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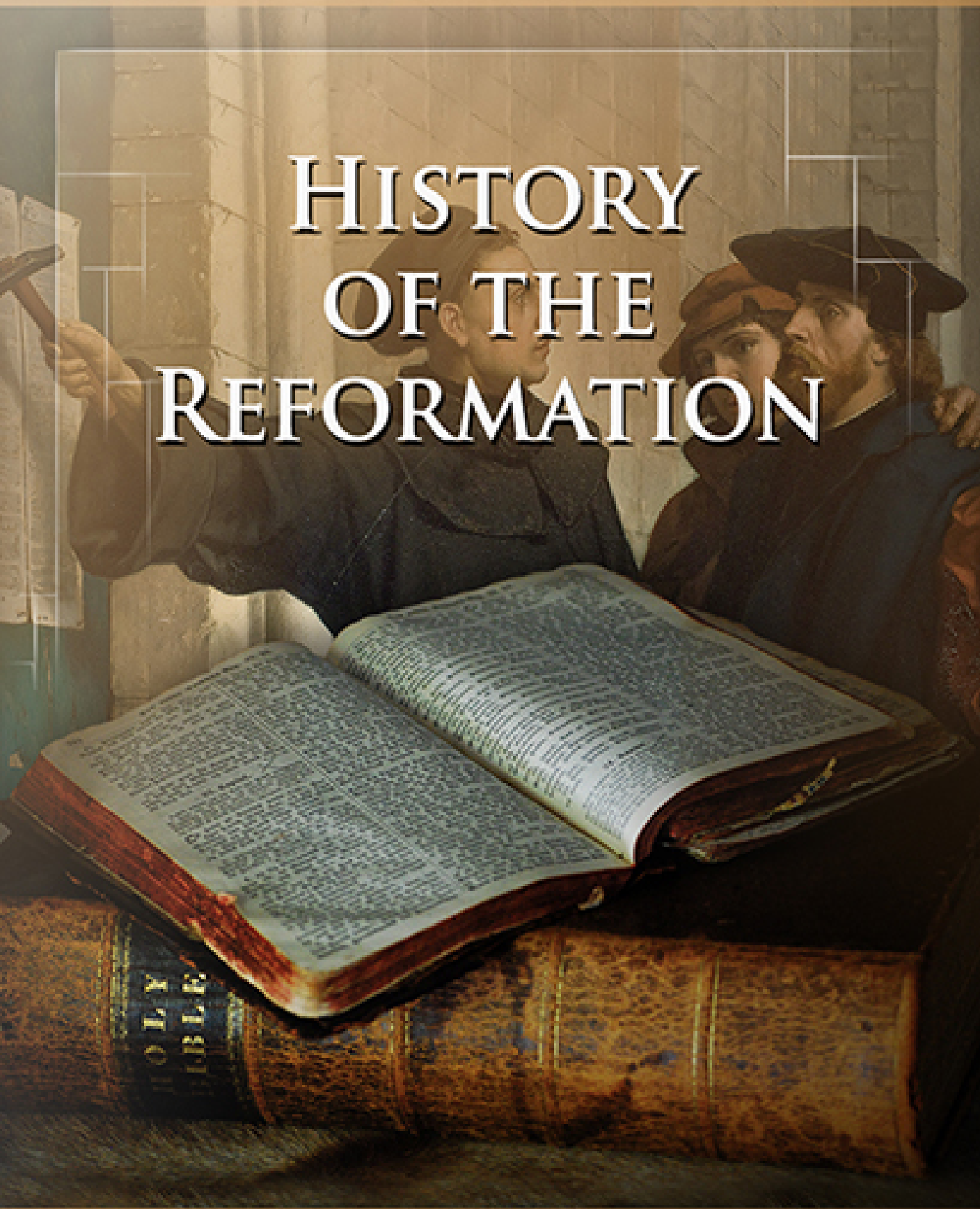

J. H. Merle D'Aubigne

History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (0000)

Information about this Book

Overview

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About the Author

Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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Contents

by J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, D.D.,

President of the Theological School of Geneva, and Vice President of the Societe Evangelique.

