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ARTICLE I.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO CHURCH HISTORY.

By Professor Philip Schaff, Mercersburg, Pa.

§ 1. *The idea of History in general.*

THE object of this General Introduction is, to come to a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of church history, and thus to gain the proper position for the contemplation of its details. A full insight into it can be reached indeed only at the close of the historical course; for the best definition of church history is the thing itself. But some preliminary explanation is still very important, at least to know what we propose in some measure, and to serve as a directory to the study of particulars. Our best course will be to resolve this compound conception into its two constituent parts, and so to inquire first what *history* is in general, and then what the *church* is, which will lead of itself to the true idea of *church history*.

By History in the *objective* sense, we understand the sum of what has happened, or more strictly expressed, of all that pertains to the life of humanity and enters essentially into its development. History in the *subjective* sense, is the apprehension and representation of what has thus taken place, by means of language.¹ The value of the last

¹ The English word *history* comes, through the Latin, from the Greek *ιστορία*, (from the verb *ιστορέω*,) which signifies first research, then what is known by research, then science generally and in particular the science of events in history. The German word *Geschichte* comes from "geschehen," to happen, to occur.

depends throughout on the degree in which it is a true copy of the first, and thus presupposes that the historian has freely surrendered himself to his object, brings it to a living reproduction in his spirit, and is concerned only to be a faithful mirror of what has taken place, or to make its representation answerable exactly to its actual occurrence.

History, in the objective sense, of which mainly we have to speak, is not an outward aggregate of names, dates, and deeds, more or less accidental, without fixed plan or sure purpose, but a living organism, whose parts are inwardly joined together in the way of mutual need and complement. All nations form but a single family, having the same origin and destination; and all periods are only the different ages of its life, which is throughout one and the same. History stands moreover under the conduct of Divine providence, proceeds on an eternal, unchangeable plan, and is carried forward accordingly, in the irresistible necessity, to a definite end. This end is the same with that of the creation in general, the glorification of God, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of the world, through the free worship of his intelligent creatures, whose highest blessedness at the same time flows from this worship.

We must look upon history thus, as the product always of two different factors. The last and highest factor is *God himself*, in whom we "live and move and have our being," who turns the hearts of men "as streams of water," who worketh in the good both to will and to do, and ruleth the wrath of the wicked to his own praise, yea, maketh Satan himself tributary to his absolute will. In this view we may style history a *self-evolution of God* in the course of *time*—in distinction from nature, which is a revelation of the Creator in *space*—a successional representation of his omnipotence and wisdom, and more particularly of his moral attributes, his righteousness, holiness, patience, long-suffering, love, and mercy. A history which leaves this out of sight, and turns God into an idle spectator of the actions and fortunes of men, is *deistic, rationalistic*, in its last consequence *atheistic*, and for this very reason at bottom without spirit, without life, without interest, and without consolation. Such a history must be at best a cold statue, without beaming eye or beating heart. God however works not in history as in nature, through the force of blind laws, but by *living persons*, whom he has made after his own image, endowing them with reason and power of will. This implies that he has assigned them a certain sphere of self-conscious, free action, for which they are held responsible; he will not coerce their service, but form them rather to the fellowship of love with himself. *Men* become in

this way a relative, secondary factor of history, and receive the reward of their words and deeds, whether they be good or bad. To deny such *subjective* causality, and make men mere passive channels or blind machines of the divine activity, is to fall into the opposite extreme of *pantheism* and *fatalism*, and overthrows also by consequence all human accountability, nay in the end all distinction between good and evil, virtue and vice. These two forms of causation again, the divine and the human, the objective and the subjective, work not one beside and out of the other, which would be a perfectly abstract and mechanical conception, but *in* and *by one another*. It may not be possible to run the line of demarcation between them; still the recognition of both is the first condition of all sound sense for history, and it is this which forms it to a lofty, continuously-rolling anthem in praise of God's wisdom and love, an humbling mirror of man's weakness and guilt, and in both respects a rich repository of instruction, encouragement, and edification. As the biography of humanity, the development of its relations to itself, to nature, and to God, it must of course embrace all that deserves to be known, all that is beautiful, great, noble, and glorious, in the course of the world's life. In it are deposited all the experiences of our race, all its thoughts, feelings, views, wishes, endeavors, and doings, all its sorrows and all its joys. Divine revelation itself belongs to history, forms the inmost marrow of its life, the golden thread that runs throughout its leaves. Thus in the nature of the case, there can be no study more comprehensive than history in the broad sense of the word, none more instructive and entertaining.

§ 2. *The central position of Religion in History.*

Universal history, like the life of humanity itself, unfolds itself of course in different spheres; which however all stand in nearer or more remote connection, and so condition and complete one another mutually. There is a history of government, of trade, of social life, of the different sciences and arts, of morality, and of religion. Among these, the last is plainly the deepest, most central, and full of interest. For religion, or the relation of man to God, the band that exalts his earthly life and knits it to the invisible world of spirits, the eternal abode of the blessed, constitutes the most sacred interest of our human life, the fountain of its loftiest thoughts, its mightiest deeds, its most blessed enjoyments, its sabbath, ornament, glory and crown, in the consciousness of all nations; the region of everlasting truth and rest, where, as it is expressed by a profound German philosopher, all mys-

teries of the world are solved, all spiritual contradictions reconciled, all painful sentiments hushed; in whose ether all sorrow, all care, is made to disappear, whether in the present feeling of devotion or in hope, while all that is dark in time brightens into the radiance of eternity. Religion, communion with God, is the morning, noon, and evening of history, the paradise from which it starts, the haven of peace into which, after a course of many thousand years on the storm-lashed ocean of time, it will finally be conducted, to rest eternally from its labor and toil, where God shall be all in all. Even the other departments of history themselves find their highest attraction, and their full illustration, only in the rays from a higher world which are flung upon them from religion.

All this however holds in the highest degree only of Christianity, the absolutely true and perfect religion. Its founder, *Jesus Christ*, the God-man and Saviour of the world, is accordingly the *animating soul*, and *central sun*, and *universal key* at the same time, of all history. His entrance into the world forms the boundary between the old and the new; from him, the light and life of the world, light and life flow backwards into the night of Paganism and twilight of Judaism, and forwards through all following centuries by means of his church. Even in ancient history, what is most worthy of notice and full of meaning is the preparation of the way for Christianity, through the divine revelation made to Israel and the dark longings of the heathen world. For later history in full, Christianity is the inmost pulse, the very heart's blood and central stream. This shows itself most clearly in the Middle Ages, when all sciences and arts, all social culture, and the greatest political and national movements, received their impulse from the church, and were guided and ruled by its spirit. But the history also of the last three centuries, rests throughout, in all its branches, upon the great ecclesiastico-religious movement of the sixteenth century, in the process of whose development we are still involved. Any one may easily see from this the comprehensive significance of *church* history.

§ 3. *The Church.*

Christianity, to which as the absolute, universal religion this central and all-embracing position in history belongs, and on which depends the salvation of the whole human race, exists not merely as something subjective in single pious individuals, but also as an objective, organic, visible society, as a *church* or *kingdom of God upon the earth*. The church is in part a pedagogic institution to prepare men for

heaven, and as such destined to pass away; in part the everlasting communion of the redeemed, embracing earth and heaven. In the first view, it embraces, as a visible organization, all baptized persons, many consequently who are hypocrites and unbelievers, who are to be fully separated from it only at the end of the world. Hence our Lord compares the kingdom of heaven, Matt. xiii, to a field, in which wheat and tares grow together until the harvest; also to a net, in which good and bad fish are promiscuously taken. To the true essence of the church however, the everlasting communion of saints, belong only the regenerate, who are united by faith with Christ the head, and through him also with one another.

