locality, or an age, which the unhistoric mind exhibits, is an altogether different thing from the enthusiasm of a spirit enlarged, educated and liberalized by an acquaintance with all ages and opinions. Enthusiasm springs out of the contemplation of a whole; zeal from the examination of a part. And there is no surer test and sign of intellectual vitality than enthusiasm; that deep and sustained interest which is grounded in the broad views and profound intuitions of history.

But while the well-read student of history preserves a wise and cautious moderation, in the outset, towards current opinions, yet, because of this genial and enthusiastic interest in the truth which the human mind has actually and without dispute arrived at, he in the end comes to take all the interest in the views and theories of the present, which they really deserve. The historic mind does no ultimate injustice. So far and so fast as it finds that the new movement of the present age is a natural continuation of the unfinished development of the past, does he acknowledge it as a step in advance, and receives the new element into his mind and into his culture with all the enthusiasm and all the feeling with which he adopts the great historical systems of antiquity. In this way the historic mind is actually more truly alive and interested even in relation to the present, than the man of the present. It appreciates the real excellence of the time more intelligently and profoundly, and it certainly has a far more inspiring view of the connection of this excellence with the excellence that has preceded it, and which is the root of it. How much more inspiring and enlivening is that vision which sees the progress of the present linked to that of all the past, and contributing to make up that long line of development extending through the whole career of the human species, than that vision which sees but one thing at a time, and does not even know that it has any living references, or any organic connections whatever!

As an exemplification of the preceding remarks, contemplate for a moment the historian Niebuhr. His was a genuinely historic mind. He conceived and constructed in the true spirit of history. He always viewed events in the light of the organization by which they were shaped and of which they were elementary parts. He saw by a native sagacity, in which respect he never had a superior, the idea lying at the bottom of a historical

process; such, for example, as the separate foundation of the city of Rome; the rise and formation of the Roman population; the growth and consolidation of the plebeians; and built up his account of it, out of it and upon it. His written history thus corresponds with a fresh and vital correspondence with the actual history; with the living process itself. In this way he reproduced history in his pages, and the student is carried along through the series with all the interest and charm of an actor in it. So sagacious was his intuition that, although two thousand years further off from them in time, he has unquestionably so reconstructed the very facts of the early history of Rome, as to bring them nearer the actual matter of fact, than they appear in the legendary pages of Livy. It was the habit of his mind, both by nature and by an acquisition as minute as it was vast, to look at human life as an indivisible unity, and to connect together all the ages, empires, civilizations and literatures, of the world by the bond of a common development; thus organizing the immense amount of material contained in human history into a complete and symmetrical whole.

But slow and sequacious as the movements of such an organizing and thoroughly historic mind were, and must be from the nature of the case, we do not hesitate to affirm that the mind of the historian Niebuhr was one of the most vividly alive and profoundly enthusiastic minds in all literary history. He was not spared to complete his great work as it lay in him to have done, and as he would have done, immense as it was, had he lived to the appointed age of man. He left it a fragment. He left it a Torso which no man can complete. But from that fragment has gushed, as from many living centres, all the life and power not only of Roman history, but of history generally, since his day. It gave an impulse to this whole department which it still continues to feel, besides reproducing itself in particular schools and particular individuals. It is the work which more than any other one production, shaped the opinions of the most vigorous and enthusiastic of English historians, the late Dr. Arnold. And that serious spirit which we find in history since the days of Niebuhr, when compared with the moral indifference characterizing the department before his day and to a great extent during his day, is to be traced to his reverent recognition of a personal Deity in history, and his deep belief in the freedom and accountability of man.

But the man himself, as well as his works, was full of life, and he showed it nowhere more plainly than in his direct address to the minds of his pupils. "When he spoke," says one of them, "it always appeared as if the rapidity with which the thoughts occurred to him, obstructed his power of communicating them in regular order or succession. Nearly all his sentences, therefore, were anacoluths; for, before having finished one, he began another, perpetually mixing up one thought with another, without producing any one in its complete form. This peculiarity was more particularly striking when he was laboring under any mental excitement, which occurred the oftener, as, with his great sensitiveness, he felt that warmth of interest in treating of the history of past ages, which we are accustomed to witness only in discussions on the political affairs of our own time and country." The writer, after speaking of the difficulty of following him, owing to this rapid, and, it should be added, entirely extemporaneous delivery (for he spoke without a scrap of paper before him), remarks, that "notwithstanding this deficiency in Niebuhr as a lecturer, there was an indescribable charm in the manner in which he treated his subject; the warmth of his feelings, the sympathy which he felt with the persons and things he was speaking of, his strong conviction of the truth of what he was saying, his earnestness, and, above all, the vividness with which he conceived and described the characters of the most prominent men, who were to him living realities, with souls, feelings and passions like ourselves, carried his hearers away, and produced effects which are usually the results only of the most powerful oratory."¹

How different from all this is the impression which we receive from the mind of one who, notwithstanding his great defects, must yet thus far be regarded as the first of English historians; from the mind of Gibbon. After a candid and full allowance of the ability of that mind and the great value of the *History of the Decline and Fall of Rome*, it must yet be said that it was not a vivid and vital mind, nor is its product. The autobiography of Gibbon, indeed, exhibits considerable native liveliness of mind, but the perusal of his history does not even suggest the existence of such qualities as earnestness and enthusiasm. One is disposed to conclude from the picture which he gives of himself, that the historian had been endowed by his Maker with a much more than average share of mental freshness and vitality, and

¹ Dr. Leonhard Schmitz. Preface to Vol. IV. of Niebuhr's *Rome*.

most certainly if there had been in exercise enough of this quality; enough of the *vis vivida vitæ*; to have vivified the immense, well-selected and well-arranged material of his history, he would have approximated nearer than he has to the ideal of historical composition. But there was not, and, therefore, it is, that, throughout the whole of this great work, there reigns, so far as the human and moral interest of history is concerned, so far as all the higher religious problems of history are concerned, an utter sluggishness, apathy and lifelessness; an apathy and lifelessness as deep, unvarying and monotonous as if the forces of the period he described, the principles of decline and decay, had passed over into his own understanding and made it the theatre of their operations. We doubt whether there is another work in any literature whatever, possessing so many substantial excellences, and yet characterized by such a total destitution of glowing inspiration and earnest enthusiasm, as the *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

The explanation of this fact will corroborate the truth of the position, that the *genuinely* historic mind is the only truly living and enthusiastic mind. Though nominally a historian, Gibbon was really utterly unhistoric in his spirit. His religious scepticism, besides paralyzing whatever natural vigor and earnestness of conception may have originally belonged to him, made it impossible for him to regard the processes of human history as so many parts of one grand plan of the world formed by one supreme and presiding mind. History for him, consequently, had no organization and no moral significance. It was, therefore, strictly speaking, no history at all for him; no course of development with a divine plan at the bottom of it and a divine purpose at the termination of it. It was neither continuous in its nature, nor complete in its spirit and tendency. Everything that occurred in the world at large, or among a particular people, was for his mind irreferent, discontinuous and sporadic. Not only did he fail to connect the *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* with the general history of the race, or even with the general history of Rome, by exhibiting it in its relation to its antecedents and consequents, but he failed even to detect the historic principle lying at the bottom of the particular period itself. The *great moral and political causes* of the decline and fall of the Roman empire, do not stand out in bold and striking relief from the immense erudition and imposing rhetoric of that

work. The reflecting reader of this history, at the close of the perusal, feels the need of something more than a scenic representation of the period; something more than the pomp of a panorama; in order to a knowledge of the deep *ground* of all this decline and decay. He needs in short, what Gibbon does not furnish, more of the philosophy of that history, drawn from a profounder view of the nature of man and of human life, united with a deeper insight into the radical defect in the political constitution of the Roman empire; into that germ of corruption which came into existence immediately after the subjugation of the Italian tribes was completed, and in which the entire millennium of decline and decay lay coiled up.