Volumes I., II., and III., translated by H. White, B.A. Trinity College, Cambridge, M.A. and Ph. Dr. Heidelberg, and carefully revised by the author, who has made numerous important additions not to be found in any other translation; vol. IV. the english original by Dr. Merle D'Aubigne', assisted by Dr. White; and vol. V. translated by Dr. White, and carefully revised by the author BSI

Biblical Studies Institute Hermosa, South Dakota

J'appelle accessoire, l'estat des affaires de coste vie caduque et transitoire. J'appelie principal, le gouvernement spirituel auquel reluit souverainement la providence de Dieu.—*Théodore de Bèze.*

By accessory, I mean the state of affairs in this frail and transitory life; by principal, the spiritual government in which God's providence rules supreme.—*Theodore Beza.*

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Preface to Oliver & Boy's edition revised by the author

I have been often requested to publish an English Edition of the first three volumes of the Reformation, carefully revised and corrected by myself, and which might thus become a Standard Edition in Great Britain.

I have acknowledged the necessity of this task. In fact, without overlooking the merit of the different English translations of this work; even the best, I am compelled to say, have failed in conveying my thoughts in several passages; and in some cases this inaccuracy has been of serious consequence. I will mention one instance.

At the end of the year 1844, I received several letters from the United States, informing me that, besides 75,000 copies of my History put in circulation by different American booksellers, *The American Tract Society* had printed an edition of 24,000 copies, which they sold through the instrumentality of more than a hundred hawkers (*colporteurs*), principally in the *New Settlements,* which no bookseller can reach, but whither the pope ceases not from sending active emissaries; they added, that the committee of this society, composed of different denominations, and among others of Episcopalians and Baptists, were rendered uneasy by certain passages in my history, and had thought proper, with the best intentions, either to modify or retrench them; they informed me, lastly, that two Presbyterian synods, astonished at these changes, had publicly accused the Society of mutilating the work, and that there had arisen (wrote one of the most respectable men in the United States, himself a Presbyterian, and not a member of the Society) so violent a discussion, that "the Committee will inevitably be ruined unless *you* interfere to rescue it."

I thought it my duty to do so without sacrificing, however, any of the facts or and of the opinions I had put forth. And the following is one of the means to which I had recourse:

On closely examining the inculpated passages, I found that in some cases those which had offended either the Episcopalians or the Baptists, were incorrectly rendered in the English translation which the New York Committee had before it.

Thus in vol. 3 book 9 chap. 4, the Committee had been stopped by this expression: "It is the *Episcopal authority* itself that Luther calls to the bar of judgment in the person of the German primate."

The Committee consequently altered this phrase, and wrote: "It is *the authority of Rome itself* that Luther calls to the bar of judgment in the person of the German primate."

This is no doubt an important alteration, but the first translator had himself changed my idea. The French reads thus: "*C'est l'episcopat tout entier que Luther traduit 'a sa barre dans la personne de primat germanique.*" (vol. 3 p. 34, 1. 8.)

There is no question of episcopal authority, but *of the whole body of the Roman-catholic bishops*. I pronounce neither for nor against the episcopal authority: I am content to point out an inaccuracy in the translation.

Here is another instance:

In vol. 3 book 9. chap. 11, the New York Committee were stopped by this expression, which they found in the English translation: "The ancient structure of the *Church* was thus tottering;" and they substituted, "The ancient structure of *Popery* was thus tottering."

In the French there occurs neither *Church* nor *Popery*, but simply: "*l'ancien 'edifice s"ecroulait*." (Vol. 3. p. 150, last line.) Nevertheless the Committee's rendering is preferable. It is not the Church of Christ that was tottering, since the gates of hell cannot prevail against it: it is the Papal Church, as is evident from the context.

Most of the other passages changed by the American Society were no doubt originally translated with tolerable fidelity; but it was sufficient that some were not so, to make the author feel the necessity of a new edition carefully revised by himself.

This I have done in the present Edition. I have revised this translation line by line, and word by word; and I have restored the sense wherever I did not find it clearly rendered. It is the only one which I have corrected. I declare in consequence, that I acknowledge

this translation as the only faithful expression of my thoughts in the English language, and I recommend it as such to all my readers.

Farther, I have in this Edition made numerous corrections and additions, frequently of importance. Some facts have been related that have not been introduced else where, so that it will thus have an indisputable authority over all others.

