

ARTICLE VI.

CONDITION OF THEOLOGY IN HOLLAND, ESPECIALLY IN THE REFORMED CHURCH.*

By B. B. Edwards, Professor at Andover.

EVERY attentive observer of the religious state of Central and Northern Europe, must be struck with the radical differences which distinguish the theology of Holland from that of Germany. At first view, these differences seem to be unaccountable. The two nations have the same origin; they speak dialects of the same original tongue; they are near neighbors, separated in part only by a river; both have fought the battles of Protestantism, and have, alike, a precious martyrology; both look back with gratitude to the same restorers of learning, the Erasmuses and Reuchlins of the sixteenth century; the students of both countries have been distinguished for laborious industry and accurate investigation; eminent classical and oriental scholars adorn the annals of both; yet how unlike, in many respects, have been, and still are, the theological characteristics of Germany and Holland.

In Germany, the discussion has often turned on the question between Christianity and absolute skepticism. A party, within the church, have attempted to destroy, not only the church system, but Christianity, and even religion itself. This party has not been weak or small. It has had bold, able, and energetic leaders, unable or unwilling to build up theology and the church, but keen in detecting defects, vigilant in seizing on the favorable moment to overthrow an established truth, adroit in imposing their sophisms on the susceptible hearts of the young. Their system is that of negations; their weapons are sarcasm and jeers; they would not reform Christianity, but abolish it, as ill adapted to the times, obsolete, like the ritual system of the Old Testament.

Again, the diversity of views among those who call themselves orthodox, and who may be regarded as real friends of the church, is almost infinitely greater in Germany than in Holland. Not taking into the account the Roman Catholics, and small sects like the Swedenborgians, what wide and diversified modes of thinking

* The greater portion of the following article is translated or condensed from a paper by Dr. Ullmann of Heidelberg, in the "Studien u. Kritiken," 3d No., 1844, and from the "Kirchliche Statistik," by Dr. Julius Wiggers of Rostock, Vol. II. 1843, pp. 253—296. A few of the first pages are original.

prevail! It is sometimes said that the old rationalism is dead or dying; but it is not so. It still has unwearied and learned champions; it is strongly rooted in a large mass of educated mind. There are still those who make human reason the ground and criterion of religious truth, though they do not consider the Kantian philosophy the basis, but rather rely upon the Hegelian or some other system.

In a general point of view, the German theologians may be divided into three parties, the followers of Hegel, those of Schleiermacher, and the old orthodox party. Yet these are mingled with each other to such an extent, that it is difficult to determine the position of many individuals. It is well known that the Hegelian party include men of decided orthodox views, as well as those of the wildest rationalism. The nomenclature, which has been adopted from the French Convention, but partially designates the actual divisions which exist.

The individuals who were strongly affected by Schleiermacher, and who adopt his views more or less, have little bond of union among themselves. Some of them decidedly incline to the old Lutheran symbols; others are vacillating between orthodoxy and rationalism. In the writings of some, a loose criticism abounds; in others, an historical faith is firmly vindicated.

Even those theologians who take their position, with great decision, on the Church doctrines, are not altogether harmonious. The orthodoxy of some is more exclusive than that of others. Some lean to what is common in the several Protestant Confessions; others adhere tenaciously to the identical words of their peculiar creed; with some, the understanding is predominant; the faith of others has a strong mystical element; a portion fiercely contend for the union of church and State; another part are ready to deny, altogether, the right of the State to interfere in ecclesiastical matters. In short, an exact classification of German theologians seems to be out of the question.

It follows, necessarily, from the above statements, that there is a boundless mental activity in Germany. Society, in certain aspects of it, is stirred to its foundations. Intellectual tranquillity is a condition but little known. Discussion provokes discussion, controversy succeeds controversy, while the common ground, on which theologians in former days stood, has become very narrow. In Holland, on the contrary, the intellectual world has never been thoroughly aroused. The changes, that have occurred, have been, for the most part, gradual and silent. Adherence to the ancient

standards has been the motto in science and literature, as well as in theology. The multiform disputes, which have rent in sunder the theologians on the other side of the Rhine, if known, have been regarded with indifference or contempt.