We have thus far discussed the nature of the historic spirit on general grounds. We have mentioned only those general characteristics which are matters of interest to every cultivated mind; having reference chiefly to secular history and general education. We have now to speak of the importance of this spirit to the theologian, and must, therefore, discuss its more special nature, with a prevailing reference to Ecclesiastical History and Theological Education.

Before proceeding to the treatment of this part of the subject, it seems necessary to direct attention, for a moment, to the distinguishing difference between Secular and Church history.

Our Lord, in the most distinct manner, and repeatedly, affirms that His kingdom is not of this world. Throughout the Scriptures the church and the world are opposed to each other as direct contraries, mutually exclusive and expulsive of each other, so that "all that is of the world is not of the Father, but is of the world." There are, therefore, two kingdoms, two courses of development, two histories, in the universal history of man on the globe. There is the account of the natural and spontaneous development of human nature as left to itself, guided only by the dictates of finite reason and impelled by the determination of the free, but fallen, human will, and the impulses of human passion. And there is the history of that supernatural and gracious development of human nature which has been begun and carried forward by means of a revelation from the Divine Mind made effectual by the direct efficiency of the Divine Spirit. The fact of sin, and the fact of redemption, constitute the substance of that great historic process which is involved in the origin, growth and final triumph of the Christian church. Had there been no

fall of man, there would have been but one stream of history. The spontaneous development of the human race would have been normal and perfect, and there would have been no such distinction between the church and the world as is recognized in Scripture. The race would not have been broken apart; one portion being left to a merely human and entirely false development, and the other portion being renovated and started upon a spiritual and heavenward career by the electing love of God. But sin in this, as in all its aspects, is dissension and dismemberment. The original unity of the race, *so far as a common religious character and a common blessed destiny are concerned*, is destroyed, and the two halves of one being, to borrow an illustration from the Platonic myth, are now and forever separated. The original single stream of human history was parted in the garden of Eden, and became into two heads, which have flowed on, each in its own channel, and will continue to do so, forevermore. For, although the church is to encroach upon the world in the future, to an extent far surpassing anything that appears in its present and past history, we know, from the very best authority, that sin is to be an eternal fact in the universe of God, and as such must have its own awful and isolated development; its own awful and isolated history.

In passing, therefore, from secular to church history, we pass from the domain of merely human and sinful, to that of truly divine and holy, agencies. The subject-matter becomes extraordinary. The basis of fact in the history of the church is supernatural in both senses of the word. From the expulsion from Eden down to the close of miracles in the apostolic age, a positively miraculous intervention of Divine power lies under the series of events; momentarily withdrawn and momentarily reappearing, throughout the long line of Patriarchal, Jewish and Apostolic history; the very intermittency of the action indicating, like an Icelandic Geyser, the reality and constant proximity of the power. And if we pass from external events to that inward change that was constantly brought about in human character by which the church was called out from the mass of men and made to live and grow in the midst of an ignorant or a cultivated heathenism; if we pass from the miraculous to the simply spiritual manifestation of the Divine agency as it is seen in the inward history of the church, we find that we are in a far different and a far higher sphere than that of secular history.

There is now a positive intercommunication between the human and the Divine mind, and the development which results constitutes a history far profounder, far purer and holier, far more encouraging and glorious, than the history of the natural man and the secular world.

It is upon the fact of this direct and supernatural communication of the Supreme mind to the human mind, and this direct agency of the Divine Spirit upon the human soul, that we would take our stand as the point of departure in the remainder of this discussion. In treating of secular history, we have regarded the unaided reason of man as the source and origin of the development. We do not find in the history of the world, as the Scriptural antithesis of the church, any evidence of any special and direct intercommunication between man and God. We find only the ordinary workings of the human mind and such products as are confessedly within its competence to originate. We can, indeed, see the hand of an overruling Providence throughout secular history, employed chiefly in restraining the wrath of man, but through the whole long course of development we see no signs or products of a supernatural and peculiar interference of God in the affairs of men. Empires rise and fall; arts and sciences bloom and decay; the poet dreams his dream of the ideal, and the philosopher develops and tasks the utmost possibility of the finite reason; and still, so far as its highest interests are concerned, the condition and history of the race remains substantially the same. It is not until a communication is established between the mind of man and the mind of God; it is not until the Creator comes down by miracle and by revelation, by incarnation and by the Holy Ghost, that a new order of ages and new species of history begins.

The Scriptures, therefore, as the revelation of the Eternal Mind, take the place of human reason within the sphere of church history. The individual man sustains the same relation to the Bible, in the sacred historic process, that he does to natural reason in the secular. The theologian expects to find in the history of the church that same comprehensive and approximately exhaustive development and realization of Scripture truth, which the philosopher hopes to find of the finite reason in the secular history of the race. It follows, consequently, that all that has been said of the influence of historical studies upon the literary man, applies with full force, when the distinguishing difference

between secular and sacred history has been taken into account, to the education and culture of the theologian. The same spirit will work the same results in both departments of knowledge, and the theologian, like the literary man, will become, in his own intellectual domain, both reverent and vigilant; both recipient and original; both deliberate and enthusiastic; as his mind feels the influences that come off from the history of the Christian religion and the Christian church.

Without, therefore, going again over the ground which we have travelled in the first part of the discourse, let us leave the general influences and characteristics of the historic spirit, and proceed to consider some of the most important of its specific influences within the department of theology and upon theological education. And, that we may not be embarrassed by the attempt to make use of all the materials that crowd in upon the mind on all sides, and from all parts, of this encyclopaedic subject, let us leave altogether untouched the external history of the church, and keep chiefly in view that most interesting and important branch of the department which is denominated Doctrinal Church History.

I. In the first place, a historic spirit within the department of theology promotes Scripturality.

We have already mentioned that the distinctive character of church history arises from the special presence and agency of the Divine Mind in the world. Subtract that presence and that agency, and nothing is left but the spontaneous development of the natural man; nothing is left but secular history. Divine revelation, using the term in its widest signification, to denote the entire communication of God to man in the economy of grace, is the principle and germ of church history. That shaping of human events, and that formation and moulding of human character, which has resulted from the covenant of redemption, is the substance of sacred history. The church is the concrete and realized plan of redemption; and what is the plan of redemption but the sum-total of revelations which have been made to man by the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Incarnate Word of the New, the infallible record of which is unchangeably fixed in the Scriptures? It follows, therefore, that the true and full history of the church of God on earth will be the Scriptures in the concrete. The plant is only the unfolded germ.