It is almost unnecessary for me to add, that if the other translations appear to me somewhat defective, I accuse neither the publishers nor the translators: this is an inevitable disadvantage when the work is not revised by the author. There are some publishers in particular with whom I have had pleasing intercourse, and whom (I feel compelled to say) I am delighted in reckoning among the number of my friends.

I seize the present opportunity of adding, that neither the evangelical Episcopalians nor the Baptists can find any thing in this work contrary to their principles. Certainly I am a Presbyterian; certainly this work is opposed to a dogmatic and sectarian Episcopacy,-to the Episcopacy of Leighton, Scott, J. Newton, Simeon, and Cecil,-which, faithful to the Word of God, desires to lay no other foundation than Jesus Christ.

There is an error with regard to the Baptists that has misled many individuals. They have imagined that the Anabaptists in the time of the Reformation and the Baptists of our day are the same sect. But they are two sects that, both in doctrine and history, are as distinct as possible. When the English Baptists separated from the Episcopal establishment in the sixteenth century, they did so without being in any way influenced by the Anabaptists of the Continent. The example of the latter would rather have prevented their separation.

I should here render justice to the evangelical Episcopalians and Baptists of Great Britain. They have acknowledged (at least I have heard nothing to the contrary) that the work of God narrated in these volumes had a claim to their entire sympathy. Christianity is neither an abstract doctrine nor an external organization. It is a life from God communicated to mankind, or rather to the Church. This new life is contained essentially in the person of Jesus Christ, and it is given to all those who are united to him, whether Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, or others. For this union is effected neither by the baptism of adults, nor by the episcopacy, nor by general

assemblies; but solely by faith in certain Divine facts that Christ has accomplished, his humble incarnation, his atoning death, and his glorious resurrection. From this intimate union of Christians with Christ there necessarily results and intimate union of Christians with all those who receive the life of Christ; for the life that is in one is the life that is in all; and all together, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, &c., form not a simple plurality, but also, and chief of all, a living and organic unity.

The history of the Reformation is the history of one of the greatest outpourings of the life that cometh from God. May this work contribute to unite always more and more all those who are partakers of that Divine life.

—signed

J. H. Merle D'Aubigné

Eaux Vives, near Geneva, *February* 1846

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Preface

The history of one of the greatest revolutions that has ever been accomplished in human affairs—of a mighty impulse communicated to the world three centuries ago, and whose influence is still visible on every side—and not the history of a mere party, is the object of my present undertaking. The history of the Reformation is distinct from that of Protestantism. In the former every thing bears the mark of a regeneration of the human race—of a religious and social change emanating from God himself. In the latter we too often witness a glaring degeneracy from first principles, the struggles of parties, a sectarian spirit, and the traces of petty individualities. The history of Protestantism may have an interest for Protestants only; the history of the Reformation addresses itself to all Christians, or rather to all mankind.

An historian may choose his subject in the wide field presented to his labors: he may describe the great events which have changed the aspect of a people or of the world; or on the other hand he may record that tranquil onward course of a nation, of the Church, or of mankind, which usually succeeds every great social change. Both these departments of history are of vast importance; yet public interest has ever been more strongly attracted to those epochs which, under the name of revolutions, have given fresh life to a nation, or created a new era for society in general.

It is a transformation of the latter kind that, with very humble powers, I have undertaken to describe, not without a hope that the beauty of the subject may compensate for my own deficiencies. The term "revolution," which I here apply to it, has of late fallen into discredit with many individuals, who almost confound it with revolt. But they are wrong: for a revolution is merely a change in the affairs of men,—something new unfolded (revolutus) from the bosom of humanity; and this very word, previous to the end of the last century, was more frequently used in a good than in a bad sense: a happy, a wonderful revolution, were the terms employed. The Reformation

was quite the opposite of a revolt: it was the re-establishment of the principles of primitive Christianity. It was a regenerative movement with respect to all that was destined to revive; a conservative movement as regards all that will exist for ever. While Christianity and the Reformation established the great principle of the equality of souls in the eyes of God, and overthrew the usurpations of a haughty priesthood that assumed to place itself between the Creator and his creature, they both laid down this fundamental rule of social order, that all power is derived from God, and called upon all men to "love the brotherhood, fear God, and honor the king."