The church still further is a human society, but not for this reason by any means the product of men, as being called into existence by their invention and free will, like free-masonry for instance, temperance societies, and all sorts of political and literary associations. On the contrary it is grounded by *God himself through Christ*, his incarnation, his life, suffering and death, his exaltation and the effusion of the Holy Ghost, for his own glory and the redemption and salvation of men. For this very reason, the gates of hell itself can never prevail against it. It is the ark of Christianity, out of which there is no salvation, the channel in which flows continuously forward the revelation of the triune God and the powers of eternal life. Paul styles it ordinarily the *body of Christ*, and believes the *members* of this body.¹ As a *body* in general, the church is an organic union of many members, which have different callings and gifts, but are pervaded by the same life-blood, governed by the same head, animated by the same soul, coöperating with mutual assistance in the service of one and the same end. All this is set forth in the most masterly and incomparable style, particularly in the 12th and 14th chapters of the first epistle to the Corinthians. As the *body of Christ*, the church is Christ's dwelling place, in which he exercises all his divine and human life-powers, as also the organ by and through which he acts upon the world in the capacity of its Redeemer, as the soul dwells in the body and reveals its activity by its means. The Lord is thus present in the church, and in all its institutions and means of grace, particularly in the word and sacraments, after a mystical, invisible, and incomprehensible manner indeed, but not the less real and efficient and manifest on this account, with the entire fulness of his personality, his theanthropic nature and life. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I"—my person, not merely my spirit or my word, or my influence—

¹ Rom. 12: 5. 1 Cor. 6: 15. 12: 27. Eph. 1: 20. 4: 12. 5: 30. Col. 1: 24.

"in the midst of them" (Matt. 18: 20). "Lo! I am with you"—the representatives of the universal body of saints—"always to the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 20). Hence Paul names the church, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1: 20).

We may thus say, without exaggeration, that the church is the continuation of Christ's life and work upon the earth, though never indeed, so far as men are concerned, without a mixture of sin and error. In the church, the Lord is perpetually born anew in the hearts of believers; through her, he speaks words of truth and consolation to the fallen race of man; in her he heals the sick, raises the dead to new life, distributes the heavenly manna, gives himself for spiritual food and drink to souls longing for salvation; in her, are repeated his sufferings and death; in her also, however, are continually celebrated anew, his resurrection and ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. She takes upon herself, through all her militant state, like her Head in his humiliation, the form of a servant, and is hated, despised, and mocked, by the ungodly world; but out of this form, at the same time, gleams a divine glory, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In her maternal womb must we be born again out of incorruptible seed; from her breast must we be nourished, in order that we may have spiritual life. For she is the Lamb's bride, the habitation of the Holy Ghost, the temple of the living God, "the pillar and ground of the truth." Those old primitive sayings, perverted into a fleshly and false sense by the church of Rome: *Qui ecclesiam non habet matrem, Deum non habet patrem*; and: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, are altogether correct when we understand in the case the true church, the spiritual Jerusalem, "which is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4: 26). For inasmuch as Christ, in his character of Redeemer, is to be found, neither in Heathenism nor Judaism nor Islamism, but in the church only, the fundamental proposition, "Out of Christ no salvation," necessarily includes in itself also the other, "No salvation out of the church."

§ 4. *The Development of the Church.*

The church now is not to be viewed as at once at hand and complete, but as a historical fact, and as a human society, subject to the laws of history, to genesis, growth, and development. Here indeed we must make an important distinction. In her idea, or as objectively viewed in Christ, in whom dwells the whole fulness of the Godhead, and who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, the church is from the start complete and capable of no change. In the same way,

his revealed word is the everlasting truth and the absolute rule of faith and practice, which the Christian world may never transcend or leave behind. The doctrine of an improvement of Biblical Christianity, of an advance on the part of man beyond revelation or beyond Christ himself, is entirely rationalistic and unchristian. Such a so-called improvement were only a deterioration, and a falling back into the old Judaism or Paganism. But from this idea of the church in the divine mind, we must distinguish her *actual manifestation* upon the earth; from the objective revelation itself, the *subjective apprehension and appropriation of this in the consciousness of humanity*, at a given time. This is progressive. As little as the single Christian may at once become a perfect saint, can humanity as a whole at once appropriate to itself the fulness of life which is in Christ. On the contrary, this can take place only by a gradual process, with much trouble and toil.

As in the case then of every individual believer, and indeed of Christ himself in his human nature,¹ we must speak of the church also, under her historical form, as passing through the different stages of infancy, childhood, youth, and mature age. She advances from one measure of truth, knowledge, holiness, to another; struggles victoriously through the opposition of an ungodly world; overcomes innumerable foes within and without; surmounts all manner of obstructions and diseases; till finally, made free from all sin and error, at the general resurrection, she shall exchange her militant for the triumphant state, and appear thus everlastingly complete. This whole process however is nothing more than the realization of the idea of the church as presented in Christ from the beginning, the appropriation and impression of his spirit and life on all sides. Christ is thus the beginning, middle, and end, of the entire process of church history.

This process of growth is in part an *outward extension* over the face of the globe, until all nations come to walk in the light of the gospel. In this respect mainly our Lord compares the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard, which is the least among all seeds, but grows to be a great tree, in whose branches the birds of heaven make their nests (Matt. 13: 31, 32). In part again it is an *inward development* of the idea of the church, in doctrine, life, worship, and government, or a more complete impress continually of the new life principle which has appeared in Christ, and is destined to pass over from him to the human race, so as gradually to transform the whole world into

¹ Comp. Luke 2: 52, "And Jesus *increased* in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Heb. 5: 8, "Though he were a Son, yet *learned* he obedience by the things which he suffered: and being made *perfect* he *became* the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

a glorious and blessed kingdom of God. To this refer the numerous passages in St. Paul's epistles, in which mention is made of the *growth* and *edification* of the body of Christ, "till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect* man, unto the measure of the *stature* of the *fulness* of Christ, that we henceforth be no more children," etc. (Eph. 4: 12—16. comp. 3: 17—19. Col. 2: 19). This development moreover is *organic*, that is, not an outward mechanical heaping together of facts that stand in no living connection with one another, but a process which springs from within, out of the vital energy implanted in the church, and continues in its course identical with itself, as the man through all stages of his life still remains a man. The untrue and imperfect in an earlier stage is overcome by that which follows, while what is true and essential is preserved, and made the living germ of further development. The history of all Christian nations, and of all times from Christ to the final judgment, forms a connected whole, and represents only in such totality the entire fulness of the new creation. Since the church on earth stands in perpetual conflict with the unbelieving world, and even believers themselves are still entangled with sin and error, it follows that the development in question is not regular and quiet, but a *constant struggle*; it proceeds through all sorts of obstructions, diseases, and extremes, through innumerable heresies and schisms. But even these disorders themselves, in the hand of Him who can bring good out of evil, are made to serve in the end the cause of truth and piety. There is no pause, strictly speaking, in history. Single lateral streams of it may indeed dry up; small sects, for instance, which have fulfilled their course, or even large divisions of the church that have once played a highly important part, may fall into stagnation, congeal into dead formalism, when they close themselves wilfully against all historical progress, as is the case with most of the Oriental churches. But the main stream of the church moves *uninterruptedly onward*, and must finally reach the mark which is proposed for it of God. Along with the wheat, however, according to the comparison already quoted, ripen at the same time also the tares, for the harvest of the last judgment; in connection with the development of the good, of truth and Christianity, advances the development of the *evil*, *falsehood*, and *antichrist*, and the two processes are often in such close contact that it requires the sharpest eye, rightly to discriminate between light and shade, the work of God and the work of Satan, who as we know not unfrequently transforms himself into an angel of light. Even here indeed we see the hand of righteous retribution, turning wicked thoughts and deeds to shame, and punishing the enemies of God; but

in the present world, this is only partially and imperfectly the case. The famous word of Schiller, "*Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht,*" must accordingly be so far corrected :

"Die Weltgeschichte ist *Ein* Weltgericht,
Und Fluch und Segen fällt aus ihren Händen,
Doch ist sie darum nicht das *End*gericht,
Wo erst sich Fluch und Segen wird vollenden."¹

§ 5. *The Church and the World.*

The church, like Christianity itself of which it is the bearer, is a supernatural principle, a new creation of God through Christ Jesus, far exalted above all that human intelligence and will are able of themselves to produce. In this character, her relation to the natural world, as fallen from God and lying in wickedness, is in the first place one of direct hostility ; in which view, church history and the history of the world, (here taken as profane history), stand in conflict with one another. Since however Christianity is ordained for men, and aims to raise them to their proper perfection, the hostility now mentioned cannot regard nature itself as it has come from the hands of God and belongs to the true essence of man, but only the corruption of nature, that is sin and error ; so that it must come to an end, when these ungodly elements are overcome. Christianity proposes not to annihilate human nature, but to redeem and sanctify it from the power of evil. Revelation seeks not to destroy reason, but to enlighten it and to inform it with its own spirit. The church must subdue the whole world finally, not with an arm of flesh, but with the weapons of faith and love, the Spirit and the Word, bringing it in captivity to the feet of the crucified One. The supernatural passes over thus into the natural, and becomes more and more at home upon the earth and among men ; the Word, in this sense also, becomes flesh, and dwells among us, in such way that we can see, feel, taste and enjoy his glory.