There is, consequently, no surer way to fill systematic theology

with a Scriptural substance than to subject it to the influence of historical studies. As the theologian passes the several ages of the church in review, and becomes acquainted with the results to which the general mind of the church has come in interpreting the Scriptures, he runs little hazard of error in regard to their real teaching and contents. As in the domain of secular history we found that there was little danger of missing the true teachings of human reason, if we collect them from the continuous and self-defeating development of ages and epochs, so in the domain of sacred history we shall find that the real mind of the Spirit; the real teaching of Scripture, comes out plainer and clearer in the general growth and development of the Christian mind. Indeed, we may regard church history, so far as it is mental and inward in its nature; so far as it is the record of a mental inquiry into the nature of Christianity and the contents of the Bible, as being as near to the infallibility of the written revelation, as anything that is still imperfect and fallible can be. The church is not infallible and never can be; but it is certainly not a very bold or dangerous affirmation to say that the church; the entire body of Christ, is wiser than any one of its members, and that the whole series of ages and generations of believers have penetrated more deeply into the substance of the Christian religion and have come nearer to an approximate exhaustion of Scripture truth, than any single age or single believer has.

So far, therefore, as a theological system contains historical elements, it is likely to contain Scriptural elements. So far as its statements of doctrine coincide with those of the creeds and symbols in which the wise, the learned and the holy of all ages have embodied the results of their continuous and self-correcting study of the Scriptures, so far it may be expected to coincide with the substance of inspiration itself.

Again, there is no surer way to imbue the theologian himself with a Scriptural spirit than to subject his mind to the full influence of a course of study in the history of the Christian religion and church. This is one of the best means which the individual mind can employ to reach the true end of a theological education; which is to get within the circle of inspired minds and see the truth exactly as they saw it. We believe, as the church has always believed, that the inspired writers were qualified and authorized to speak upon the subject of religion as no other human minds have been. They were the subjects of an illumi-

nation clearer and brighter than that of the purest Christian experience; and of a revelation that put them in possession of truths that are absolutely beyond the ken of the wisest human mind. Within that inspired circle, therefore, there was a body of knowledge intrinsically inaccessible to the human mind; beyond the reach of its subtlest investigation, or its purest self-development. If those supernaturally taught minds had been prevented from fixing their knowledge in a written form; or if the written revelation had perished like the lost books of Livy; the human mind of the nineteenth century would have known no more upon moral and religious subjects, for substance, than the human mind of a Plato or Aristotle knew twenty-two centuries ago. For he must have an extravagant estimate of the inherent capacities of the finite mind, who supposes that the rolling round of two millenniums, or of ten, would have witnessed in any one individual case, a more central, or a more defecated, development of the pure rationality of mere man than was witnessed in Aristotle. And he must have a very ardent belief in the omnipotence of the finite, who supposes, that, without that communication of truth and of spirit; of light and of life; which God in Christ has made to the race, ages upon ages of merely spontaneous and secular history would have produced a more beautiful development of the human imagination than appears in the Grecian Art and Literature, or a more profound development of the human reason than appears in the Grecian Philosophy and the Grecian Ethics.

The Scriptures have, accordingly, been the source of religious knowledge and progress for the Christian, as antithetic to the secular, mind, and will continue to be, until they are superseded by some other and fuller revelation in another mode of being than that of earth. It has, consequently, been the aim and endeavor of the church in all ages, to be Scriptural; to work itself into the very heart of the written revelation; to stand upon the very same point of view with the few inspired minds, and see objects precisely as they saw them. But this, though possible and a duty, is no easy task, as the whole history of Christian doctrines shows. Truth in the Scriptures is full and entire. The Scriptural idea is never defective, but contains all the elements. Hence its very perfection and completeness is an obstacle to its full apprehension. It is difficult for the human mind to take in the *whole* great thought. It is often exceedingly difficult

for the human mind oppressed, first, by the vastness and mystery of the revealed truth, and, secondly, by its own singular tendency to one-sided and imperfect perception, to gather the full idea from the artless and unsystematized contents of Scripture, and then state it in the imperfect language of man. The doctrine of the Trinity, for example, is fully revealed in the Bible. *All* the elements of that great mystery; the whole truth respecting the real triune nature of God, may be found in that book. But the elements are uncombined and unexpanded, and hence one source of the heresies respecting this doctrine. Arius and Sabellius both appealed to Scripture. Neither of them took the position of the infidel. Each acknowledged the authority of the written word, and endeavored to support his position from it. But in these instances the individual mind merely picked up Scriptural elements as they lie scattered upon the page and in the letter of Scripture, and, without combining them with others that lie just as plainly upon the very same pages, moulded them into a defective, and therefore erroneous, statement. Heresy is individual and not historic in its nature.

Now it is the characteristic of the general mind of the church; of the historic Christian mind; that it reproduces in its intuition, and in its statement, the *complex* and *complete* Scriptural idea. So far as it has any intuition at all, it sees *all* the sides; so far as it makes any statement at all, it brings into it *all* the fundamentals. By this is not meant that even the mind of the church has perfected the expansion of Scripture elements and made the fullest possible statement of the doctrine of the Trinity. There may, possibly, be a further exhaustion of the contents of revelation in this direction. There may, possibly, be a statement of this doctrine that will be yet fuller; still closer up to the Scriptural matter; than that one which the church has generally accepted since the date of the Councils of Nice and Constantinople. But there will never be a form of statement that will flatly contradict this form, or that will add any new fundamentals to it. All that is new and different must be in the way of expansion and not of addition; in the way of development and not of denial. A closer study of the teachings of Scripture, and a deeper reflection upon them, may carry the theological mind further along on the line, but will give it no diagonal or retrograde movement.

Now is it not perfectly plain that the close and thorough study

of this continuous and self-correcting endeavor of the Christian church to enucleate the real meaning of Scripture; an endeavor which has been put forth by the wisest, the most reverent, and the holiest, minds in its history, tasking their own powers to the utmost, and invoking and receiving Divine illumination, during the whole of the process; an endeavor which has to a great extent formed and fixed the religious experience of ages and generations, by its results embodied in the creeds and symbols of the church; a series of mental constructions, which, even if we contemplate only their human characteristics, their scientific coherence and systematic compactness, are more than worthy to be placed side by side with the best dialectics of the secular mind; is it not perfectly plain, we say, that the close and thorough study of such a strenuous endeavor, as this has been, to reach the inmost heart and fibre of Scripture, will tend irresistibly to render the theologian Scriptural in head and in heart? May we not expect that such a student will be *intensely* Scriptural? Will not this distinct and thorough knowledge of revelation be so wrought into his mental texture that he will see and judge of everything through this medium? Will he not have so thought in that same range and region in which his inspired teachers thought, that doubt and perplexity in regard to Divine revelation would be nearly as impossible for him, as for that of Isaiah while under the Divine afflatus, or for Paul when in the third heavens? To borrow an illustration from the kindred science of Law: if it is the effect of the continued and thoughtful study of Law Reports and Political Constitutions and Commentaries upon Political Constitutions; a body of literature which, as it originates out of the organic idea of law, breathes the purest spirit of the legal reason; if it is the effect of such study to render the individual mind legal and judicial in its tone and temper, must it not be the effect of the study of that body of symbolic literature which has come slowly but consecutively into existence through the endeavor of the theological mind to reach a perfect understanding of Scripture, to render the individual mind Scriptural in its tone and temper?