The Reformation is eminently distinguished from all the revolutions of antiquity, and from most of those of modern times. Political changes—the consolidation or the overthrow of the power of the one or of the many—were the object of the latter. The love of truth, of holiness, of immortality, was the simple yet mighty spring which set in motion that which I have to describe. It indicates a forward movement in human nature. In truth, man advances—he improves, whenever he aims at higher objects, and seeks for immaterial and imperishable blessings, instead of pursuing material, temporal, and earthly advantages. The Reformation is one of the brightest days of this glorious progress. It is a guarantee that the new struggle, which is receiving its accomplishment under our own eyes, will terminate on the side of truth, in a purer, more spiritual, and still nobler triumph.

Primitive Christianity and the Reformation are the two greatest revolutions in history. They were not limited to one nation only, as were the various political movements that history records; but their influence extended over many, and their effects are destined to be felt to the utmost limits of the world.

Primitive Christianity and the Reformation are one and the same revolution, brought about at different epochs and under different circumstances. Although not alike in their secondary features, they are identical in their primary and chief characteristics. One is a repetition of the other. The former put an end to the old world; the latter began the new: between them lie the Middle Ages. One is the [2]
parent of the other; and although the daughter may in some instances bear marks of inferiority, she had characters that are peculiarly her own.

One of them is the rapidity of its action. The great revolutions that have led to the fall of a monarchy, or wrought an entire change in a political system, or which have launched the human mind on a new career of development, have been slowly and gradually prepared. The old-established power has long been undermined: one by one its chief supports have given way. This was the case at the introduction of Christianity. But the Reformation, at the first glance, seems to present a different aspect. The church of Rome under Leo X appears in the height of its power and glory. A monk speaks—and in one half of Europe this mighty glory and power crumble into dust. In this revolution we are reminded of the words by which the Son of God foretells his second advent: "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be."

Such rapidity of action is inexplicable to those who see in this event nothing more than a reform; who look upon it simply as an act of critical sagacity, which consisted in making a choice among various doctrines—rejecting some, preserving others, and arranging those which were retained so as to combine them into a new system.

But how could a whole people, how could many nations have so promptly executed this laborious task? How could this critical examination have kindled the fire and enthusiasm so necessary for great and above all for sudden revolutions? The Reformation, as its history will show, was altogether different. It was a new outpouring of that life which Christianity brought into the world. It was the triumph of the greatest of its doctrines,—of that which animates all who embrace it with the purest and most intense enthusiasm,—the doctrine of Faith, the doctrine of Grace. Had the Reformation been what many Romanists and Protestants of our days imagine it,—had it been that negative system of negative reason which, like a fretful child, rejects whatever is displeasing to it, and disowns the grand truths and leading ideas of universal Christianity, it would never have crossed the threshold of the schools, or been known beyond the narrow limits of the cloister or perhaps of the friar's cell. But with Protestantism, as many understand the word, it had no connection. Far from being an emaciated, an enervated body, it rose up like a man full of strength and energy.

Two considerations will account for the suddenness and extent of this revolution. One must be sought in God; the other among men. The impulse was given by an invisible and mighty hand: the change accomplished was the work of Omnipotence. An impartial and attentive observer, who looks beyond the surface, must necessarily be led to this conclusion. But as God works by second causes, another task remains for the historian. Many circumstances which have often passed unnoticed, gradually prepared the world for the great transformation of the sixteenth century, so that the human mind was ripe when the hour of its emancipation arrived.

It is the historian's duty to combine these two great elements in the picture he presents to his readers. This has been my endeavour in the following pages. I shall be easily understood so long as I am occupied in investigating the secondary causes that concurred in producing the revolution I have undertaken to describe. Many perhaps will understand me less clearly, and will even be tempted to charge me with superstition, when I ascribe the completion of the work to God. It is a conviction, however, that I fondly cherish. These volumes, as well as the motto I have prefixed to them, lay down in the chief and foremost place this simple and pregnant principle: God in History. But as it is a principle that has been generally neglected and sometimes disputed, it may be right for me to explain my views on this subject, and by this means justify the method I have adopted.

History can no longer remain in our days that dead letter of events, to the detail of which the majority of earlier writers restricted themselves. It is now understood that in history, as in man, there are two elements—matter and spirit. Unwilling to resign themselves to the task of producing a simple recital of facts, which would have been but a barren chronicle, our great modern historians have sought for a vital principle to animate the materials of past ages.