Nor is it, in this view, a single department of the world, that the kingdom of God proposes thus to pervade and master, but the world as a whole. Christianity is absolutely catholic or universal in its character ; that is, it is designed for all nations, for all times, and for all spheres of our human existence ; the church is humanity itself,

¹ A more full exposition of the idea of development, which falls in properly with that of history itself and is indispensable to the cultivation of it with any living spirit, has been attempted at least in our small work entitled: *What is Church History? A Vindication of the idea of Historical Development.* Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co. See especially p. 80 sq.

made perfect and complete. The whole creation groans after redemption and the glorious liberty of the children of God. The moral order of the world can never become complete, without being permeated in full by the life of the God-man. Nay, the very body itself, and the surrounding earth, are to be comprehended in the all-pervading and transforming process; since the new creation finds its end in the resurrection, and in new heavens and a new earth whercin dwelleth righteousness. Whence our Lord compares the kingdom of God with leaven, which is to pervade the entire human mass, that is our human life as a whole, in spirit, soul, and body (Matt. 13: 33).

The several spheres of the world in its good sense, or the essential forms of human life ordained of God himself for its proper evolution, are particularly the *family*, the *State*, *science*, *art*, and *morality*. On all these Christianity exerts, in the course of history, a purifying and sanctifying influence, and lays them under service to the glory of God and the establishment of his kingdom, till God may be all in all.

It recognizes in the *family* a divine order, but raises it at the same time to a far higher character than it ever had before, by conforming it to the law of monogamy, placing the relative duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, on their highest religious ground, and consecrating the whole institution by the reference in which it is made to stand to the sacred union of Christ with the church. Marriage meets us accordingly under its happiest forms, and reveals its richest fruits of domestic bliss, in the history of Christianity. In the same way, the *State* is regarded here also as a divine institution, for the maintenance of order in human society, for the encouragement of good, for the punishment of evil, and for the promotion generally of the public weal; while however the magistrate himself is again made dependent on the absolute sovereignty of God and responsible to it, and subjects are required to obey for the Lord's sake. Thus arbitrary despotism is counteracted, obedience is shorn of its slavish spirit, cruel and hurtful institutions are gradually abolished, and room is made for the introduction more and more of wise and wholesome civil laws. The end of history in this respect is a *theocracy*, in which all dominion and power shall be given to the saints of the Most High, and all nations shall joyfully yield themselves to his will as their only law. Christianity owns no opposition in principle to *science*, imparts to it rather a new impulse, and itself gives birth to the most lofty of all sciences, theology; but it is ever active in separating error and egoism from science, leads it to the highest source of all wisdom and knowledge, to God as revealed in Christ, and rests not till all sciences are finally transformed into *theosophy*, and so carried back to the ground from

which originally they take their rise. What Bacon says of philosophy holds good of science in general : *Philosophia obiter libata abducit a Deo, penitus hausta reducit ad eundem*. The *arts* in general the church takes into her service, and produces herself the noblest creations in architecture, painting, music and poetry. The scope of history in this direction, is the spiritualization of all arts in *worship*, or divine service. Lastly, Christianity transforms the whole *moral life*, both of individuals and of entire nations, infuses into morality its proper soul, namely, love to God, and rests not till all sin is banished from the earth, and *holiness* as it belongs essentially to the idea of the church is fully realized in the life of redeemed humanity.

§ 6. *Church History.*

We have now opened the way to a definition of church history. It is nothing else than the gradual actualization of the plan of the kingdom of God in the life of humanity, the outward and inward development of the church ; that is, her extension throughout the earth, and the introduction of the spirit of Christ into all spheres of human existence, the family, the State, arts, sciences, and morality, to form them into organs and expressions of this spirit, for the glory of God and the advancement of man to his proper perfection and happiness. It is the sum of all the utterances and deeds, experiences and fortunes, all the sufferings and conflicts and victories, of Christianity in general, as well as of all manifestations which God has made of himself in it and by its means.

As the church militant lives in the midst of the ungodly world, which also forces itself into it in manifold ways, it follows of course that in church history also all kinds of sinful passions, perversions and caricatures of divine truth, heresies and divisions, will come into view ; as we find indeed to have been the case extensively, in the age of the New Testament itself. For, in proportion as the kingdom of light causes itself to be felt, the kingdom of darkness also shows itself more active, and whets its weapons on Christianity itself. Judas not only stood in the sacred circle of the apostles, but wanders also as Ahasuerus through the ecclesiastical sanctuary of all centuries. The most dangerous and hateful forms of human and diabolical perversion, are called forth in direct opposition to the highest manifestations of the Spirit of God. But church history shows, in the first place, that this opposition, that all errors and divisions, even where they may have come for a long time to almost universal prevalence, must still in the end serve only to assist the church to a sense of her true calling, to

evoke the inmost powers of her life, to open the way for higher developments, and thus to glorify the name of God and his Son Jesus Christ. All troubles and persecutions also are for her, as for the single Christian, only a powerful refining fire, in which she is purged always more and more from her remaining dross, till in the end, upon the renovated earth, adorned as a bride at the side of her heavenly bridegroom, she shall celebrate the resurrection morning as her last and most glorious pentecost.

But, in the next place, this dark side of church history is only as it were its earthly and transient outside. Its deeper and more permanent substance, its heart's blood, is the manifestation it carries in itself of the divine love and wisdom. It shows us above all the Lord Christ, as he moves through all time, living and working in his church, expelling all sinful and false elements more and more from her communion, and triumphing over the world and Satan. It is the repository of the manifold signatures and seals of his Holy Spirit, in that bright cloud of bloody and unbloody witnesses, who have not counted their lives dear even to death itself; who have maintained true and faithful conflict with all ungodliness in and out of themselves; who have preached the gospel of peace to every creature, bathed themselves in the depths of the divine life and of everlasting truth, and brought forth and interpreted the treasures of revelation for the instruction, improvement, and comfort of their contemporaries and subsequent generations; who with many tears and prayers, willingly bearing the cross of their Master, but through much joyful experience also, triumphing in faith and hope, and boldly disregarding death and the grave, have passed into the upper sanctuary, to rest there forever from all their labor.

The *commencement* of church history is strictly the incarnation of the Son of God, or the entrance of the new principle of light and life into humanity. The life of Jesus Christ forms the unalterable divine human foundation of the entire structure. Gieseler, Hase, and other historians, accordingly, embrace a short sketch of this in their systems, while Neander has devoted to it a special work. But inasmuch as the church first comes into view, under the form of an organic union of the disciples of Jesus, on the day of Pentecost, we may begin also with this; and it is better to do so, as by reason of the mass of matter to be handled no room can be found to do full justice to so difficult and momentous a subject as the life of Christ. In any case however there must be prefixed to the account given of the apostolic age, a preliminary sketch of the condition of the Jewish and Heathen world, at the time when the church thus entered into it as a new creation; since it is only thus that any clear conception can be had of the world-historical

significance of Christianity. The *relative goal* of church-history is the present as it stands at any given time, or rather the epoch which lies nearest to the historian; since what is immediately passing before our eyes and is not yet brought to its conclusion, cannot well be the object of free, impartial representation. Its *absolute goal* is the final judgment; though here of course what is still future for us can only be the object of prophetic representation, and falls consequently beyond the range of any simply human history. Only the inspired Apocalypse, whose exposition belongs to exegetical science, is a prophetic church history, in grand symbols, the full understanding of which will be possible only when all is fulfilled in actual event, just as the prophecies of the Old Testament are much clearer to us Christians than they were to the Jews before the coming of the Messiah.

For us, then, church history embraces a period of eighteen hundred years. This at once shows it to be, of all branches of divinity by far the most comprehensive and extensive. It is preceded by *exegesis*; that is, the exposition of the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, with all needful introductory and auxiliary science. Since the Bible is the storehouse of divine revelation, and the rule of faith and practice for the church, this department may be styled Fundamental Theology. Much exegetical matter at the same time enters also into history, particularly in the patristic age and in that of the reformation, the way namely in which the Bible has been understood and explained at different times and by different theologians; whence *exegesis* itself again has its history. Where *exegesis* ceases, church history begins, in such way however that they both come together in the apostolic age; for the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the New Testament, are source and object for both sciences, only under a different view. Historical Theology, in the next place, is followed in natural order by *speculative*, or as it is usually styled, *systematic* theology, whose province it is to explain and vindicate the Christian faith scientifically, from the position of its own time. The whole organism of the science of religion completes itself finally in *Practical* Theology, which, resting upon *exegesis*, church history, and *systematic* divinity, gives direction for the advancement of the Christian faith and life among God's people, by preaching (Homiletik), instruction (Katechetik), administration of divine services (Liturgik), and church government (theory of ecclesiastical law and discipline). Thus *exegesis* has to do with the *normative* charter in which the revelation starts, church history with the manner of its conception in time past, speculative theology with the present church consciousness, while practical theology looks towards the future. But as present and future are always

becoming past, speculative and practical theology fall again continually into church history, which in this way also is found to be the most comprehensive theological discipline.