Now why this marked difference between the two nations? What causes have produced so wide a diversity? Without attempting to answer this question fully, we may hint at two or three considerations which have had a decided influence.

The intellect of Holland has had, in some important respects, a far wider scope for development than that of Germany. Holland has enjoyed a greater degree of civil freedom than perhaps any continental country. It has often been the asylum of the exiled republican, as well as of the persecuted Protestant. Political and Christian liberty owes it a great debt. The intellect of the country has here had free vent. The mind, that might have been plunging into the mysteries of the divine decrees, or of the absolute reason, has been strenuously occupied in resisting Spanish or French aggression. But in Germany, with the exception of a brief interval after the battle of Jena, there has been no such outlet. The political press is an insignificant affair. A severe censorship has restrained every liberal tendency. Dungeons and immense standing armies have been ready to crush the first uttered aspiration in favor of liberty. Of course, the mind, shut out from this great field, has turned, with convulsive ardor, to theology and abstract science. The more narrow the arena for discussion, the wilder the movement within that arena. The despotisms of Germany are accountable for no small share of the infidelity that has given a bad eminence to the country. Paulus and Wegscheider and Strauss are the natural growth of an irresponsible monarchy. The mind will assert its freedom in some direction; coerced on one point, it will violently break out on another.

Again, Holland had, for many years, a wide and prosperous foreign commerce. Much of the intellectual activity of the people flowed in the channels of trade. Commercial, not mental, wealth, became the object of eager enterprise. On the other hand, the greater part of Germany is shut out from commercial activity. No large rivers or bays intersect her principalities. An important branch of her enterprise has centered at the Leipsic fair; her merchants are dealers in books. She has lived within herself.

Again, Holland is one country, compact, homogeneous, acknowledging one sovereign, with common ancestral recollections, with peculiar and strongly marked features of character. The stu-

dent at Gröningen does not differ much from his brother at Leyden. A close family resemblance is everywhere manifest. But Germany is a labyrinth of States and kingdoms, in some respects, indeed, subject to a central power, but too weak and insulated to figure on the field of politics, if opportunities were allowed; yet willing and able to meet anywhere in intellectual conflict. In other words, the numerous political divisions of Germany are a source of active mental rivalry. Bavaria enters the lists against Saxony; Dresden provokes Munich; the university of Göttingen is the foster-child of its government; while Prussia strenuously endeavors to make Berlin outshine, not only its German competitors, but all European universities. This unceasing rivalry among fifteen or twenty great literary establishments, is a principal cause of the activity of the German mind, and of the great diversities of opinion which prevail. Each university must have its literary organ and its distinguishing peculiarities. Each, by its adventurous theories, or its sound opinions in science and literature, must be an honor to the government which maintains it.

We may mention the predominant religious creeds, as another cause of the different condition of theology in the two countries. Holland is Calvinistic, Germany is Lutheran. In the tenets of the Genevan reformer, there is more logical exactness, more scientific discrimination, and consequently more permanent elements, than in the formulas of Luther and Melancthon. On some important points, the Saxon reformers hesitated and retracted. This wavering tendency somewhat characterizes their Symbols. The door is left open for doubt, discussion and change. Calvin's theory, on the contrary, as it has been finely said,¹ is symbolized by the two great natural objects on which he daily looked. It has the stedfastness and rugged form of the Alps, and the transparency of the Lake of Geneva. This decided, unyielding theory has had, doubtless, great effects on the Dutch character. It has imparted its own fixedness to its disciples.

Again, some of the eminent philologists of Holland have chosen to hold little intercourse with their German cousins. Wytttenbach was a most strenuous adversary of the Kantian metaphysics. Van Heusde studied them, as he informs us, but found no rest to his spirit till he had wholly escaped from their influence. This disinclination to German learning, is seen also in the department of philology, as the latter, in the German mode of handling it,

¹ The late Rev. J. Henry Bancroft.

would bear some decided traces of the former. The same thing would necessarily hold good of theology and religion. Non-intercourse in one field of labor would hardly tend to an active sympathy in another. The Holland theologian, witnessing the lamentable effects of the boundless skepticism, that has characterized much of the theology of Germany, binds closer to his heart the beloved and venerable words of his Symbols.