II. And this leads us to say, in the second place, that a historic spirit in the theologian, induces a correct estimate of Creeds and Systematic Theology.

One of the most interesting features in the present condition of the theological world is a revived interest in the department

of church history. This interest has been slowly increasing for the last half century, and promises to become a leading interest for some time to come. In Germany, in America, and in England scholars and thinking men are turning their attention away, somewhat, from the purely secular history of mankind, to that more solemn and momentous career which a part of the human family have been running for nearly six thousand years. They have become aware that the history of the church of God is a peculiar movement that has been silently going on in the heart of the race from the beginning of time, and which, while it has not by any means left the secular historic processes untouched and unaffected, has yet kept on in its own solitary and sublime line of direction. They are now disposed to look and see how and where

* * the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to the sunlit sea.

But it would be an error to suppose that this interest has been awakened merely or mainly by the external history of the Christian church. "The battles, sieges, fortunes it hath passed;" its conflicts with persecuting Paganism, Mohammedanism, and Romanism; its influence upon art, upon literature and science, upon society and government; these are not the charm which is now drawing as by a spell the best thinking of Christendom towards church history. It is not the secular and worldly elements in this history into which the mind of the time most desires to look. The great march of secular history brings to view a pomp and prodigality of such elements that has already dulled and satiated the tired sensibilities. Thinking minds now desire to look into the distinctively supernatural elements in this historic process; to see if it really has, as it claims to have, a direct connection with the Creator of the race and the Author of the human mind. It is for this reason that the revived interest in this department of knowledge has shown itself most powerfully and influentially in investigating the origin and nature of the *doctrines* of the church, as they are found speculatively in creeds and symbols, and practically in the Christian consciousness. The mind of Germany, for example, after ranging over the whole field of cultivated heathenism, and sounding the lowest depths of the finite reason, in a vain search for that absolute truth in which alone the human

soul can rest, has betaken itself to the domain of Christian revelation and Christian history. Its interest in Greek and Roman culture, in Mediaeval Art, and in its own speculative systems, has given way to a deeper interest in the Christian religion; in some instances with a clear perception, in others with a dim intimation, that, if the truth which the human mind needs, is not to be found here, the last resource has failed; and that then

The pillared firmament is rottenness
And earth's base built on stubble.

This revived interest in church history, therefore, is in reality a search after truth, rather than after a mere dramatic scene or spectacle. The mind of the time is anxious to understand that *revealed doctrinal system*, which it now sees, has, from the beginning, been the "rock" on which the church of God has been founded, and the "quarry" out of which it has been built. Knowing this, it believes it will then have the key to the history. Knowing this, it believes it will know the whole secret; the secret of that charmed life which has borne the church of God through all the mutations and extinctions of secular history, and of that unearthly life which in all ages has secured to the believer a serene or an ecstatic passage into the unknown and dreadful future.

Now this interest in a doctrinal system which thus lies at the bottom of this general interest in church history, will be shared by the individual student. He, too, cannot stop with the scene, the spectacle, the drama. He, too, cannot stop with those characteristics which ecclesiastical history has in common with secular, but will pass on to those which are distinctive and peculiar. For him, too, the history of a single mind, like that of Augustine or Anselm; or of a single doctrine, like that of the Atonement or of the Trinity; will have a charm and fruitfulness not to be found in the entire rise of the worldly Papacy, or in centuries of merely external and earthly movement like the Crusades. The whole influence of his studies in this direction will be spiritual and spiritualizing.

But, without enlarging upon the general nature of the estimate which the historic spirit puts upon the internal as compared with the external history of the church, let us notice two particulars which fall under this head.

1. Notice, first, the interest awakened by historical studies in the creeds and symbols of the Christian church as containing the *Philosophy of Christianity*.

We have spoken of the symbolic literature of the Christian church as a growth out of Scripture soil; as a fruitage full of the flavor and juices of its germ. A Christian creed is not the product of the individual or the general human mind evolving out of itself those truths of natural reason and natural religion which are connate and inborn. It is not the self-development of the human mind, but the development of Scripture matter. The Christian mind, as we have seen, is occupied, from age to age, with an endeavor to fathom the depths of Divine revelation; to make the fullest possible expression and expansion of all the truths that have been communicated from God to man. This endeavor necessarily assumes a scientific form. The practical explanation, illustration, and application, is going on continually in the popular representations of the pulpit and the sermon, but this cannot satisfy all the wants of the church. Simultaneously with this there is a constant effort to obtain a still more scientific apprehension of Scripture and make a still more full and self-consistent statement of its contents. The Christian mind, as well as the secular, is scientific; has a scientific feeling, and scientific wants. A creed is as necessary to a theologian, as a philosophical system is to the secular student.

It follows, therefore, that the philosophy, by which is meant the rationality, of the Christian religion, is to be found in these creeds and symbols. For reasonableness and self-consistence are qualities not to be carried into Christianity from without, as if they were not to be found in it, but are to be brought out from within, because they belong to its intrinsic nature. The philosophy, that is, the rational necessity, of the Christian religion, is not an importation but an evolution. This religion is to be taken just as it is given in the Scriptures; just as it reappears in the close and systematic statement of the creeds; and its intrinsic truth and reasonableness evinced by what it furnishes itself. For whoever shows the *inward* necessity and reasonableness of a doctrine of Christianity does by the very act and fact show the harmony of philosophy and religion. Whoever takes a doctrine of Christianity and without anxiously troubling himself with the tenets of this or that particular philosophical system, derives out of the very elements of the doctrine and the very terms of the

statement itself, a reasonableness that irresistibly commends itself to the spontaneous reason and instinctive judgment of universal man, by this very process demonstrates the *inward, central*, unity of faith and reason. Instead, therefore, of setting the two sciences over against each other and endeavoring, by modifications upon one or both sides, to bring about the adjustment, the theologian should take the Christian system precisely as it is given in Scripture, in all its comprehension, depth and strictness, and without being diverted by any side references to particular philosophical schools, simply exhibit the *intrinsic* truthfulness, rationality, and necessity of the system. In this way he establishes the position, that philosophy and revelation are harmonious, in a manner that admits of no contradiction. The greater necessarily includes the less. When the theologian has demonstrated the inward necessity of Christianity, out of its own self-sufficient and independent rationality, his demonstration is perfect. For reason cannot be contrary to reason. A rational necessity anywhere, is a philosophical necessity everywhere.

