

any of these great cities, to let in the light of investigation and publicity upon such an accursed traffic in human

virtue—upon social crimes, equal to any that caused the overthrow of Sodom and Babylon?

CURRENT RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE.

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GERMANY.

PERSONAL RELIGION.

Is the pulpit and in the theological and religious literature of Germany, the subject of conversion is not so frequently discussed as in America. From the time of Luther the Evangelical Church in the Fatherland has laid the emphasis on justification by faith. There have been periods when this faith was preached more as an intellectual possession than as a vital power; but even in times of spiritual quickening, it was faith that was emphasized. Then a living faith was viewed as including conversion and sanctification. It is on this deep and broad Pauline sense of faith that the devotional literature of Germany is based. This comprehensive view of the Christian life as a life of faith in its inception and development, gives unity and completeness to the discussions of the subject of personal religion. Such discussions become specially interesting when the fruit of profound scholarship, of sound exegesis, of historical research, and of personal experience. It is surely a favorable sign when theological professors in the universities recognize it as their mission to give vitalized truth, as well as logical discussions. Germany to-day has quite a number of professors who can be edifying as well as learned.

In *Studien und Kritiken*, 3. Heft, there is an article on "*The Essence of Personal Christianity*" (*Das Wesen des Persönlichen Christenthums*), by Prof. Dr. H. Weiss, of Tübingen. He regards the personal life of the Christian as the individual appropriation and realization of the grace and power offered in the person and redemptive work of Christ. The State into which the believer is thereby brought is a new one, is more perfect in principle than the old one, is created by God through Christ, and depends on a living union of the believer with Christ. As Schleiermacher says, "The individual whom the redemptive work of Christ affects must attain a personality which was not his before." The Christian state puts a man in a new relation to God, changes his heart, and puts him into a different attitude towards the world, particularly towards mankind. In principle, not in realization, the Christian is perfect. The new relation attained by the believer through Christ is frequently represented in a one-sided manner. Some emphasize its beginning, namely, conversion, but neglect other elements; others, however, ignore this beginning. So there are those who emphasize the ideal element, as the relation to God or the doctrine of justification, but neglect the life; while others lay the whole

stress on the new life. Some regard religion too exclusively as communion with God; others too exclusively as a new relation to the world. Thus there is an exaltation of the inner illumination, or the practical realization of religion, or emotion, or personal progress, or social duties, while other factors are overlooked. From the rich discussion, all tending to bring out the Christian life in its completeness, I select a few hints on the believer's assurance respecting his Christian state. What certainty have we that we are truly Christians? In the life itself this assurance is given. Whoever has gained a spiritual life so new, peculiar and decided as that of the Christian, cannot remain in doubt as to the grounds of its genuineness. There may, indeed, still be times of doubt, especially so long as this life has not yet attained maturity, or when specially weak and subject to conflicts. There are theologians who question the possibility of knowing that one is in a state of grace. But since this life itself springs from this grace, it gives us the certain assurance of the presence of this grace. The Christian life must be lived, it is not a mere theory; and in living it there is the unmistakable evidence of its genuineness. Certain conditions must of course be complied with if this certainty is to be attained. Faith, based on Scripture, the sacraments, and communion with believers, is essential; also the peculiar experience in prayer and in the communion of the soul with God; lastly, the proof of the life itself is necessary. Where these conditions are found, the Holy Spirit, without which there can be no assurance of salvation, will not be wanting to the Christian. But if any of these conditions is attended to disproportionately, there will be unhealthy tendencies. One-sided prominence to reflection (doctrine) promotes a false churchliness; one-sided communion with God tends to mystical spiritualism and separatism; one-sided attention to practice leads to practicalism or moralism. A healthy all-sided Christian development is necessary for the attainment of Christian assurance. The healthy spiritual life may be designated as an experience on earth of eternal life, of which it is a pledge. The spiritual quickening here is an earnest that we are destined for communion with God in glory. The personal state of the Christian on earth, having its origin in the divine life, conditioned by the revelation of God in Christ, and revealing in sinful humanity the powers of the divine eternal life, is the best apology for Christianity, and also the most conclusive proof that the Christian life begun here will be completed in heaven. The author