

## "THE PHILOSOPHY OF PROTESTANTISM."

### A REPLY.

In the Christmas number of "The Owl," there appeared a short article entitled, "The Philosophy of Protestantism." "The Owl," as our readers may know, is a monthly magazine published by the students of the University of Ottawa, an educational institution of the Roman Catholic Church. As the article in question is one which has to all appearances cost the writer considerable thought, and at the same time, is not marred by a spirit of extreme bias as the majority of such controversial articles are, we have deemed it worthy of a reply.

The article is written in a clear and concise manner, which renders its examination a matter of ease. The writer begins with a quotation, which, however, he does not acknowledge. We give it as it is. "There are crises in the world's history when the minds of men seem but to await the falling of a spark to break out into a fearful explosion." Following this, we have a statement of the purport of the article. We quote the writer's own words. "That such a crisis was reached at the time of the religious movement of the sixteenth century, and that the revolution which followed and spread so rapidly, was the effect of vicious principles, itself a sedition and not a legitimate reform capable of correcting existing abuses in the Church, it is the attempt of this brief summary to show." According to the writer's own words, then, his object is threefold:—First, to prove that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was a crisis in the world's history; secondly, to show that this reformation, or revolution, as he terms it, was the effect of vicious principles; and, thirdly, that it was itself a sedition and was thus incapable of cor-

recting existing abuses in the Church. In reviewing the article we shall, accordingly, bear these three points in mind.

That the Reformation of the sixteenth century was a crisis in the history of the world, is a fact conceded by every student of history. That it was a crisis of the nature indicated in the above quotation, we also admit. Like every other mighty change which has been wrought upon the established and world-wide convictions of men, the Reformation was gradually brought about. The minds and hearts of men were little by little prepared for the event. They were filled with such a sense of dissatisfaction at the existent order of things, that they needed only "a spark" to set them on fire with firm resolve and intense action.

But while admitting this, we would, at the same time, express a caution which it is very important to observe just here. In seeking to trace the causes of such an extensive movement as the one in question, we must be extremely careful in what light we place those minor events which immediately preceded the final outbreak. Such gigantic movements take decades, and sometimes even centuries to gain force and figure, one cause being added to another, each producing its own effect, until the chain of causes is complete, when one tremendous effect follows as a natural consequent.

Now, we will obviously fall into a very serious fallacy in our reasoning, if we attribute to one of these minor events all the potency of an efficient cause. At the very most it can be regarded only as a link in a chain of causes, though, in the great majority of instances, such events cannot be looked upon as causes at all, but only as the occasions of the