The correctness of this method of finding and establishing the rationality of Christianity, is beginning to be acknowledged in that country where the conflict between reason and revelation has been hottest. It begins to be seen that the harmony between philosophy and Christianity is not to be brought about, by first assuming that the infallibility is on the side of the human reason; and that, too, as it appears in a *single* and *particular* philosophical system; and then insisting that all the adjustment, conformity, and coalescence, shall be on the side of the Divine revelation. It begins to be seen that philosophy is in reality an abstract and universal term, which, by its very etymology, denotes, not that it has already attained and now possesses the truth, but that it is seeking for it.¹ It begins to be seen that both Aristotle and Bacon were right in calling it an *organon*; an *instrument* for getting at the truth, and neither the truth itself nor even its containing source.² It begins to be seen that philosophy is only another

¹ The *love* of wisdom, implies a present seeking for it.

² Kant, says William Humboldt, did not so much teach philosophy, as how to philosophize. Correspondence with Schiller: *Vorlesungen*.

It is the greatest merit of Schleiermacher that he saw and asserted the independent and self-subsistent position of Christian theology in relation to philosophical systems. If he had sought the *sources* of this theology more in the objective revelation and less in the subjective Christian consciousness, he would have

term for rationality, and that to exhibit the philosophy of a department, like religion, or history, or philosophy, or natural science, is simply to exhibit the real and reasonable truth that is in it. It begins to be seen, consequently, that each branch of knowledge, each subject of investigation, must be treated *genetically* in order to be treated philosophically; must be allowed to furnish its own matter, make its own statements, out of which, and not out of what may be carried over into it from some other quarter, its acceptance or its rejection by the human mind should be determined.

We are aware that the barrenness of those later systems of speculative philosophy, with which the German mind has been so intensely busied for the last fifty years, has been one great means of bringing it back to this moderate and true estimate of the nature and functions of philosophy; but this revived interest in the history of Christianity and profounder study of its symbols, has also contributed, greatly, to produce this disposition to let revealed religion stand or fall upon its own merits. For this study has disclosed the fact that it has philosophical and scientific merits of its own; that, in the unsystematized statements and simple but prolific teachings of the Bible, there lies the substance of a *system* deeper and wider and loftier than the whole department of philosophy, and that this substance has actually been expanded and combined by the historic mind of the church into a series of doctrines respecting the nature of God and man and the universe with their mutual relations, with which the corresponding statements upon the same subjects, of the Greek Theism or the German Pantheism cannot compare for a moment. Probably nothing has done more to exhibit the Christian system in its true nature and proportions, and thereby to render it grand and venerable to the modern scientific mind, than this history of its origin and formation. As the scientific man studies the articles of a creed, which one of the most naturally scientific minds of the race, aided by the wisdom of predecessors and contemporaries, derived from the written revelation; as the rigorous and dialectic man follows Athanasius down into those depths of the Divine nature, which yawn like a gulf of darkness before the unaided human mind; if he finds nothing to love and adore, he

accomplished more than he has towards evincing the harmony of the two sciences, while his own system would have had more agreement than it now has with the general theology of the Christian church.

finds something to respect; if he finds no food for his affections, he finds some matter for his thoughts. Here, too, is science. Here, too, is the profound intuition expressed in the clear but inadequate conception; the most thorough unions, guarded against the slightest confusions; analysis and synthesis; opposite conceptions reconciled in their higher and original unities; in short, all the forms of science, filled up in this instance as in no other, with the truth of eternal necessary fact and eternal necessary being.

And this same kind of influence, only in much greater degree, is exerted by historical studies upon the mind of the theologian. As he becomes better acquainted with the history of Christian doctrines, he becomes more disposed to find his philosophy of human nature and of the Divine nature in them, rather than in human systems. As he studies the development of that great doctrine, the doctrine of sin, he becomes convinced, if he was not before, that the powers and capacities and possible destiny of the human soul have received their most profound examination within the sphere of Christian theology. As he studies the history of that other great doctrine, the doctrine of the atonement, he sees plainly that the ideas of law and justice and government, of guilt and punishment and expiation; ideas that are the life and lifeblood of the Aristotelian ethics, the best and purest ethical system which the human reason was able to construct; that these great parent ideas show truest, fullest, largest and clearest, by far, within the consciousness of the Christian mind.

What surer method, therefore, of making his mind *grow* into the philosophy of Christianity can the theologian employ, than the historic method? In what better way can he arm himself for the contest with ignorant or with cultivated scepticism, than by getting possession, through the reproductive study of dogmatic history, of the exact contents of Scripture as expanded and systematized by the consentaneous and connected studies of the Fathers, the Reformers, and the Divines, the Councils, the Synods and the Assemblies, of the Church universal?

2. Secondly, notice the interest awakened by historical studies in the creeds and symbols of the Christian church as *marks of development and progress in theology.*

If we have truly enunciated the idea of history, in the first part of this discourse, it follows that all *genuine* development is

a *historical* development, and all *true* progress is a *historical* progress. For the *true* history of anything is the account of its development according to its true idea and necessary law. The history of a natural object, like a crystal, for example, is the account of its rigorously geometric collection and upbuilding about a nucleus. Crystallization is a *necessary* process, for it is a petrified geometry. The history of a tree is the account of its spontaneous and *inevitable* evolution out of a germ. The process itself, in both of these instances, is predetermined and fixed. The account of the process, therefore, if it is exactly conformed to the actual matter of fact, has a fixed and predetermined character also. For, if nature herself goes forward in a straight and undeviating line, the history of nature must follow on after, and tread in her very and exactest footsteps. Hence, true legitimate history, of any kind, is neither arbitrary nor capricious. It corresponds to real fact, and real fact is the process of real nature. The matter and method of nature, therefore, dictate the matter and method of the history of nature.

And the same holds true, when we pass from history in the sphere of nature to history in the realm of mind and spirit. The matter and method of a spiritual idea dictate the matter and method of the unfolding, and, consequently, of the history, of that idea. In the case now under discussion, the real nature and inward structure of Christianity determine what does, and what does not, belong to its true historical development. The true history of Christianity, therefore, is the history of true Christianity. The church historian is, indeed, obliged to take into account the deviations from the true Scriptural idea, because, unlike the naturalist, he is within the sphere of freedom and of false development, and because redemption itself is a mixed process of dying to sin and living to righteousness. But he notices the deviations not for the purpose, it should be carefully observed, of letting them make up a part of the true and normal history of Scriptural Christianity. The church historian is obliged to watch the rise and growth of heresies, not surely because they constitute an integrant part of the legitimate development and true history of Scripture truth. The account of a heresy has only a negative historical value. All the positive and genuine history of Christian doctrine is to be made up out of that correct apprehension and unfolding which Scripture has received from the Catholic as antithetic to the Heretical mind. Temporary depar-

tures from the real nature of Scripture truth, and deductions from it that are illegitimate, may possibly have contributed to a return to a deeper and clearer knowledge of revelation on the part of some few minds, and have unquestionably elicited a more full and comprehensive statement and defence of Christianity on the part of others, and in this way the heresies that appear all along the line of church history, throw light upon the true course of doctrinal development and help to bring out the true history. But these heretical processes themselves, cannot be regarded as integrant and necessary parts of the great historic process, any more than the diseases of the human body can be regarded, equally with the healthy processes of growth, as the normal development of the organism. Nosology is not a chapter in physiology.