§ 7. *Single Branches of Church History. History of Missions.*

Since the Christian religion, by reason of its universal character, pervades like leaven all spheres of human life, with its regenerative force (§ 5), church history divides itself of course into as many corresponding branches, any one of which may be treated separately, and is rich enough indeed to occupy a whole life. Only by the coöperation then of innumerable learned powers, can any tolerable justice be done to the whole; and even in this case, when a work of history rests upon the shoulders of many centuries of labor, it is still but a piecemeal production, as compared with objective history itself.

1. The first section of church history, which usually also is first handled, is the history of *missions*; that is, of the spread of Christianity among unconverted nations. By some it is embraced, by others rejected, the preparation and want of preparation for it also discovering themselves in very various degrees. The missionary work, which the Lord himself has solemnly committed to the church, must continue as long as there are still heathen, Jews or Turks, or a single soul on the face of the earth to which the sound of the gospel has not come. It is not carried forward however at all times, with the same zeal and success. The conversion of the heathen meets us on the largest and most effective scale, in the first and second centuries; then on the threshold of the Middle Ages, in the christianization of the Germanic nations; and finally in our own time, when Asia, Africa, and Australia, are overspread with a net of Protestant and Roman Catholic missionary stations. But often the church is so occupied with her internal affairs and conflicts, with her own purification and the right understanding of herself, that the poor heathen are almost entirely forgotten; as was the case, for instance, in the age of the Reformation, and in the Protestant church of the seventeenth century. Ordinarily then, however, in place of the *foreign* missionary interest, one of a *home* character prevails, directed towards the defenceless or lifeless portions of the church itself. Under the head of such inward missionary work, we may reckon the course of the reformation through the Roman Catholic countries of Europe in the sixteenth century, the labors of the Evangelical Society in France in favor of Protestantism, the highly important and successful activity of the American Home Missionary Society, and other associations for providing the Western States of

North America with ministers and means of grace; and indeed, strictly speaking, the Protestant missions also among the Abyssinians and the Oriental churches.

2. Just the opposite of the history of missions, we have in the history of the *compression* of the church, through the persecution of hostile powers, as of the Roman empire in the first three centuries, and of Mohammedanism in the seventh and eighth. But what appears in one aspect a compression or limitation, is in a higher view a purifying and invigorating process, and serves in the end to promote even the outward diffusion of Christianity. So under the Roman emperors, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the church. Here again also we may distinguish between *outward* persecution proceeding from openly infidel powers, and an *inward* persecution of one part of the church against another. To the last belongs, for instance, the suppression of the reformation in Spain, Italy, Austria, and other regions, by the Roman Catholic Inquisition and the machinations of Jesuitism. Protestantism also has its martyrs, particularly in France, Holland, and England.

When however Christianity has effected its settlement among a people, the more slow and tedious inward work commences, which has for its object the full extirpation of all remains of its old sinful heathenism, and the transformation of its thinking and working, manners and customs, into an evangelical mould. The church must take root, gain firm growth, and bring forth its proper flowers and fruits. This conducts us into new portions of church history, which are much more difficult to treat than the two now mentioned.

§ 8. Continuation. History of Doctrines.

3. Christianity cannot seek to suppress the desire of knowledge and science implanted in the human spirit by the Creator, but must encourage it rather and give it right direction, leading it to the primitive source of all truth. Faith itself urges to *gnosis*; it aims always at a clearer sense of its object; a still deeper apprehension of God, of his word and of his relations to men, is for it always a sacred duty and lofty satisfaction. With this is joined, in the way of impulse from without, the opposition of science and learning, and still further the perversions of the Christian doctrine by heretical sects. These attacks force the church (which must be ready always to give an account of her faith to every man) to inquiry and vindication. In this way, partly through the inward tendency faith has to knowledge and partly through assaults from without, arises *theology*, or the science of the

Christian religion, and this first, as opposed to heathen philosophers and Gnostic errorists, under the apologetic and polemic form. Theology is the higher self-consciousness of the church, and theologians are its leading intelligences, the eyes and ears, so to speak, of Christ's body. We find that in the most active and fruitful periods precisely, divinity shows the greatest life, as in the time of the Fathers, in the best period of the Middle Ages, and in the age of the Reformation; while along with the decline of theology in common, ignorance also, superstition, and general religious decay, sooner or later make themselves felt.

The most important part of the history of theology, is *dogmatic* history, having for its object the doctrines of Christianity.¹ This forms the most spiritual, and in many respects the most weighty branch, of church history in general, and has been in modern times accordingly honored in Germany with a number of separate works by Muenschler, Engelhardt, Bauingarten-Crusius, Hagenbach, Baur, and others. Besides this, German scholars have devoted to the history of the more weighty dogmas special extended monographies, some of which are of great value. So Baur and Meier have treated the doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation, Baur also the doctrine of the atonement, Dorner the doctrine of Christ's person, Ebrard the doctrine of the Lord's supper, etc.² The New Testament, which is the living germ of all theology, contains also all the doctrines of salvation, not however in a scientific, but in their original, living, popular, and practical form. Only Paul, who had a learned education and whose mind was of the most dialectic cast, approaches in his epistles, and particularly in his epistle to the Romans, the logical and systematic mode of instruction. By *dogma* now, we understand simply the Biblical doctrine, mastered by reflection, reduced to a scientific expression and laid away as a fixed article of religion. It becomes *symbolic*, when it is adopted by the general church, or by a part of the church, as expressing its sense of what the Scriptures teach, so as to be invested thus with general authority as a doctrinal rule. Dogmas and dogmatic theology then, in the strict sense, begin only with the time when the church woke to scientific self-consciousness, a result due, in no small part to heresies and the perversions of the Christian doctrine. The dogma

¹ We have no fully suitable name for it in English. *Dogmatic History*, as it is generally called, should signify rather a history of dogmatic theology, or of the systematic treatment of doctrines, and refers more to the form than the contents. The nearest approach to it is the title *History of Christian Doctrines*.

² There is also an extended, philosophically digested, instructive and stirring "Introduction to Dogmatic History" by *Theodore Kliefoth*, 1839.

of course has also its own development, and is subjected to the moving flow of the world's general life and culture, whilst the Biblical truth remains in its own nature always the same. Each period of church history is called to unfold and bring into clear view some special side of the dogma, over against corresponding errors, until at last the whole circle of the Christian system of truth shall be brought out in natural order. So the Nicene period was called to assert particularly the dogma of the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, the dogma thus of the Holy Trinity, against the Arians and Semi-arians; the Augustinian period, the dogma of man's sin and God's grace against the Pelagians. The work of the Reformation, in a dogmatic respect, was soteriological, that is, it brought out the doctrine of the subjective side of salvation, in particular of justification by faith, in opposition to the Romish idea of righteousness by works. In our own time, the dogma of the church appears to be challenging continually more and more the attention of theologians. Eschatology, or the doctrine of the Last Things, will finally have its turn. Since however the Christian doctrines form a connected whole, no one of them of course can be handled, without some reference at the same time, to all the rest.

As theology in general comes into contact with the profane sciences, exegesis with oriental and classic philology, church history with world history, Christian morality with philosophical ethics, homiletics with rhetoric, etc., so dogmatic history stands in specially intimate connection with the history of philosophy, and is always more or less under its influence. Thus with the Greek fathers we find the dogmatic consciousness swayed by Platonism and New-Platonism; in the case of the mediaeval schoolmen, by the logic and dialectics of Aristotle; since the Reformation, by the systems of Descartes, Spinoza, Bacon, Locke, Leibnitz, Kant, Fries, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. The history of philosophy and dogmatic history are two parallel processes, which repel and attract one another at different times, till finally the world-consciousness shall be brought to harmony and reconciliation with the consciousness of God, natural reason into unison with the truth of revelation.

