

principles and facts in human nature and the history of man; when we can even analyze the struggle which its first branching occasioned, and the arguments for and against its reception; we furnish ourselves with the best of all weapons for detecting imposture and vindicating truth. Many heresies we can trace up to the early admixture of philosophical speculation with the truths of God. The heresy of the Gnostics, for instance, owes its existence wholly to this cause, and Gnosticism may be fitly termed the fruitful parent of many other heresies; yea, perhaps, of every error which in the course of ages has corrupted and disfigured the simplicity of the faith. Its abettors set out with the assumption of two original principles equally potent—the one the source of good; the other the source of evil. The Eternal Being, or first cause, was identified with the one, and gross corporeal matter was identified with the other. Each was supposed to possess independent activity, and a perpetual and fierce struggle was the issue. The soul of man clogged with the incumbrance of a material body, the Gnostics held to be originally and essentially pure, but sadly impeded in its career by the fatal incumbrance. To free the soul and the world itself from the foul dominion of matter, was, in their view the grand design of the mission of the Redeemer. Him they called the Son of the great God, but they held him to be a creature, though one of the great *et* of the celestial *etna*, clothed with the appearance of a human body, but perfectly ethereal, and thus incapable of suffering. A great firmament, or *plexama*, they filled with spiritual beings, intermediate between God and man; and allied with these were the *genii*, whose residence was on earth, or so near it, that they could with perfect ease interfere in every action of men. To this strange medley we may easily trace up all the pretensions and schemes of magic, astrology, and necromancy, as means designed to avert the evil influences, or to secure the good offices of these imaginary agencies. To the same source we trace all the varieties of penance to which superstition has had recourse in order to mortify the flesh. Hence, also, we find an easy explanation of the early introduction of celibacy among the clergy, the source, according to the minute and laborious researches of Isaac Taylor, of the Puseyism which has so injuriously affected the Church of God. Who does not see here, also, the rise of monastic institutions; and the germ of the whole system of *Papish mediation*, from the Virgin Mary, on the one hand, to St. Giles or St. Januarius, on the other.

The worship of saints and angels, and the relics of martyrs, we can easily trace to an early and not unnatural veneration for relics, and a desire to gather the bones and dust of confessors, and to deposit them in holy places with peculiar solemnity. In the fourth and fifth centuries, the discovery of such dear remains was a very favourite object of pursuit, and "holy coats" wanted not many Arnolds of Treves, to recognise and honour them. Practical Christianity being low, a morality, based upon it, gave its willing sanction to easy tales, and the deluded people were in the fittest of all positions to receive them. Plato, long before, had inculcated the expediency of what he calls "political lies," and interest could easily recognise in these a most befitting instrument for its purposes. Even Jerome wrote in support of the reverence due to relics; and the name of such a man was sufficient to give currency to his doctrine. Satan seldom employs the worst of men to help his cause; he transforms himself into an angel of light; and subjects to his fell designs some of the most learned and pious of mankind.

Church History teaches us to trace up the errors of Popery to the imitation of Pagan rites. A desire to bring in the heathen to the Church, particularly about the time of the fall of Paganism, led to the scheme of adapting the tales of Ovid and Livy, to the meridian of Christianity, and thus filling the Church with false legends, pretended miracles, and all the mummery of the pantheon. The custom of leaving legacies to the

gods was quite common in ancient times, yea, civil law, on more than one occasion, interposed to regulate the practice so as to prevent abuse; and we need no other fountain to which to trace the largeness and the gifts of superstitious devotees.

The errors of the later Platonists, substantially the same in character with those of the Gnostics, throw light on the history of Popery. These revivifiers of old Platonism, while in their hands it lost much of its sublimity and mystic grandeur, mixed it up with partial and corrupted views of divine truth, as to bring out a scheme of opinions most gross and pernicious. They applied the *isoteric* and *exoteric* distinctions of the schools to the morality of the scriptures, and thus provided one rule for the common classes of men, and another for the rich; one standard for the ordinary masses, and another for persons of superior sanctity. They first drew the distinction, since well known to Roman law, betwixt *counsels* and *precepts*; *moral* and *venial sins*; while they had as their watch-word the doctrine that the end sanctifies the means—a doctrine to which we can easily trace all the pretended miracles and legends, with all the impudent impostures of the Romish hierarchy. Perhaps the casuistry of the Romish Church, and the whole system of its tortuous moral systems, may be traced up to the admixture of Platonism after the days of Julian of Damascus in the eighth century, with the metaphysical abstractions of the philosophy of Aristotle.