Some have borrowed this principle from the rules of art: they have aimed at being ingenuous, exact, and picturesque in description, and have endeavoured to give life to their narrative by the characteristic details of the events themselves.

Others have sought in philosophy the principle that should fertilize their labors. With the relation of events they have interwoven extended views, instructive lessons, political and philosophical truths; and have given animation to their narrative by the idea they have

drawn from it, and by the theory they have been able to associate with it.

Both these methods, undoubtedly, are good, and should be employed within certain limits. But there is another source to which, above all, we must look for the intelligence, spirit, and life of past ages; and this source is Religion. History should live by that life which belongs to it, and that life is God. In history, God should be
[3] acknowledged and proclaimed. The history of the world should be set forth as the annals of the government of the Sovereign King.

I have gone down into the lists whither the recitals of our historians have invited me. There I have witnessed the actions of men and of nations, developing themselves with energy, and contending in violent collision. I have heard a strange din of arms, but I have been nowhere shown the majestic countenance of the presiding Judge.

And yet there is a living principle, emanating from God, in every national movement. God is ever present on that vast theater where successive generations of men meet and struggle. It is true he is unseen; but if the heedless multitude pass by without caring for him because he is "a God that dwelleth in the thick darkness," thoughtful men, who yearn for the very principle of their existence, seek for him the more ardently, and are not satisfied until they lie prostrate at his feet. And their inquiries meet with a rich reward. For from the height to which they have been compelled to soar to meet their God, the history of the world, instead of presenting to their eyes a confused chaos, as it does to the ignorant crowd, appears as a majestic temple, on which the invisible hand of God himself is at work, and which rises to his glory above the rock of humanity.

Shall we not recognize the hand of God in those grand manifestations, those great men, those mighty nations, which arise, and start as it were from the dust of the earth, and communicate a fresh impulse, a new form and destiny to the human race? Shall we not acknowledge him in those heroes who spring from society at appointed epochs—who display a strength and activity beyond the ordinary limits of humanity—and around whom, as around a superior and mysterious power, nations and individuals unhesitatingly gather? Who has launched into the expanse of time, those huge comets with their fiery trains, which appear but at distant intervals, scattering among the superstitious crowd abundance and joy, calamity and

terror? Who, if not God? Alexander sought his origin in the abodes of the Divinity. And in the most irreligious age there has been no eminent glory that has not endeavoured in some way or other to connect itself with heaven.

And do not those revolutions which hurl kings from their thrones, and precipitate whole nations to the dust,—do not those wide-spread ruins which the traveller meets with among the sands of the desert,—do not those majestic relics which the field of humanity presents to our view; do they not all declare aloud—a God in history? Gibbon, seated among the ruins of the Capitol, and contemplating its august remains, owned the intervention of a superior destiny. He saw it—he felt it: in vain would he avert his eyes. That shadow of a mysterious power started from behind every broken pillar; and he conceived the design of describing its influence in the history of the disorganization, decline, and corruption of that Roman dominion which had enslaved the world. Shall not we discern amidst the great ruins of humanity that almighty hand which a man of noble genius—one who had never bent the knee to Christ—perceived amid the scattered fragments of the monuments of Romulus, the sculptured marbles of Aurelius, the busts of Cicero and Virgil, the statues of Caesar and Augustus, Pompey's horses, and the trophies of Trajan,—and shall we not confess it to be the hand of God?

What a startling fact, that men brought up amid the elevated ideas of Christianity, regard as mere superstition that Divine intervention in human affairs which the very heathens had admitted!

The name given by ancient Greece to the Sovereign Ruler shows it to have received primeval revelations of the great truth of a God, who is the principle of history and the life of nations. He was styled Zeus, or the life-giver to all that lives,—to nations as well as to individuals. On his altars kings and people swore their solemn oaths; and from his mysterious inspirations Minos and other legislators pretended to have received their laws. This is not all: this great truth is figured forth by one of the most beautiful fables of heathen antiquity. Even mythology might teach a lesson to the philosophers of our days; and I may be allowed to establish the fact, as perhaps there are readers who will feel less prejudice against he instructions of paganism than of Christianity itself. This Zeus, this supreme Ruler, this Eternal Spirit, this life-giving Principle, is the father of

Clio, the muse of history, whose mother is Mnemosyne or Memory. Thus, according to the notions of antiquity, history combines a heavenly with an earthly nature. She is the daughter of God and man; but, alas! the purblind philosophy of our proud age is far from having attained the lofty views of that heathen wisdom. Her divine paternity has been denied; and the illegitimate child now wanders up and down the world, like a shameless adventurer, hardly knowing whence she comes or whither she is going.