Another cause of the difference in question may be found in the practical character of the inhabitants of Holland. The Dutch are a sensible, sober, cautious people, with little inclination for metaphysical and mystical extravagance. The Germans are strongly inclined to search for the abstruse, the profound, the most secret causes and relations of things. In this inward, ideal world, they often become estranged, to their own detriment, from the world of fact. Hence, while the Germans, like a gifted, aspiring, intellectual youth, have been constantly absorbed in the attempt to reach the highest ideals in Christian knowledge and the religious life, running from system to system, examining an immense amount of intellectual productions with all their wonderful phenomena, without accomplishing thereby anything really perceptible or tenable for the benefit of the outward life,—the Dutch, in this respect more like Englishmen, and in the manner of safe and quiet men, have put up a strong and comfortable house, not being very careful to ascertain whether the foundation is laid in the profoundest depth, but rather anxious to possess a dwelling sufficiently firm and well-contrived,—a defence against the storms of life. Thus, both for the foundation and completion of the ecclesiastical polity, the Dutch have firmly adhered to a theology which has been tried by long use. They have not thrown anything away, without repeatedly and anxiously inquiring whether it might not still be useful; they have not readily received anything, though ever so splendid and imposing, of whose worth and stability they had not ocular proof; more particularly they have not abandoned that ground which had been found by the experience of centuries and the personal observation of innumerable believers, to be the only tenable one. For these reasons, they have opposed, more or less exclusively, the great movements of German theology, so far as these have originated in philosophy, regarding philosophical investigations themselves as mere experiments. On the other hand, as a natural result, their own theology would be more employed in the investigation and culture of known truths, and of facts which have come down from former

times. Avoiding everything revolutionary, this theology would assume the character of a quiet, moderate progress, a kind of historical continuity. With this is naturally associated the fact, that the Dutch have prosecuted with special zeal and success, not so much systematic divinity in its speculative tendencies, as historical and exegetical theology. For them, as good Protestants, the investigation and exposition of the Scriptures would be the central point of divinity;—a field which supplies, in one aspect, the charms of philological inquiry, and in the other, by its results, the best and richest materials for popular use.

In these general characteristics,—the quiet adherence to the Christian foundation, the calm, devout handling of that which has come down from former times, the predominant interest in exegetical study and the thorough attachment to the practical,—all the Holland theologians of name agree; so far, taken as a whole, they stand on common ground. Some of them are indeed inclined, without forming any special party, to make wider investigations within this common field, either in the historical department, like the two fundamental ecclesiastical investigators of Holland, Kist and Royaards,¹ or in the exegetical and practical, like the excellent Van Hengel, or in the entire circuit of scientific theology, like the worthy Clarisse. Yet within this common territory, we may distinguish some very definitely marked movements, which are similar, indeed, to the opposing tendencies of German theology, but which differ from them by peculiar modifications.

Leaving out of view such as have adopted no definite party organization, like the individuals just named, or such as have no scientific importance, the theological world in Holland may be distinguished into three classes or tendencies. Like a connected chain, they are so far joined together that each later movement is conditioned on the earlier; yet they are not related to each other like the wider evolutions of one and the same principle, but like opposing principles which are held together only by a very broad and general Christian basis. The first movement or tendency has no very sharply defined characteristic, but in the course of time, has been unfolded, as it were, out of itself, unobserved; the second is very strongly marked and is sternly opposed to the first; while the third, in its attempts to effect a reconciliation between the other two, has come into conflict with both.

I. By a fundamental law of the State, dated Aug. 24, 1815.

¹ Editor of the instructive "Archives for Netherlands Church History."

freedom of opinion and worship, equality in civil and political rights and equal access to all offices and honors, were granted to all religious sects. Still the reformed, or Calvinistic church, in accordance with the decisions of the synod of Dort, is the religion of the government. It is the faith of the majority of the people. It has in fact the character of a State religion, and it is the only one which is taught in the higher State institutions and in the theological faculties of the universities. It consists almost wholly of those who speak the Dutch language. It includes, however, twenty Walloon or French Churches, four English and two Scotch Presbyterian churches, and one German church.