It follows, consequently, that the *true* and *proper* history of Christianity will exhibit a *true* and *proper* theological progress. It will show that the Scripture germ implanted by God, has been slowly but correctly unfolding in the doctrine and science of the church. We cannot grant that historical theology is anti-scriptural and radically wrong; that the Bible has had no true and legitimate apprehension in the ages and generations of believers. There has been, notwithstanding all the attacks of infidelity from without, and controversies from within, a substantial agreement, and a steady advance, in understanding the written revelation. This is very plainly to be seen in the history of doctrines, and from this we may draw the most forcible proofs and illustrations. Let any one compare the first with the latest Christian creed, and he will see the development which the Scripture mustard-seed has undergone. Let any one place the 'Apostles' creed beside that of the Westminster Assembly, and see what a vast expansion of revealed truth has taken place. The former was all that the mind of the church in that age of infancy was able to eliminate and systematize out of the Scriptures; and this simple statement was sufficient to satisfy the imperfectly developed scientific wants of the early church. The latter creed was what the mind of the church was able to construct out of the elements of the very same written revelation, after fifteen hundred years of study and reflection upon them. The "words," the doctrinal elements, of Scripture, are "spirit and life," and hence, like all spirit and all life, are capable of expansion. Upon them the historic Christian mind, age after age, has ex-

pended its best reflection, and now the result is an enlarged and systematized statement such as the early church could not have made, and did not need.

Compare, again, the statement of the doctrine of the Trinity in the Apostles' creed with that in the Nicene creed. The erroneous and defective statements of Arius compelled the orthodox mind to a more profound reflection upon the matter of Scripture, and the result was a creed in which the implication and potentiality of revelation was so far explicated and evolved as to present a distinct and unequivocal denial of the doctrine of a created Son of God. But, besides this negative value, this systematic construction of the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity has a great positive worth. It opens before the human mind the great abyss of the Divine nature; and, though it cannot impart to the finite intelligence that absolutely full and perfect knowledge of the Godhead which only God himself can have, it yet furnishes a form of apprehension, which accords with the real nature of God, and will, therefore, preserve the mind that accepts it from both the Dualistic and the Pantheistic ideas of the Supreme Being. *Abstruse* and dialectic as that creed has appeared to some minds and some ages in the Christian church; little connection as it has seemed to them to have with so practical a matter as vital religion; it would not be difficult to show that those councils at Nice and Constantinople, did a work in the years 325 and 381, of which the church universal will feel the salutary effects to the end of time, both in practical and scientific respects. For, if all right religious feeling towards Jesus Christ is grounded in the *unassailable* conviction that he is truly and verily God; "begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;" then *this creed* laid down the systematic basis of all the true worship and acceptable adoration which the church universal have paid to the Redeemer of the world.¹ And if a correct metaphysical

¹ By this is not meant that there can be no true worship until a creed has been systematically formed and laid down, but that all true worship is grounded in a practical belief which, when examined, is found to harmonize exactly with the speculative results reached by the Christian Scientific mind. So far as the great body of believers is concerned, their case is like that of Hilary of Poitiers, who has left one of the best of the patristic treatises upon the Trinity, but who, in his retired bishopric in Gaul, did not hear of the Nicene creed until many years after its origin. He found in it that very same doctrine of the unity of essence in the Father and the Son, which he had, before this, ascertained to be the true doctrine, from the study of the New Testament, and had received into

conception of the Divine Being is necessary in order to all right philosophizing upon God and the universe, then this Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the only statement that is adequate to the wants of science, and the only one that can keep the philosophic mind from the Pantheistic and Dualistic deviation to which, when left to itself, it is so liable.

The importance of historical studies and the historic spirit in an age of the world that more than any other suffers from false notions regarding the nature of progress and development, cannot be exaggerated. But he who is able to see in the creeds and symbols of the Christian church so many steps of real progress; he who knows that outside of that line of symbolic literature there is nothing but deviation from the real matter of Scripture, will not be likely to be carried away with the notion of a sudden and great improvement upon all that has hitherto been accomplished in the department of theology. He will know that, as all the past development has been historic; restatement shooting out of prestatement; the fuller creed bursting out of the narrower; the expanded treatise swelling forth growth-like from the more slender; so all the present and future development in theology must be historic also. He will see, especially, that elements that have already been examined and rejected by the Christian mind, as unscriptural and foreign, can never again be rightfully introduced into creeds and symbols; that history cannot undo history; that the progress of the present and the future must be homogeneous and kindred with the progress of the past.

III. In the third place, a historic spirit in the theologian protects him from false notions respecting the nature of the visible church, and from a false church feeling.

We can devote but a moment to this branch of the discussion, unusually important just at this time.

We have seen that the most important part of the history of the church is its inward history. We have found that the exter-

his Christian experience, without being aware that the faith which he bore in his heart, had been laid down in the form of a creed." — Torrey, Neander, II. 396.

Consonant with this, Hagenbach, after speaking of the highly scientific character of the *Symbolum Quicumque*, its endeavor, namely, to express the ineffable by its series of affirmations and guarding negations, adds, that "such formulæ nevertheless have their edifying no less than their scientific side, inasmuch as they testify to the struggle of the Christian mind after a satisfactory expression of that which has its full truth only in the depths of the believing heart and character." — *Dogmengeschichte*, third edition, p. 249, note.

nal history of Christianity derives all its interest for a thoughtful mind from its connection with that dispensation of truth and of spirit which lies beneath it as its animating soul. The whole influence, consequently, of genuine and comprehensive historical study is to magnify the substance and subordinate the form; to exalt truth, doctrine and life, over rites, ceremonies and politics.

It is undoubtedly true, that the study of ecclesiastical history, in some minds, and in some branches of the church, has strengthened a strong formalizing tendency, and promoted ecclesiasticism. The Papacy has from time immemorial appealed to tradition; and those portions of the Protestant church which have been least successful in freeing themselves from the materialism of the Papacy, have said much about the past history of the church. Hence, in some quarters in the Protestant church, there are, and always have been, apprehensions lest history should interfere with the great right of private judgment, and put a stop to all legitimate progress.