But this God of pagan antiquity is only a faint reflection, a dim shadow of Jehovah—of the Eternal One. The true God whom the Hebrews worship, willing to impress on the minds of all nations that he reigns continually upon earth, gave with this intent, if I may venture the expression, a bodily form to this sovereignty in the midst of Israel. A visible theocracy was appointed to exist once upon the earth, that it might unceasingly remind us of that invisible theocracy which shall for ever govern the world.

[4] And see what luster this great truth (God in history) receives under the Christian dispensation. What is Jesus Christ, if he be not God in history? It was this discovery of Jesus Christ which enabled John Muller, the greatest of modern historians, fully to comprehend his subject. "The Gospel," said he, "is the fulfillment of every hope, the perfection of all philosophy, the interpreter of every revolution, the key to all the seeming contradictions in the physical and moral world: it is life and immortality. Since I have known the Saviour, every thing is clear to my eyes: with him, there is no difficulty I cannot solve."

Thus wrote this eminent historian; and is not this great truth, that God has appeared in human nature, in reality the keystone of the arch,—the mysterious link which binds all earthly things together, and connects them with heaven? History records a birth of God, and yet God has no part in history! Jesus Christ is the true God of man's history; it is shown by the very meanness of his advent. When man would raise a shelter against the weather—a shade from the heat of the sun—what preparation of materials, what scaffolding and crowds of workmen, what trenches and heaps of rubbish!—but when God would do the same, he takes the smallest seed that a new-born child might clasp in its feeble hand, deposits it in the bosom of the earth, and from that grain, scarcely distinguishable

in its commencement, he produces the stately tree, under whose spreading branches the families of men may find a refuge. To effect great results by imperceptible means—such is the law of God.

In Jesus Christ is found the most glorious fulfillment of this law. Christianity has now taken possession of the gates of every people. It reigns or hovers over all the tribes of the earth, from the rising to the setting sun; and even a skeptical philosophy is compelled to acknowledge it as the social and spiritual law of the world. And yet what was the commencement of this religion, the noblest of all things under the vault of heaven—nay, in the "infinite immense" of creation? A child born in the smallest town of the most despised nation in the world—a child whose mother had not what even the most indigent and wretched woman of our towns possesses, a room to shelter her in the hour of travail—a child born in a stable and cradled in a manger! In this, O God, I acknowledge and adore thee!

The Reformation recognized this divine law, and was conscious of fulfilling it. The idea that "God is in history" was often put forth by the reformers. We find it particularly expressed by Luther in one of those homely and quaint, yet not undignified similitudes, which he was fond of using that he might be understood by the people. "The world," said he one day at table with his friends, "is a vast and magnificent game of cards, made up of emperors, kings, princes, etc. The pope for many centuries beat the emperors, kings and princes. They yielded and fell before him. Then came our Lord God. He dealt the cards: he took the lowest (Luther) for himself, and with it he beat the pope, that vanquisher of the kings of the earth. This is the ace of God. As Mary said: 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.'"

The epoch whose history I am desirous of retracing is important for the present generation. When a man becomes sensible of his own weakness, he is generally inclined to look for support in the institutions he sees flourishing around him, or else in the bold devices of his imagination. The history of the Reformation shows that nothing new can be made out of things old; and that if, according to our Saviour's expression, we require new bottles for new wine, we must also have new wine for new bottles. It directs man to God as the universal agent in history,—to that Divine word, ever old by the eternal nature of the truths it contains, ever new by the regenerative

influence that it exerts; which purified society three centuries ago, which restored faith in God to souls enfeebled by superstition, and which, at every epoch in the history of man, is the fountain whence floweth salvation.