§ 9. *History of Morality, Government, and Worship.*

4. The next branch of our science, is the history of *Christian practice* or of *morality*. This very important part, which is most adapted for practical ends, has been alas thus far but too much neglected. Neander, who throws it into one section with worship, has given more

attention to it than usual; and it is this which imparts to his celebrated work its peculiar charm in the way of religious edification. The doctrine of Christianity requires a corresponding holy walk, faith must work by love. Since the Christian religion is throughout of a moral nature, that is, aims always at the glory of God and the full sanctification of man, all church history is indeed, in a broad sense, a history of morality. The dogma, theology, church constitution, worship, are all moral acts. We take the word here, however, in the narrower sense of what is immediately practical. To this part then belongs the description of the peculiar virtues and vices, the good and bad deeds, the characteristic manners and customs, of leading ecclesiastical individuals, as well as of whole nations and times. Here it falls, to describe the influence of Christianity upon marriage, the family, the female sex, on the abolition of slavery and various social evils. A large space is required, in this view, for the history of the monastic institute, particularly during the Middle Ages, when it split into a great many orders, each of which again forms a more or less peculiar type of morality, having however also its corresponding dangers and temptations.

5. The church must have further a form of government, and exercise discipline on her refractory members. This gives us the history of *church polity* and *church discipline*; which are usually comprised under one section, but may just as well be treated apart also, especially where the last has reached a high degree of cultivation. The constitution of the church, like the Christian doctrine, includes an unchangeable substance and a changeable form. The first is the spiritual office ordained by Christ himself, to which belongs the power of binding and loosing in the name of the Lord. This is different, according to the necessities of the time and its particular relations. In the beginning, we find the Apostolic constitution, where the apostles are the infallible teachers and leaders of the church. In the second century, the Episcopal system comes forward, which advances with natural growth into the Metropolitan and Patriarchal systems. The Oriental churches stop with the last, while the Latin church, in the Middle Ages, concentrate all the power of the patriarchs in the bishop of Rome, and form thus the Papal system, which in the end degenerates into an insupportable despotism over the conscience. With the Reformation then arise new church constitutions, more suitable to the free genius of Protestantism; so, in particular, the government by Presbyteries and Synods.

Discipline is at one time strict, at another lax, according to the reigning spirit of the church, and the measure of her freedom or vassalage, as related to the civil power.

It is in this sphere particularly that the church comes into correspondence with the *State*, and this relation also has its own history, as subject to a great variety of forms. Either the State takes the attitude of hostility to the church, in the character of a persecuting heathen power, as in the first three centuries before the conversion of the emperor Constantine; or the church rules the State and becomes hierarchical, as in the case of Western Christendom in the Middle Ages, and as the case is still where the papacy is in full power; or the Christian State governs the church, and is Caesaro-papistic, on the principle *cujus regio ejus religio*; so in the case even of the Byzantine emperors, who had a great deal to do with the outward, and also with the inward, affairs of the Greek church, and then more fully in the case of a number of Protestant countries since the sixteenth century. Or finally, State and church are independent of one another and each is left to its own free course; the order which prevails in the United States, and that seems latterly to be making way for itself also in Europe.

6. Lastly, we have still to notice the history of *divine service* or *worship*. The essential elements of it, appointed by Christ himself, are the preaching of God's word and the administration of the holy sacraments. But the way and manner of preaching, of religious instruction, of administering the sacraments, has again its history. In addition to this, the church appoints sacred places and sacred times, produces prayers, liturgies, hymns, chorals, and all sorts of significant symbolic forms and actions, enters into alliance with the fine arts, especially architecture, painting, music, and poetry, and makes them tributary to the purposes of worship. Often the service is rich, overlaid indeed, as in the Roman church, which seeks to work upon the mind by imposing symbols, by outward show and pomp, particularly in the mass. Or it is simple and sober, as for instance in the Puritan churches. Again, each single branch of worship has its separate history. There is a history thus of the pulpit, of catechetical instruction, of liturgies, of church building, of religious sculpture and painting, of sacred poesy and music, etc. Here also much still remains to be done, especially in the department of Christian art. *Hass* is the only one properly among general church historians, who has brought it into the range of his description; and he too is confined, by the narrow size of his manual, to short though spirited sketches. Often the history of church government and worship is thrown together, under the name of Christian *archaeology*, which is then usually limited to the first six centuries, as the period of the origin and settlement of church forms and laws. The most important works here are *Bingham's* Antiquities

of the Christian Church, which have been translated also into Latin, and the later Archaeologies of *Augusti* (full in 12 volumes, abridged in 3), *Rheinwald*, *Böhmer* and *Siegel*. From all this, we may see easily the rich and manifold nature of church history, as well as the difficulty of properly mastering its immense material.

As regards now however the treatment in detail, it will not do to carry out rigidly everywhere this six-fold division, unless we choose to become pedantic and interrupt the natural order of things. In the age of the Reformation, for instance, the different spheres, particularly the outward course of events and the development of doctrine, run so actively into one another, that a strict distribution of the matter under different heads, would do violence to the history, and hinder more than promote a clear view of it. Nor will it answer to follow always the same order, but in each period, that interest should be placed foremost which in reality is found to take the lead. Thus, for instance, the development of doctrine stands, in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, almost entirely still, and must take, in this period, accordingly, only a very subordinate rank. At the same time, however, the division and treatment of the matter, in the different periods, will depend very much of course on the disposition of the historian and the end he has particularly in view.

§ 10. Sources of Church History.

Whatever may serve to furnish information, more or less accurate, on the external and internal acts and fortunes of the church, is to be reckoned among the sources of its history. The degree of its credibility and trustworthiness, criticism must determine on outward and inward grounds. We may distinguish in general between *immediate* and *mediate* sources.

A. The IMMEDIATE or DIRECT SOURCES, as being the pure original utterance of history itself, are the most important, and fall again into :

a. *Written*. Here belong,

1. *Official reports and documents*. Of special weight among these are the *acts of councils*;¹ then the *official letters of bishops*, particularly the *bulls of the popes*.² These decrees and bulls refer to all

¹ Of these we have several collections; the best, by *Mansi*: Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio. Florent. et Venet. 1759 sqq. in 81 folio volumes. (For the history of our American churches, also, synodical transactions are, in like manner, the most authentic immediate source.)

² Of these, too, there are various collections; one of particular note by *Cocquelinus*: Bullarum amplissima collectio. Rom. 1739. 28 t. fol., and Magni bullaril continuatio (1758—1830), collegit Andr. Advocatus Barbieri. Rom. 1835 sq.

sections of church history, but especially to doctrine and government. For single sections, again, there are special documentary sources. For dogmatic history first of all the *confessions of faith*, in which the church doctrine is enunciated in *normative* style;¹ for the history of the Christian life, the different *monastic rules*;² for the history of worship, the *liturgies*;³ for the history of ecclesiastical polity, the civil ordinances of the Byzantine, Frank, and German princes referring to the church.⁴

2. *Inscriptions*; particularly over graves. These frequently throw light on particular facts, the birth and death of distinguished men, their deeds, etc. and are characteristic for the spirit of the age. They are not, however, of as much value for church history, as for certain parts of profane.⁵

3. *Private writings of historical actors*. So for the history of the ancient church, the works of the apologists and church fathers are of the greatest account; for the history of the Middle Ages, the works of the schoolmen and mystics; for the history of the Reformation, the works of the reformers and their Roman adversaries. They give us the most lively image of their authors and their age. Here however it is necessary to weigh beforehand, in the scales of careful and thorough criticism, the genuineness of the authorities, so as not to be misled by any false light. Especially needful is this in the case of written monuments of the second and third centuries, when a multitude of apocryphal writings were forged; which are themselves indeed characteristic, only not for the names they are made falsely to represent, but for the heretical tendencies rather out of which they have sprung.

¹ A collection of the older symbols is given by *C. W. F. Walch*, in his *Bibliotheca symbolica vetus*. Lemgo. 1770; and recently by *A. Hahn*: *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der apost. Kath. Kirche*. Breslau. 1842. The Confessions of the Lutheran church are found complete in the editions of *Rechenberg* and *Hahn*; those of the Reformed church in the *Collectio Confessionum*, etc. by *Niemeyer*. Leipzig. 1840.

² *L. Holstenius*: *Codex regularum Monasticarum*. Rom. 1661. 3 t. enlarged by *Brockie* a. 1759. 6 t.