But it only needs a comprehensive idea of the nature of history to allay these apprehensions. It only needs to be remembered that the history of Christianity is something more than the history of the Nicene period or of the Scholastic age. It only needs to be recollected that the history of Christianity denotes a course of development from the beginning of the world down to the present moment; that it includes the whole of that Divine economy which began with the first promise, and which manifested itself first in the Patriarchal, next in the Jewish, and finally in the Christian church.¹ The influence of the study of this

¹ Probably the most serious defect in the construction of the History of Christianity by the school of Schleiermacher, springs from regarding the incarnation as the beginning of church history. Even if this is not always formally said, as it sometimes is, the notion itself moulds and forms the whole account. The golden position of Augustine, *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet*, is forgotten, and the Jewish religion, as it came from God, is confounded with that corruption of it which we find in the days of our Saviour, but against which the evangelical Prophet Isaiah inveighs as earnestly as the evangelical Apostle Paul. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." Judaism is not Phariseism. There is, therefore, no *inward* and *essential* difference between true Judaism and true Christianity. The former looked forward and the latter looks backward to the same central Person and the same central Cross. The manifested Jehovah of the Old Testament was the incarnate Word of the New. "The religion," says Edwards, "that the church of God has professed from the first founding of the church after the fall to this time, has always been the same. Though the dispensations have

whole great process, especially if the eye is kept fastened upon the spiritual substance of it, is anything but formalizing and sectarian. If, therefore, a papistic and anti-catholic temper has ever shown itself in connection with the study of ecclesiastical history, it was because the inward history was neglected, and even the external history was studied in sections only. He who selects a particular period merely, and neglects all that has preceded and all that has followed, will be liable to a sectarian view of the nature and history of the church of God. He who reproduces within his mind the views and feelings of a single age merely, will be individual and bigoted in his temper. He who confines his studies, for example, as so many have done, and are doing, to that period from Constantine to Hildebrand, which witnessed the rise and formation of the Papacy; and, especially, he, who in this period studies merely the archaeology and the polity, without the doctrines, the morality, and the life; he, who confines himself to those tracts of Augustine which emphasize the idea of the church in opposition to ancient radicals and disorganizers, but studiously avoids those other and greater and more elaborate treatises of this earnest spiritualist, which thunder the idea of the truth, in opposition to all heretics and all formalists; he, in short, who goes to the study of ecclesiastical history with a pre-determined purpose, and carries into it an antecedent interpreting idea, derived from his denomination, and not from Scripture, will undoubtedly become more and more Ronfish and less and less historic.

Such a disposition as this is directly crossed and mortified by

been altered, yet the religion which the church has professed, has always, as to its essentials, been the same. The church of God, from the beginning, has been one society. The Christian church which has been since Christ's ascension, is manifestly the same society continued, with the church that was before Christ came. The Christian church is grafted on their root; they are built upon the same foundation. The revelation upon which both have depended, is essentially the same; for, as the Christian church is built on the Holy Scriptures, so was the Jewish church, though now the Scriptures be enlarged by the addition of the New Testament; but still it is essentially the same revelation with that which was given in the Old Testament, only the subjects of Divine revelation are now more clearly recorded in the New Testament than they were in the Old. But the sum and substance of both the Old Testament and the New, is Christ and His redemption. The church of God has always been on the foundation of Divine revelation, and always on those revelations that were essentially the same, and which were summarily comprehended in the Holy Scriptures." — Edward's Work of Redemption, I. 473.

a comprehensive and philosophic conception of history. Especially will the history of doctrines destroy the belief in the infallibility, or *paramount* authority, of any particular portion of the church universal. The eye is now turned away from those external and imposing features of the history which have such a natural effect to carnalize the mind, to those simpler truths and interior living principles, which have a natural effect to spiritualize it. An interest in the theology of the church is very different from an interest in the polity of the church. It is a fact that as the one rises, the other declines; and there would be no surer method of destroying the formalism that exists in some portions of the church, than to compel their clergy to the continuous and close study of the entire history of Christian doctrines.

IV. In the fourth place, a historic spirit in theologians promotes a profound and genial agreement on essential points, and a genial disagreement on non-essentials.

It is plain that the study of church history tends to establish and to magnify the distinction between real orthodoxy and real heterodoxy. History is discriminating and cannot be made to mingle the immiscible. In regard, therefore, to the great main currents of truth and of error, the historic mind is clear in its insight and decided in its opinions. It knows that the Christian religion has been both truly and falsely apprehended by the human mind, and that, consequently, two lines of belief can be traced down the ages and generations; that in only one of these two, is Scriptural Christianity to be found.

But its wide and catholic survey, also enables the historic mind to see as the unhistoric mind cannot, that the line of orthodoxy is not a mathematical line. It has some breadth. It is a path, upon which the church can travel, and not merely a direction in which it can look. It is a high and royal road, where Christian men may go abreast; may pass each other, and carry on the practical business of a Christian life; and not a mere hair-line down which nought can go but the one-eyed sighting of either speculative or provincial bigotry.

Hence historical studies banish both provincialism and bigotry from a theological system, and imbue it with that practical and catholic spirit which renders it interesting and influential through the whole church and world. A system of theology may be true and yet not contain the whole truth. It may have seized upon some fundamental positions, or cardinal doctrines, with a too

violent energy, and have given them an exorbitant expansion, to the neglect of other equally fundamental truths. In this case, historical knowledge is one of the best correctives. A wider knowledge of the course of theological speculation; a more profound acquaintance with the origin and formation of the leading systems of the church universal, tends to produce that equilibrium of the parts and that comprehensiveness of the whole, which are so apt to be lacking in a provincial creed or system.

A similar liberalizing influence is exerted by the study of church history upon the theologian himself. He sees that men on the same side of the line which divides real orthodoxy from real heterodoxy, have differed from each other, and sometimes upon very important, though never upon vital, points. The history of Christian doctrine compels him to acknowledge that there is a theological space, within which it is safe for the theological scientific mind to expatiate and career; that this is a liberty conceded to the theologian by the unsystematized form in which the written revelation has been given to man, and a liberty, too, which, when it is not abused, greatly promotes that clearer and fuller understanding of the Scriptures, which we have seen the historic Christian mind is continually striving after.

But this scientific liberality among theologians leads directly to a more profound and genial agreement among them upon all practical and essential points. The liberality of the historic mind is very far removed from that mere indifferentism which sometimes usurps this name. There is a truth for which the disagreeing, and perhaps (owing to imperfectly sanctified hearts) the bitterly disagreeing, theologians would both be tied to one stake and be burnt with one fire. There is a vital and necessary doctrine for which, if it were assailed by a third party, a bitter unevangelic enemy, both of the contending orthodox divines would fight under one and the same shield. That truth which history shows has been the life of the church and without which it must die; that historic truth, which is the heritage and the joy of the whole family in heaven and on earth, is dear to both hearts alike.

But that which tends to make differing theologians agree, profoundly and thoroughly, upon essential points, also tends to make them differ generously and genially upon non-essentials. Those who know that, after all, they are one, in fundamental character, and in fundamental belief; that, after all their disputing, they

have but one Lord, one faith and one baptism; find it more difficult to maintain a bitter tone and to employ an exasperated accent toward each other. The common Christian consciousness wells up from the lower depths of the soul, and, as in those deep inland lakes which are fed from subterranean fountains, the sweet waters neutralize and change those bitter or brackish surface currents that have in them the taint of the shores; perhaps the washings of civilization.