Popery is fond of the plea, that if Rome has really been corrupted by errors, these errors must have had a beginning; must once have been entirely new; and must therefore surely have been opposed and rejected by the Church, when originally proposed to its ministers and members.—The reply is plain to any tyro in Church history; first, that gross errors generally creep in by stealth and do not shew their native grossness at once, while anything repulsive about them, even in their first degrees, is glossed over by pious and plausible accompaniments; and secondly, that errors have been introduced successfully in times of spiritual ignorance, when truth was obscured, and the holy book of God hid from the common people.—We can, by the help of Church history, point out very nearly the time when pictures and images found their way into Churches and began to be venerated; and we can trace historically the lengthened contest on the subject of image worship and its triumph after a severe struggle.—We can point by name also to the monk who, in the ninth century, first wrote in favor of transubstantiation; to the mighty sensation which the incipient doctrine of the real presence caused in the Church; to the strenuous but unsuccessful efforts of Joannes Scotus, in opposition to the monstrous delusion; and to the crowning of the whole in the twelfth century, in the decreed idolatry of the elevated host.

Dr. Jortin has remarked, that the errors and false doctrines and corrupt practices of the Romish Church, when compared with the doctrines of reason and the oracles of God, appear so groundless, so despicable, and so scandalous, that we wonder how it is that rational beings can admit or retain them. But he judiciously proposes to view them all in the light of "political institutions," designed to exalt the clergy, and to give them wealth, dignity, and power; to keep the body of Christians in ignorance and implicit faith, to make the head of the Church an universal monarch and an absolute tyrant; and thus to secure that ascendancy which all love—and in this view, our wonder ceases; for there is not one error of the Papacy that does not look this way.—Late events have thrown much light on this tendency of the Papacy to subjugate to its influence the varieties of human opinion and of human government. It is owing to this that Popery flourishes on the soil of liberty as well as on that of despotism; and thus illustrates its own character as the "mystery of iniquity" and the master-piece

of Satan. Weak-minded Protestants do not see this, and are thus led captive by its wiles.

While Church History is valuable in tracing and exposing error, it is no less so in establishing truth. Even in resisting error, truth is established, for had heresies not arisen, prophecy would not have been fulfilled. Moreover, the sameness of the manner in which error has in all ages crept in; the steps of its gradual advancement; and the tendency of a first departure from the simplicity of Scripture, to lead to grosser, and ultimately to fatal, alienations: these are features in human nature which the lover of truth will carefully improve. Students in theology may obtain very valuable benefit from combining the study of the mental character of man, and the intellectual capacities of the species, with the practical developments of both, in the progress of opinion and the changes of religious profession and government, as forming a main character in the history of the Church.

While it is one great object of Church History to trace the causes of error, it is not less an object to mark the progress and influence of truth. Truth, in the New Testament sense of the word, is something definite and fixed, and the Church of God has been constituted specially as a witness for the truth. Hence the importance of ascertaining historically the identity of God's revelations at successive periods; the holy harmony of all His communications with mankind; and the result of the introduction of God's truth into any part of the world. Such an enquiry will embrace also the distinction betwixt prominent doctrines, and matters of mere outward form; betwixt the external history of Churches, and the annals of their internal organization; betwixt the men who are only nominally Christian, and those who are made spiritually alive through the truth. One great scheme—that of man's redemption—pervades the whole of revelation; and to trace the bearings of events on this scheme, is a most interesting department of the history of the Church.

Polemical theology and the history of doctrines differ in this: that the former undertakes to exhibit the arguments for and against particular views, and to draw specific conclusions; the other gives merely the history of controversies, and of the men who figured in them. This last is properly within the province of the Church Historian; although I observe that Hagenbach, in his recent work on the "History of Doctrines," assigns to it a place of its own in the system of theological study. The fact is, the history of doctrines becomes in this way little more than a descriptive catalogue of the varied phases of opinion, connected together by the links of chronology. His book is not, to my mind, particularly interesting.

The connexion betwixt the history of learning and the history of the Church is close, and the Church historian will delight to trace it. Dr. Jortin has for the title of one of his charges: "Christianity, the preserver and supporter of literature." He places as the motto on that charge the words of the blessed Saviour, *εγω επι το ουσ του κοσμου* an application of the words not more reverent and becoming perhaps, than that proposed some years ago for a prominent light-house on one of the Scilly Islands! and yet, having his motto, the historical sketch of Dr. Jortin is entertaining and useful. He points at various ways in which the Church of God has contributed to the advancement of learning; the learned labours of Jews and Christians on their sacred books, so advantageous to criticism and literature generally; the study of chronology, astronomy, and physical geography, as cherished by a desire to illustrate and defend divine truth; the efforts of christian philosophers and apologists to preserve the Latin and Greek languages in their purity long after learning had fatally declined; the schools maintained, and the MSS. preserved in cathedrals and monasteries even in the dark ages; the powerful impetus which the reformation gave to the revival of letters; and the palpable contrast betwixt Protestant lands and those over which the man of sin extends his dominion. It is very im-