³ *Comp. Assemani*: *Codex liturgicus ecclesiae universalis*. Rom. 1749. 13 t. — *Renaudot*: *Liturgiarum orientalium collectio*. Par. 1716. 2 t. — *Muratorius*: *Liturg. rom. vetus*. Venet. 1748. 2 t.

⁴ The laws of the Roman emperors may be found in the *Codex Theodosianus* and *Cod. Justinianus*; those of the Frank kings in *Baluzii Collectio capitularium regum Frankorum*. Par. 1677; those of the German emperors in *Haiminfeldii Collectio constitutionum imperialium*. Fref. 1713.

⁵ Collections of such inscriptions are, for instance, *Ciampini Vetera Monumenta*. Rom. 1747. 3 t. fol.; *Jacutii Christ. antiquitatum specimina*. Rom. 1752 4 t.; *F. Munter's Sinnbilder und Kunstvorstellungen der Alten Christen*. Altona. 1825.

So again it is necessary also to have at hand correct and complete editions.¹

b. *Unwritten.* Here belong works of art; particularly church edifices, and religious paintings. The religious domes of the Middle Ages, for instance, are an embodiment of the gigantic spirit of that period; they may be taken as a commentary on the reigning apprehension at the time of Christianity and the church, and are so far of the greatest importance for the historian.

B. THE MEDIATE OR INDIRECT SOURCES ARE:

1. Before all, *the reports and representations of historical writers.* These do not give us the history as it is in its own originality, like the immediate sources, but its subjective apprehension, in the way of exposition and commentary. Among such reports, those of course must take the first place, which proceed from eye and ear witnesses, whether friends or foes; in which case indeed they approximate closely to the character of direct sources. The measure of their worth depends, as all may see, on the trustworthiness and capacity of their authors. Weighty in this way are, for the Apostolic period, for instance, the Acts of the Apostles by St. Luke, aside even from their canonical authority; for the history of the early persecutions, the reports of the churches at Smyrna and Lyons; for the age of Constantine, the historical works of Eusebius; for the Middle Ages, the annals and chronicles of the monks; for the Reformation, Spalatin's *Annales reformationis*, the biographies of Luther by Melanchthon and Matthesius, Sleidan's *Commentarii*, etc.

Historians who have lived after the events they narrate, may be regarded also as sources, when they have drawn upon reliable documents, monuments, and *autoptic* reports, which are subsequently either lost altogether, or at least placed beyond our reach, (as in the case partly with the treasures of the Vatican library). Among these, the biographies of particular men, who have stood high in the church, take an important place. Such biographies, of the martyrs particularly and saints, we have in great number.²

¹ Of all the more important church fathers there are good editions, particularly from the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century. (See Walch's *Bibliotheca patristica*.) There are also valuable collections of patristic literature; as, *Maxima bibliotheca veterum patrum*, etc. Lugd. 1677. 28 t. fol.; and, *Gallandi: Bibliotheca vet. patrum antiquorumque scriptorum ecclesiarum*, postrema lugdunensi locupletior. Venet. 1765—88. 14 t. fol.

² The most important collection of the sort, which however by reason of the fables mixed with it needs to be used with great caution, is found in the *Acta Sanctorum*, quotquot toto orbe coluntur, edd. Bolandus et alii (Bollandistae). Antwerp.

2. Among the mediate sources, finally, may be reckoned also, although of very subordinate consequence, oral *traditions, legends, and popular sayings*; so far at least as they are characteristic of the history of the time, in which they had their origin. So, for example, the saying throughout the Middle Ages, that the church since her union with the State under Constantine had lost her virginity; the saying which arose in the time of the Hohenstaufen, that Frederick II. would return, or that an eagle would rise out of his ashes, to destroy the papacy, showing an early opposition to Romanism on the part of the common German mind.

§ 11. *Substitute for Study of Sources.*

For the historian a critical acquaintance with at least the principal sources is indispensable; and this requires again a vast amount of preliminary knowledge, in particular a most intimate acquaintance with the Greek and Latin languages, in which for the most part the direct sources are offered for use.¹ For general need however, and for common practical ends, such works may answer as are founded on a thorough study of the sources. Especially worthy of commendation among the modern works of that kind, are the church histories of *Neander* and *Gieseler*, neither of which however is yet completed. Neander combines with the most extensive reading, particularly in patristic literature, the finest sense of truth and justice, an inward sympathy with all forms and types of the Christian spirit and life, a great talent for apprehending and delineating genetically the spirit of leading persons and tendencies, and a lovely, child-like religious spirit and sincerity; qualities altogether, which have won for him deservedly the title, father of modern church history, and almost cause us to forget the faults of his immortal work—among which must be reckoned particularly the carelessness and frequently wearisome diffuseness of his style. Gieseler's text is very lean, and betrays rather an untoward,

1693—1794, in 53 folio volumes. They are composed by Jesuits, and arranged after the days of the months, reaching to the 6th of October. The apparatus for this work embraces alone about 700 manuscripts, which are found in a castle of the province of Antwerp.

¹ Not these languages indeed in their classic purity. The ecclesiastical Greek and Latin, accordingly, is not to be learned out of the usual grammars and lexicons alone, but other helps must be called in, such as *Suicer's* *Thesaurus ecclesiasticus e patribus graecis*; *Carol. du Fresne's* (*Dom. du Cange*) *Glossarium 'ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis* (Lugd. 1688. 2 t. fol.); also his *Glossarium ad scr. med. et inf. latinatis* (Par. 1733—36. 6 t. fol.) Other editions, with *Carpentier's* supplement, in 4 vols. folio.

spiritless apprehension of history; his work is made invaluable, however, by the rich extracts from the sources, selected with vast diligence and skill, which occupy by far the most room, and place the reader in a situation to form his own judgment.

Of smaller works, *Guericke* and *Hase* are best for manual use. *Guericke's* work is just of the right size (3 volumes) for commencing students, and gives the principal matter in a comprehensive and pious form; the best parts of it however, down to the time of the Reformation, are due to the work of Neander, and it stands, subsequently to this epoch, so much in the service of bigoted Lutheranism, and blind hatred towards the Reformed church, that this must hinder its usefulness, out of Germany especially, far more even than its cumbersome and tasteless style. *Hase* is, among all that have been named, by far the most gifted *writer* of history. He has an extraordinary talent for spirited individual delineation, and can, with a few masterly touches, characterize a whole age. So much the more to be lamented is it, that his admirable genius should not be baptized fully in the element of faith.

Along with such general works however, should be consulted particularly also the many extremely instructive and interesting monographies of German scholarship on distinguished theologians and their times; as these serve to bring minuteness into our view, and in many cases almost supercede the necessity of a study of sources. Such monographies we have on Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Anselm, Bernhard of Clairvaux, Hugo of St. Victor, Gregory VII, Innocent III, Alexander III, those on the Forerunners of the Reformation, on almost all the Reformers, on Spener, Franke, Zinzendorf, Bengel, etc.; so again on the most weighty portions of the dogmatic history, on single divisions and periods of the church. This monographic literature moreover is constantly on the increase; as German diligence in particular, especially since Neander here also has led the way, is adding almost every year some new work of value to those already on hand, and is not likely to rest till every nook and corner of church history is explored and the entire past made near to us by living reproduction.

§ 12. *Method of writing Church History.*

We are next to inquire, how the material of church history is to be arranged and represented.

I. As regards *external* method, or the disposition of the matter,

it is best to unite the order of *time* with that of *things*. The *chronological* or *synchronistic* method, which has been in much favor heretofore, is very external and mechanical, when carried out by itself, whether by years, according to Fleury, or by centuries, as with Mosheim. History sinks in this way to a mere chronicle, and the flow of events is broken, so that *things* are sundered which should go together, and not unfrequently things brought together which should be held apart, all in obedience to the artificial rule of time. No less unsuitable however is the use, exclusively, of the order of *subjects* or *things*, where the matter is distributed under certain heads, as missions, doctrine, government, etc., and each head pursued without regard to the rest, from the beginning down to the present time. History in this way is turned into a number of independent and separate parallel lines; allowing no insight into the interior connections and relations of the different departments, no proper apprehension of any period as a whole.

In view of these disadvantages on either side, it is desirable so to unite the two methods, that we may have the benefit of both. This we may do, by following indeed the course of time, but in such way that the division here shall depend on the character and order of the events, and the same subject be followed out still to its relative close, without any concern to have this coincident exactly with the end of a year or century or any other fixed period. The entire history is thus divided into certain periods answerable to its actual course itself, to satisfy the chronological interest; while within these periods, the matter is treated under particular sections or heads, as many as each period may need, to satisfy the order of things.