While, therefore, a wide acquaintance with the varieties of statement which appear in scientific orthodoxy, does not in the least render the mind indifferent to that essential truth which every man must believe or be lost eternally, it at the same time induces a generous and genial temper among differing theologians. The controversies of the Christian church have unquestionably been a benefit to systematic theology, and that mind must have a very meagre idea of the comprehensiveness and pregnancy of Divine revelation, who supposes that the Christian mind could have derived out of it that great system of doctrinal knowledge which is to outlive all the constructions of the philosophic mind, without any sharp controversy, or keen examination among theologians. That structure did not and could not rise like Thebes, at the mellifluous sound of Amphion's lute; it did not rear itself up like the Jewish temple without sound of hammer, or axe, or any tool of iron. Slowly, and with difficulty, was it upreared, by hard toil, amid opposition from foes without and foes within, and through much earnest mental conflict. And so will it continue to be reared and beautified in the ages that are to come. We cannot alter this course of things so long as the truth is infinite, and the mind is finite and sees through a glass darkly.

What is needed, therefore, is a sweet and generous temper in all parties as the work goes on. The theologian needs that great ability: *the ability to differ genially*. It has been the misery and the disgrace of the church, that too many theologians who have held the truth, and have held it, too, in its best forms, have held it, like the heathen, in unrighteousness; have held it in narrowness and bigotry. They have differed in a hard, dry, ungenial way. They have forgotten that the rich man can afford to be liberal; that the strong man need not be constantly anxious; that a scientific and rigorous orthodoxy should ever look out of a beaming, and not a sullen, eye.

Let us be thankful that some ages in the history of the church furnish us examples that cheer and instruct. Look back at that most interesting period, the period of the Reformation, and contemplate the profound agreement upon essentials and the genial disagreement upon non-essentials, that prevailed among the leaders then. Martin Luther and John Calvin were two theologians who differed as greatly in mental structure, and in their spontaneous mode of contemplating and constructing doctrines, as is possible for two minds upon the same side of the great controversy between orthodoxy and heresy. No man will say that the differences between Lutheranism and Calvinism are minor or unimportant. Probably any one would say that, if those two men were able to feel the common Christian fellowship; to enjoy the communion of saints; and to realize with tenderness their common relationship to the Head of the church; there is no reason why all men who are properly within the pale of orthodoxy should not do the same.

Turn now to the letters of both of these men; written in the midst of that controversy which was going on between the two portions of the Reformed, and which resulted, not, however, through the desire or the influence of these two great men, but through the bitterness of their adherents, in their division into two distinct churches; and witness the common genial feeling that prevailed. Hear Luther in his letter to Bucer sending his cordial greeting to Calvin whose books he has read with singular pleasure: *cum singulari voluptate*. Hear Calvin declaring his willing and glad readiness to subscribe to the Augsburg Confession, interpreting it upon the sacramental question as the Lutherans themselves authorized him to do.¹ Above all, turn to that burst, from Calvin, of affectionate feeling towards Melancthon, which gives itself vent in the midst of one of his stern controversial tracts, like the music of flutes silencing for a moment the

¹ Henry's Life of Calvin, II. pp. 96, 99. It is interesting and instructive to witness the liberal feeling of the scientific and rigorously orthodox Athanasius towards the Semiarians themselves, whose statement of the doctrine of the Trinity he regarded to be inadequate. See the quotation from *Athanasius de Synodis*, § 41, in Gieseler, Chap. II. § 83, and the reference to *Hilarius de Synodis*, § 76. Says Augustine: "they who do not pertinaciously defend their opinion, false and perverse though it be, especially when it does not spring from the audacity of their own presumption, while they seek the truth with cautious solicitude, and are prepared to correct themselves when they have found it, are by no means to be ranked among heretics.— Epistle 43. Newman's Library Version.

clang of war-cymbals and the blare of the trumpet: "O Philip Melanchthon, to thee I address myself, to thee who art now living in the presence of God with Jesus Christ, and there awaitest us, till death shall unite us in the enjoyment of Divine peace. A hundred times hast thou said to me, when weary with so much labor and oppressed with so many burdens, thou laidst thy head upon my breast, 'God grant, God grant, that I may now die!'"¹

The theology of Richard Baxter differs from the theology of John Owen by some important modifications, and each of these two types of Calvinism will probably perpetuate itself in the church to the end of time; but the confidence which both of these great men cherished towards each other, should go along down with these systems through the ages and generations of time.

But what surer method can be employed to produce and perpetuate this catholic and liberal feeling among the various types and schools of orthodox theology, than to impart to all of them the broad views of history? And what surer method than this can be taken to diminish the number and bring about more unity of opinion in the department of systematic theology? For it is one great effect of history to coalesce and harmonize. It introduces mutual modifications, by showing opponents that their predecessors were nearer together than they themselves are, by tracing the now widely separated opinions back to that point of departure where they were once very near together; and, above all, by causing all parties to remember, what all are so liable to forget in the heat of controversy, that all forms of orthodoxy took their first origin in the Scriptures, and that, therefore, all theological controversy should be carried on with a constant reference to this one infallible standard, which can teach but one infallible system.

I have thus considered the nature of the historic spirit and its influence both upon the secular and theological mind, in order to indicate my own deep sense of the importance of the department in which I have been called to give instruction by the guardians of this Institution. The first instinctive feelings would have shrunk from the weight of the great burden imposed, and the extent of the very great field opened; though in an institution where the pleasant years of professional study were all

¹ Henry's *Life of Calvin*, I. 239.

spent; though in an ancient institution, made illustrious and influential, through the land and the world, by the labors of the venerated dead and the honored living. But it does not become the individual to yield to his individuality. The stream of Divine Providence, so signally conspicuous in the life of the church, and of its members, is the stream upon which the diffident as well as the confident must alike cast themselves. And he who enters upon a new course of labor for the church of God, with just views of the greatness and glory of the kingdom, and of the comparative unimportance of any individual member, will be most likely to perform a work that will best harmonize with the development and progress of the great whole.

ARTICLE VII.

CHAUCER AND HIS TIMES.

By M. P. Case, M. A., Newburyport, Mass.

MR. ADDISON has somewhere said, that "a reader seldom peruses a book till he knows whether the author of it be a black or a fair man; of a mild or choleric disposition; married or bachelor, with other particulars of the like nature that conduce very much to the right understanding of an author." Whether we accept the assertion and adopt the implied conclusion or not, it is a fact that, in seeking for a life of many of the imperial geniuses of the world, we are obliged to reverse this process and read their biography chiefly in their works. Of Homer we know neither how nor where he lived nor when he died. Very little of outward biography has come to us of most of the great poets of antiquity; and, even in respect to Shakespeare, the most of his external life seems to have got equally beyond the research of the antiquary and the industry of the historian. How intense, indeed, would be our interest in the details of his early life, and that succession of years which intervened between his marriage and his flight to London, where his