

Although in my department three distinct subjects are included, they stand in intimate co-relation. The successful study of the one, will assist in the fuller comprehension of the others. The *first*, CHURCH HISTORY, may be regarded as the arena and, to some extent, the criterion of theological dogma, and of apologetical discussion; the *second*, HISTORICAL THEOLOGY, as the cause, and in some degree, the consequence of Church History and of apologetics; the *third*, CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS, the demand and the defence of historical Christianity and of Christian Theology.

Had the Christian Church conformed to the "divine ideal" and preserved its conformity, it would have been *in its Character*, a reflection although (from its human elements) somewhat dim, of the exalted image of Christ, just as Christ Himself, in His incarnation, was the express image of God, and *in its history*, the mirror, from whose surface would have been seen the principles of the divine government—the heroic of human nature and the purity and bliss of sanctified humanity—just as in the life of Christ, we find them glowing with the beauty of absolute truth. But alas! The gold soon became dim—the salt lost its savor. The image of Christ grew fainter on the character of the Church; and the resemblance between the history of the church and the life of its founder waned more and more. With these changes came the loss of spiritual power, both for the regeneration of the world and the manifestation of the truth. Nevertheless tho' lessened this power still survived; it quietly cropt through the surface weight of worldly conformity—rose superior to the vain speculations of science falsely so called—grew stronger in the fires of persecution—defied the assaults of Kingly and of Priestly tyranny—laughed at the low subterfuges of empty scepticism—valourously fought and conquered the arguments of honest doubt—lived in the hearts of peasants, while it died in the courts of princes—burned in the souls of the martyrs, while it cooled in the philosophy of the schools:—and as at first, so still in perpetual freshness, it did its divine work of mercy for the lost and the wretched, while it was despised by the self-righteous, and the self-complacent. Thus by fulfilment of the ancient type, the church in its higher life was ever burning yet never consumed—or like the fire pictured by the puritan seer, remained unquenched amidst the deluge of water—because the invisible Saviour poured the oil of his grace upon it, from within the veil.

From this strange anomaly the student of ancient story, who looks beneath the outward covering of visible events, to the inner meaning which lies enfolded, will learn lessons of prime, and ever present moment. The loss of primitive vitality, the decay of spiritual power, in a word the seeming failure of the church as a divinely chosen agency, however perplexing at first sight reveals on more mature thought, the necessary dependence of all remedial agencies on the faithfulness and vigour of man; brings out in bold relief the co-relation of divine energy and human co-operation, and painfully illustrates the cardinal fact underlying all Christian doctrine, viz., the universal depravity of the human race.

The causes which more immediately effected the degeneracy of the Church are worthy of serious consideration. In our exposition of them, you will readily perceive, that they bear very pointedly on our own times; let them be beacons to warn us of danger, as well as lights to illuminate the history of the past,

The zeal and simplicity of Apostolic Christianity were transmitted to the age immediately following. Clement, Polycarp and even Ignatius breathed the spirit of their predecessors. Justin Martyr followed closely in their wake but with all his childlike piety there are marks upon him of his heathen training and polemic warfare. The age was one of suffering for the truth and of martyrdom for Christ. Doctrine was accepted without any attempt at formulation. Christ was trusted as Saviour, and obeyed as Lord. It is only by the most watchful scrutiny that we can observe the deadening influence which early sprung up concerning the person of Christ. Docketism on the one hand, and Ebionism on the other wrangled over the humanity and the divinity of the blessed Saviour. These errors however did not vitiate the Church's faith. The injury which they inflicted was more subtle