2. The *internal* method of the historian is the *genetic* or *evolutionary*; which consists in this, that the history is made to reproduce itself according to nature, or to represent itself exactly as it has occurred. This method differs on the one hand from simple narration, which puts together mere outward facts and names, without rising to general views and philosophical observations, and on the other hand from *a priori* construction, which adjusts history to a preconceived scheme, and for the spirit of a past age substitutes its own spirit. The historian must give himself up in full to his object; first inquiring accurately and conscientiously into the state of facts, in the next place living himself into the spirit of the time which has produced the facts, and then representing both, the facts filled with their own spirit and life, in such way that the whole process of development may repeat itself before the eyes of the reader, and the actors appear clothed in real flesh and blood. History is neither altogether body, nor altogether soul, but both in in-

dissoluble union; on which account both, as fact and idea, must be understood and brought into view. The older historians have done invaluable service in the way of collecting material, facts; but their works lack generally the character of living freedom. The modern historical school goes to the inmost marrow of history, the hidden springs of its life, and lays all open to our view. The two methods do not of necessity absolutely exclude each other, although each calls for a different kind of talent; but properly one completes the other, and the full force of history is reached only by their intimate union.

Truth and fidelity thus are the highest object of the historian; which, though as a fallible man he can never attain it in full, he is bound to keep continually before his eyes. He must divest himself of all prejudices, of all party interests, in order to bring the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, into the light of day. This does not imply, as some have pretended, that he must lay aside his own subjectivity, his character, nay his religion itself, and become a mere *tabula rasa*. For in the first place this is a downright impossibility, since a man can have no knowledge without the exercise of his own thinking and judgment; and it is plain besides, that those precisely who boast most of their philosophical *innocipation*, as for instance Strauss in his notorious "Leben Jesu," are of all others most completely preoccupied with opinions and principles, by which they affect to master history instead of sitting as docile scholars at her feet. Then again, the very first condition of all knowledge is an active sympathy already at hand with the object to be known. He that would know the truth, must himself stand in the truth; only the philosopher can understand philosophy, the poet poetry, the religious man religion. So also the church historian must live and move in the spirit of Christianity in order to do justice to his subject. And since Christianity is the centre of the world's life and of truth itself, it unlocks also the sense of all other history. We cannot say then, that according to the same rule only a heathen can understand heathenism, only a Jew Judaism, and only a rationalist rationalism; for only from a higher position can we command a full view also of all below, and not the reverse; and only by the truth can we understand error, whereas error cannot be said at all to understand even itself. *Verum index sui et falsi*. But paganism over against Christianity is a false religion, and whatever of truth there may be in it, such as the longing it includes after redemption, finds precisely in Christianity its own fulfilment. The same is true of sects, as related to the central power of truth in the church. And so far as Judaism is concerned, it is just a direct preparation for Christianity; this is its completion, and it is thus more

intelligible for the Christian than for the Jew, in the same way that the man is able to understand the child, while the child can have no proper understanding of himself. Whence Augustine says with full right: *Novum Testamentum in vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet.*

The objectivity then which the historian is bound to aim at always, though he may never reach it fully in this life, is the truth itself, as it is to be found only in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This truth is inseparable at the same time from righteousness, and allows no partiality, no violation of the *suum cuique*, to come into view.

§ 13. *Division of Church History.*

. The development of the church has different stadia or life-stages, which are styled *periods*. The close of one period and beginning of another is an *epoch*, properly a stopping-place (*ἐποχή*). This marks the entrance of a new principle; and an epoch-forming event or idea, is such as introduces a new course of development. So for instance, the first feast of Pentecost; the conversion of St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles; the destruction of Jerusalem; the union of church and State under Constantine; the rise of Gregory VII; the posting of his ninety-five theses by Luther; Calvin's appearance in Geneva; the succession of queen Elizabeth to the throne; the landing of the Puritan pilgrims at Plymouth; the appearance of Spener, Zinzendorf, Wesley; the breaking out of the French Revolution; the year 1848, etc. A period is the circuit (*περίοδος*) between two epochs, or the time within which a new idea or view of the world comes to its evolution. Among periods themselves, however, we may distinguish greater and smaller. The greater periods we will style, for the sake of clearness, *ages*, or if it be preferred, world-ages. A new age we will allow to commence, by a vast scale of productive contemplation, where the church not only passes into an entirely new outward state, but the stream of her inward life also is brought to assume a wholly different direction. Such an age then falls again into a number of sections or periods in the narrower sense, each of which represents and unfolds some particular side of the general principle which rules the age.

We divide now the whole history of the church down to the present time into three ages, and each age again into three periods; from which we derive the following scheme, or universal index, in the way of preliminary survey and preparation.

FIRST AGE: The *Primitive* church, or the Graeco-Latin (Oriental and Occidental) Universal church, from its foundation on the day of Pentecost, to Gregory the Great, embracing thus the first six centuries (to 590).

First Period: The Apostolic church, to the death of the apostles.

Second Period: The church under persecution (*ecclesia pressa*), to the sole sovereignty of Constantine (311).

Third Period: The church in the Graeco-Roman empire, under the barbarian flood, to Gregory the Great (590).

SECOND AGE: The church of the *Middle Ages*, or the *Romano-Germanic* church, from Gregory the Great to the Reformation (590—1517).

Fourth Period: Commencement of the Middle Ages, the Planting of the church among the Germanic nations, to the time of Gregory VII. (1073).

Fifth Period: Bloom of the Middle Ages, summit of the papacy, monasticism, scholastic and mystic theology, to Boniface VIII. (1294).

Sixth Period: Dissolution of the Middle Ages and Preparation for the Reformation, to 1517.

THIRD AGE: The *Modern* church, or the *Evangelical Protestant* church, over against the Roman, to the present time.

Seventh Period: The Reformation, or Productive Protestantism (16th century).

Eighth Period: Self-consolidating or Scholastic Protestantism (17th century and first part of the 18th).

Ninth Period: Negative Protestantism (Rationalism and sect spirit), and introduction to a new age (from middle of the 18th century to this time).

§ 14. *General Character of the Three Ages of Church History.*

A full justification of this division, in its details, can be found only in church history itself. It is in place here, however, to establish in some measure the authority of the main division into three ages, by a preliminary exposition of their general character.

I. The *Ancient* church, from her foundation to the close of the sixth century, has her local theatre in the countries immediately around the Mediterranean sea; namely in Western Asia (particularly Palestine and Asia Minor), in Southern Europe (Greece, Italy, southern Gaul), and in Northern Africa (Egypt, Numidia, etc.), in the very centre, thus, of the old world and its heathen culture. Proceeding

from the bosom of the Jewish nation, Christianity even in the age of the apostles effected a settlement in the Greek and Roman nationality, and this national basis reaches through the whole first age; which we have good ground thus to style the *Graeco-Roman* or *Oriental and Occidental*. In the first place, it has a mighty conflict to sustain with Judaism and Paganism, this too under its most cultivated and powerful form. Hence a weighty part falls to the history of the diffusion of Christianity, and also to the history of the church's persecutions, in part by the Roman sword, in part also by Grecian science and art. In this conflict, however, the church triumphs, through her moral strength displayed in life and death, and her new view of the world. She appropriates the classical language and culture, fills them with Christian contents, and produces the magnificent literature of the fathers, which has been of fruitful force also for all later periods. The Oriental or Greek church occupies the foreground, as the principal bearer of the movement. She unfolds in this age her highest power and fairest blossoms, particularly in the explanation and settlement of the objective fundamental doctrines of Christ's divinity and that of the Holy Ghost, and of the blessed Trinity; the Greek dialectics being made here to do good service; whence her complacency in the title of the *orthodox* church. Still the Latin church also comes into view, especially the African, from the time of Tertullian, and takes the lead indeed, through Augustine, in the great anthropological controversies.

This age is, in dogma, polity, and worship, fundamental for all following centuries, the common ground, out of which the later main branches of the church have sprung. In it the church presents to our view, even outwardly and visibly, an imposing free unity, which comprises in itself at the same time manifold differences; and commands admiration by the power she has to vanquish, not only outward foes, Judaism and Paganism, but inward foes also, the most dangerous errors and schisms, with the weapons of the Spirit and of truth.