It is singular to witness a great number of men, agitated by a vague desire of believing in something fixed, addressing themselves in our days to the erroneous Catholicism of Rome. In one sense this movement is natural; religion is so little known among them, that they think it can only be found where they see it inscribed in large letters on a banner that time has rendered venerable. I do not say that all Catholicism is incapable of bestowing on man what he stands in need of. I think we should carefully distinguish between Catholicism and Popery. The latter, in my opinion, is an erroneous and destructive system; but I am far from confounding it with Catholicism. How many worthy men, how many true Christians, has not the catholic church contained within its bosom! What important services were rendered by Catholicism to the existing states of Europe, at the moment of their formation—at a period when it was still deeply impregnated with the Gospel, and when Popery was as yet only hovering over it like a faint shadow! But we live no longer in those days. Strenuous endeavors are now making to reunite Catholicism with Popery; and if catholic and christian truths are put forward,
[5] they are merely to serve as baits to draw us into the nets of the hierarchy. We have nothing, then, to hope for on that side. Has Popery renounced one of its observances, of its doctrines, or of its assumptions? Will that religion which was insupportable in former times be less so in ours? What regeneration has ever been known to emanate from Rome? Is it from a pontifical hierarchy, overflowing with earthly passions, that can proceed the spirit of faith, hope, and charity, which alone can save us? Is it an exhausted system, that has no vitality for itself, which is everywhere in the struggles of death, and which exists only by external aid, that can impart life to others, or animate Christian society with the heavenly inspiration that it requires?

Will this yearning of the heart and mind that begins to be felt by many of our contemporaries, lead others to apply to the new Protestantism which in many places has succeeded the powerful teaching of the apostles and reformers? A great vagueness in doctrine prevails

in many of those reformed churches whose first members sealed with their blood the clear and living faith that inspired them. Men distinguished for their information, and sensible to all the beauties which this world presents, are carried away into strange aberrations. A general faith in the divinity of the Gospel is the only standard they are willing to uphold. But what is this Gospel? that is the vital question; and yet on this, either they are silent, or else every one answers it according to his own opinions. What avails it to know that God has placed in the midst of all nations a vessel containing a remedy for our souls, if we care not to know its contents, or if we do not strive to appropriate them to ourselves? This system cannot fill up the void of the present times. While the faith of the apostles and reformers appears everywhere active and effectual for the conversion of the world, this vague system does nothing—enlightens nothing—vivifies nothing.

But let us not be without hope. Does not Roman-catholicism confess the great doctrines of Christianity,—God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—Creator, Saviour, and Sanctifier, who is the Truth? And does not this vague Protestantism hold in its hand the Book of Life, which is sufficient for doctrine, correction, and instruction in righteousness? And how many upright souls, honored in the eyes of men, lovely in the sight of God, are there not to be found among those subjected to these two systems? How can we forbear loving them? How not ardently desire their complete emancipation from human elements? Charity is infinite: it embraces the most distant opinions, to draw them to the feet of Christ.

Already there are indications that these two extreme opinions are moving nearer to Christ, who is the center of truth. Are there not some Roman-catholic churches in which the reading of the Bible is recommended and practiced? And what steps has not Protestant rationalism already made! It did not spring from the Reformation: for the history of that great revolution will prove it to have been an epoch of faith. But may we not hope it is drawing nearer to it? Will not the might of truth go forth to it from the Word of God, and will not this rationalism be transformed by it? Already we often witness in it a religious feeling, inadequate doubtless, but still it is a movement towards sound doctrine, and which may lead us to hope for some definite progress.

But the new Protestantism and the old Catholicism are of themselves irrelevant and ineffectual. We require something else to restore the saving power to the men of our days. We need something which is not of man—something that comes from God. "Give me," said Archimedes, "a point without the world, and I will lift it from its poles." True Christianity is this point, which raises the heart of man from its double pivot of selfishness and sensuality, and which will one day turn the whole world from its evil ways, and make it revolve on a new axis of righteousness and peace.

Whenever religion has been under discussion, there have been three points to which our attention has been directed. God, Man, and the Priest. There can only be three kinds of religion upon earth, according as God, Man, or the Priest, is its author and its head. I denominate that the religion of the priest, which is invented by the priest, for the glory of the priest, and in which a sacerdotal caste is dominant. By the religion of man, I mean those various systems and opinions which human reason has framed, and which, being the offspring of human infirmity, are consequently devoid of all healing power. The term divine religion I apply to the truth such as God gave it,—the end and aim of which are the glory of God and the salvation of man.

