

that there was a time in the world when a religious change—a change for the better—was necessary.

With this admission before us, a question arises of some consequence to all who are interested in the present investigation. What was the state of things three hundred years ago, when, as it is conceded, a reformation was required? Perhaps some one may answer, in general terms, that the people were all Catholics then, and hence there was an absolute need for reform. But is not the name Catholic as lovely, as sound, and as scriptural as the name protestant? It is not names, but things, we have under examination. Was there no piety in those days? Was there no sound doctrine? Were there no holy ceremonies? Could men of learning, of zeal, of sanctity, of sterling worth, and of determined opposition to the spirit of the times, not be found? What was Zwingli, and who was Myconius? In what age did Reuchlin and Erasmus live? What shall we say of Melancthon, and of Staupitz, and of Luther before even the principles of the reformation were in embryo? Where was the people who embraced the doctrine of Huss? And what shall we say of the Waldenses?

But we approach the question in another form, and elicit an answer in which again we shall all concur. When we say that the state of things which called for the protestant reformation, was a state of things contrary to the simplicity, order, and purity of the oracles of God, we say what receives a universal response from every party in the protestant ranks. In one word, a departure from the New Testament, in theory and in practice, was the sole occasion of the need of a reformation in the days when princes and people protested against the papacy. Once more, then, we are all agreed. This makes two things in which every protestant from Dan to Beersheba is united. First, that a reformation was once absolutely needful; and second, that it was needful because the professed members of the christian church had so widely departed from the New Testament standard. We are happy in agreeing thus far with the whole protestant world. And since there is a concurrence upon these very important premises, shall we not be united in reference to all the conclusions legitimately deduced from them? These two points of agreement must be regarded as the basis of a complete union, provided we can show how they are brought to bear upon the state of things in this our own day.

First of all we hesitate not to say that modern protestantism is as far from New Testament excellence, as the protestant world is now in advance of the papal world in the days of Reuchlin or of Calvin.