2. The church of the *Middle Ages*, though in one view the product of the Primitive church, is still very different from this both outwardly and inwardly. In the first place, the theatre changes; it is carried forward towards the west and north, into the heart of Europe, into Italy, Spain, France, Britain, Germany, Scandinavia. The unity of the church is split into two great halves. The Eastern church, after her separation from the Western, loses more and more always her own vitality; stiffening in part into dead formalism, and in part making room for a new enemy from without, Mohammedanism, before which also the North African church gives way. This loss in the East however,

is compensated in the richest manner by a new gain in the West. The church here receives into itself an entirely new nationality, barbarians indeed at the start, but highly gifted and of vast native force, namely the *Germanic*, which descending from the North like an overflowing deluge on the inwardly rotten Roman empire, destroys with rude hand its political institutions and its treasures of learning, but at the same time founds upon its ruins a succession of new States full of energy and big with promise for the future. The church rescued from the rubbish the Roman language and culture, together with her own literature; christianized and civilized these rude tribes, especially from Rome out, which was then her centre; and so created the Middle Ages, in which the pope represented the highest spiritual, the German emperor the highest temporal power, and the church ruled all social relations and every popular movement in the West. This then is the age of *Romano-Germanic catholicism*. Here we meet the colossal creations of the papacy, in league or conflict with the German imperial power, of the monastic orders, of the scholastic and mystic divinity, of the Gothic architecture and other arts, vying with each other to adorn the worship of the church. But in this activity, the church loses sight more and more of her apostolical foundation, and is overrun with all sorts of human alloy and impure dross. The papacy becomes a despotism over men's minds, the school divinity degenerates into empty forms and useless subtleties, and the entire religious life takes a Pelagian, legal direction towards particular outward works, substituted for living faith in the only Saviour. Against this oppression of the hierarchy, with its human ordinances, reacts the deeper life of the church, the consciousness of evangelical freedom.

3. So after due preparation, not only without but also within the bosom of the mediaeval Catholicism, we are brought to the *Reformation* of the sixteenth century; which gives the stream of church history an altogether different direction, opening the way thus for an entirely new age, in whose evolution we ourselves are still comprehended. The *Modern* church has her theatre primarily in *Germany* and *Switzerland*, where the Reformation was born and inwardly matured. This itself impresses upon it, in a national respect, a predominantly German character. It spreads, however, with rapid triumph, into the Scandinavian North, into France, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and at last into North America; which continues to unfold itself as a theatre of the kingdom of God, making room in itself for the good and bad powers of the old world, and representing the different tendencies of Protestantism along with the renovated life of Romanism in complicated confusion. As in the second age the Greek and Latin, so with

the beginning of the third age the Latin church falls asunder into two great halves, the Roman and the Protestant, the last branching into the Lutheran and Reformed confessions. And as in the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic church was the centre of all great movements, while the Greek remained motionless in an earlier position; so also Protestantism forms manifestly the central stream of modern history, and the activity of Romanism itself, though numerically the stronger interest, is conditioned mainly by the impulse it gains from the Protestant side. We have a right then to style this third age, from its leading character, the age of the *Evangelical Protestant* church.

§ 15. *Continuation.*

Taking these three ages in their most general relation to one another, we find a difference which may be best described by the philosophical distinction of objectivity and subjectivity.

The first age is the *immediate union of objectivity and subjectivity*; that is, we find the two great moral principles, on which all individual human life as well as all history turns, the authority of the general and the freedom of the single, in tolerable equipoise, but still in their first stadium only, without any clear sense of a determinate boundary between the two orders of existence. We meet in the ancient church a rich activity and manifoldness of the Christian life and of Christian science, also a great number of unsound excrescences, dangerous heresies and divisions. But over all these individual and national tendencies and views and characters, is felt the sway of the universal church mind, separating with sure instinct the false element, and in œcumenical councils settling doctrines and promulgating ecclesiastical laws, to which single Christians and nations submit.

Afterwards, however, these two principles of objectivity and subjectivity, the outward and the inward, the general and the single, authority and freedom, stand forward *onesidedly*; and in the nature of the case, the principle of *objectivity* first prevails. In the Catholic church of the Middle Ages, Christianity appears prevailing under the character of law, as a power extending itself with outward domination over the whole life. We may call it thus the age of Christian legalism, of ecclesiastical authority. The free personality comes not here to its proper rights; it is bound slavishly in fixed objective rules and forms. The individual subject is of account, only so far as he is the organ and medium of the general spirit of the church; all secular powers, the State, science, art, are under the guardianship of the hierarchy, and must serve its ends throughout. It is the era emphatically of grand,

universal enterprises, colossal works, for whose completion the co-operation of nations and centuries is required; the time of the most perfect outward sovereignty of the visible church. Such a well ordered and imposing system of authority was necessary, at the same time as an educational institute for the Germanic nations, to form them to the consciousness and rational use of freedom; for parental discipline must go before independence, the law is a schoolmaster towards Christ. This consciousness awoke even before the close of the Middle Ages. In proportion as the dominion of Rome degenerated into tyranny over conscience and all free thought, the subjective and national spirit was roused into an endeavor to shake off the ignominious yoke.

All these struggles of waking freedom concentrated themselves finally into a world-historical movement, and assumed a religious determinate character by the Reformation of the sixteenth century. With this commences the age of *subjectivity* and *individuality*. Still the Reformers aimed to free the Christian world only from the oppressive authority of human ordinances, and not by any means from the authority of God; on the contrary they sought to bring reason into subjection to God's word, and the natural will into subjection to his grace. They wanted no licentiousness, but a freedom filled with the contents of faith and ruled by the Holy Scriptures. Inasmuch however as history, by reason of our human sinfulness and its constant attendant error, proceeds only through contradictions and extremes, the Protestant subjectivity degenerated gradually into its corresponding abuse of division, wilfulness, and contempt for all and every sort of authority. This has taken place especially since the middle of the last century, theoretically in Rationalism, and practically in Sectarism. Rationalism has formed itself into a learned and scientific system, particularly among the Germans, a predominantly theoretic and thinking people, and in the Lutheran church; but as to substance is at hand also in other European countries, and in North America, under various forms, such as Arminianism, Deism, Unitarianism, Universalism, and infects to some extent the theology even of the orthodox denominations themselves. As is well known, it places private judgment above the Bible itself, and receives only as much of this as it can grasp with the natural understanding. The system of sect and denomination has sprung more from the bosom of the Reformed church, and owes its form to the practical English nationality. In North America, under the banner of full religious freedom, it has reached its zenith; but strictly it belongs, in actual power, to Protestant Christianity as a whole, which is sadly wanting in unity, outward

visible unity, the necessary fruit of that which is inward, as much as works are of faith. Sects, it is true, do not commonly reject the Bible; rather they are stiff for it, in their own way; but it is in opposition to all history, and in the imagination that they alone, of all the world, are in possession of its true sense. Thus their appeal to the Bible still runs out at last practically into rationalism; since they always mean *their own sense* of the Bible, and so at bottom follow their private judgment. Finally, the principle of subjectivity shows itself in this, that since the Reformation the different spheres of the world, the sciences, arts, politics, social life, have separated themselves more and more from the church, and pursue their own way independently of its authority. In such wide spread rationalism and division into endless party interests, and the consequent weakness of the church over against the world, with its different spheres, especially over against the State, we have presented to us only a bad, diseased subjectivity, which forms just the opposite pole to the stiff, hard objectivity of degenerated Catholicism.

Against this evil state, however, reacts the deeper life of the church, which can never be extinguished. In opposition to Rationalism, arises with victorious conflict a new evangelical theology, which now satisfies the demands of science together with those of faith; while the misery of sect comes more and more into painful consciousness, and calls forth a longing for church union. At the same time, the question concerning the nature and form of the church presses evidently into the foreground. The deeper although by no means prevailing tendency of the time is thus towards objectivity; not however indeed towards that which had place in the Middle Ages; for history can as little flow backwards, as a stream up hill; but to an objectivity which shall be enriched with all the experience and manifold living fulness of the age of subjectivity, to a *higher reconciliation* thus, (*vermittelte Einheit*) of *Protestantism and Catholicism*, without their respective errors and diseases. These struggles of the present, when brought to due ripeness, will issue doubtless in a far more glorious reformation than any the church has yet seen; and then will open a new age, in which also all spheres of the world shall return, in a free way, into league with the church, science and art join to glorify the name of God, and all nations and powers, according to the word of prophecy, be given to the saints of the Most High.