

The mention of these great centres of learning with their various phases of thought, will show what opportunities Ritschl enjoyed to study different religious and philosophical systems, and by comparison judge of their weakness or their strength, and how all along he was being taught wherein as he supposed consisted a more excellent way. Nitzsch, Neander, Erdmann, Tholuck, Julius Müller, Rothe and Baur, were successively his teachers; and it need be no wonder that, however different their teaching, they all for the time contributed to the formation of his views.

Ritschl's biographers have noticed his receptivity, especially during his student career. Whether he sat at the feet of Neander or Baur, Tholuck or Rothe or Müller, he was an earnest and appreciative hearer, so much so indeed that he might be supposed to be fickle in his theological opinions. This phase of character may seem to be irreconcilable with what in after years was manifested both in his teaching and writings, a tenacity of purpose to adhere to the system of theology he had then formulated. But the apparent inconsistency may be explained by the supposition that during his earlier years he was in quest of a system which would reconcile many conflicting views in the great domain of theology, and would form a haven of rest for multitudes who were tossed upon the sea of doubt. Add to this that Ritschl's habit as a student seems to have been to bring all teachings to the standard of a personal utilitarianism, so as to speak, that is, when any doctrine was propounded he applied it to himself in its practical aspect to test its utility, without giving himself much trouble to ask whether the doctrine could be logically sustained or not. His question was, Has it value for my personal wants? If so, I shall accept it as a part of my belief. This point settled, the doctrine was received or rejected according as it was or was not regarded of practical value. This peculiarity which seems to have characterized Ritschl during his whole life has given rise to the expression "worth-judging" or "value-judging" as applicable to the method pursued by this school in their investigations.

REASONS OF POPULARITY OF RITSCHLIANISM.

It is somewhat difficult to fully account for the phenomenal popularity of the system of doctrine known as Ritschlianism. Generally in such cases there is some one cause, not however to the exclusion of other causes which are subsidiary. But here no one cause stands out so prominently as to overshadow all others. It is for the philosophy of history, in dealing with great movements in church or state, to indicate causes, assigning them their position as factors in inducing certain courses of events. It may yet be premature to attempt such a work for Ritschlianism, though the movement has long since passed its initial stages and by this time should furnish some clue to a rational explanation of the hold it has taken upon German Christendom. American rather more than English writers are dealing with the question, and while they admit that sufficient data are not yet available on which to form a final judgment—for further developments are necessary—they agree in asserting that in some measure they can see what are and what are not some of the causes.