Hierarchism, or the religion of the priest—Christianity, or the religion of God—Rationalism, or the religion of man, are the three doctrines that divide Christendom in our days. There is no salvation, either for man or for society, in the first or in the last. Christianity alone can give life to the world; and, unhappily, of the three prevailing systems, it is not that which has the greatest number of followers.

Some, however, it has. Christianity is operating its work of regeneration among many Catholics in Germany, and no doubt in other countries also. It is accomplishing its task with greater purity and vigor, in my opinion, among the evangelical Christians of Switzerland, France, Great Britain, and the United States. God be praised that these individual or social regenerations, produced by
[6] the Gospel, are no longer such rarities as must be sought in ancient annals.

It is the history of the Reformation in general that I desire to write. I purpose tracing it among different nations, to show that the

same truths have everywhere produced the same results, and also to point out the diversities arising from the dissimilar characters of the people. It is especially in Germany that we find the primitive type of this reform; there it presents the most organic developments,—there chiefly it bears the character of a revolution not limited to a particular nation, but which concerns the whole world. The Reformation in Germany is the fundamental history of the reform—it is the primary planet; the other reformations are secondary planets, revolving with it, deriving light from the same source, forming part of the same system, but each having a separate existence, shedding each a different radiance, and always possessing a peculiar beauty. We may apply the language of St. Paul to these reforms of the sixteenth century: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory." (1 Corinthians 15:41.) The Swiss Reformation occurred at the same time as the German, but was independent of it. It presented, at a later period especially, some of the great features observable in that of Germany. The Reformation in Great Britain recommends itself in a very especial manner to our attention, from the powerful influence which the churches of that country are exerting at the present day over all the world. But recollections of ancestry and of refuge—the remembrance of struggles, suffering, and exile endured in the cause of the Reformation in France, lend a particular attraction, in my eyes, to the French reform. Considered by itself, and with respect to the date of its origin, it presents beauties that are peculiarly its own.

I believe the Reformation to be the work of God: his hand is everywhere visible in it. Still I hope to be impartial in retracing its history. I think I have spoken of the principal Roman-catholic actors in this great drama—of Leo X, Albert of Magdeburg, Charles V, and Doctor Eck, for instance, more favorably than the majority of historians have done. On the other hand, I have had no desire to conceal the faults and errors of the reformers.

As early as the winter of 1831-32, I delivered a course of public lectures on the epoch of the Reformation. I then published my opening discourse. These lectures were a preparatory labor for the history I now lay before the public.

This history is compiled from the original sources with which a long residence in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, has

rendered me familiar; as well as from the study, in their original languages, of the documents relating to the religious history of Great Britain and other countries. As these sources will be pointed out in the course of the work, it will be unnecessary to enumerate them here.

I should have wished to authenticate the various portions of my work by many original notes; but I feared that if they were long and frequent, they would prove a disagreeable interruption to my readers. I have therefore confined myself to such passages as seemed calculated to give them a clearer view of the history I have undertaken to write.

I address this history to those who love to see past events exactly as they occurred, and not by the aid of that magic glass of genius which colors and magnifies, but which sometimes also diminishes and changes them. Neither the philosophy of the eighteenth nor the romanticism of the nineteenth century will guide my judgments or supply my colors. The history of the Reformation is written in the spirit of the work itself. Principles, it is said, have no modesty. It is their nature to rule, and they steadily assert their privilege. Do they encounter other principles in their paths that would dispute their empire, they give battle immediately. A principle never rests until it has gained the victory; and it cannot be otherwise—with it to reign is to live. If it does not reign supreme, it dies. Thus, at the same time that I declare my inability and unwillingness to enter into rivalry with other historians of the Reformation, I make an exception in favor of the principles on which this history is founded, and I firmly maintain their superiority.

Up to this hour we do not possess, as far as I am aware, any complete history of the memorable epoch that is about to employ my pen. Nothing indicated that this deficiency would be supplied when I began this work. This is the only circumstance that could have induced me to undertake it, and I here put it forward as my justification. This deficiency still exists; and I pray to Him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, to grant that this humble work may not be profitless to my readers.

J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, D. D.

Eaux-Vives, near Geneva, August 1835.