For centuries, the people of Holland held fast to their ancient faith at the cost of the blood of many martyrs. At length, however, by manifold influences from abroad, by the effects of English deism, French materialism, and German rationalism, in connection with the political revolutions which affected every department of the religious community, by the usual results of a prosperous commerce and the influx of wealth, the ancient orthodoxy had been decidedly weakened. At the end of the last century, the flame of piety, though still burning, had lost much of its original warmth and brightness. The quiet and unimpassioned national temperament, indeed, prevented that wide departure from the truth, which would seek to array itself against the Symbols, or involve the church in heated controversies. The change was altogether gradual. It was not the darkness of entire unbelief. The people still retained their church-going habits and a reverence for sacred usages. Even the sermons, in their close adherence to the letter of the Bible, contributed to maintain the connection with the orthodox creeds. Under these superficial forms, not a little living piety was concealed. In the upper classes, the decline of religion and orthodoxy was more marked. Many discontinued attendance upon public worship; others exhibited a merely cold compliance with the outward forms. Such, however, did not sink down to the low level of German rationalism. The sermons did not degenerate into mere dry, moral essays. The theology might be described as a lax supranaturalism, mingled in individuals with rationalistic sympathies and tendencies. It was a kind of rational orthodoxy. Its course, in some respects, was like that of the earlier Leipsic and Tübingen schools (Storr, Ernesti, Morus). Its studies were specially exegetical, critical and apologetical, in contrast with a negative rationalism, or philosophical modes of inquiry. It regarded Christianity as a set of

ethical rules, as a summary of articles of faith, or as an expansion of the knowledge of divine things which we gain by reason. Every thorough explanation of the Scriptures, in order to show their agreement with the doctrines of the church, was decried as mysticism. In sermons, the doctrines of native depravity, regeneration, the necessity of the influences of the Holy Spirit, when not denied or passed by, were not placed in the fore-ground, while the dignity and worth of human nature were brought out in strong relief.

At the same time, the ministry of the Reformed church, with all their interest in exegetical theology, did not strive for a profound scientific acquaintance with the contents of the Bible, in order to show, in particulars, its indwelling truth and necessity; but they satisfied themselves with a learned examination and a careful exposition of single passages. So, also, in consequence of the narrowness of its principle of interpretation, it failed to place any special value on a fuller development of the meaning of the Scripture, in its bearing on the doctrines of the church. Rather has it always been inclined to discover in such a development that which disturbs and corrupts Christianity. Still, on the contrary, it did not come out against such a mode of inquiry with sharp criticism and polemic zeal; but preferred, in its peculiarly moderate and forbearing manner, to pass by or round anything which appeared to be antiquated, or to soften the roughness with which it seemed to come into conflict with apostolic authority.

A natural consequence of this latitudinarian mode of interpreting the church Symbols, was a doctrinal amalgamation with the other Confessions, especially with that of the Evangelical church. Under the name of *verdraagsamkeit*, a habit of toleration was introduced, which did not recognize any of the differences and limits of particular evangelical communions, while it laid its own church doctrines, as an offering, on the altar of a general Christianity. The Reformed Church harmonized so closely with its old opponents, the Remonstrants, that the latter seemed to differ from the former only by the want of all symbolical books, catechisms, and church formularies. Preachers of the Reformed church exercised their office in the churches of the Remonstrants, while the latter appeared in the pulpits of the Reformed congregations. The same brotherly intercourse was also held with Mennonites and Lutherans. The inquiry was even loudly made, whether all the different evangelical parties in Holland might not be merged in a single church. With this tendency to make all articles of faith

general and indefinite, were connected changes, which were introduced at the commencement of the present century, by the church authorities, in relation to public worship and the constitution of the church, and which began with the introduction of evangelical hymns. There had been used previously, in public worship, only a version of the Psalms, sufficiently prosaic, to which twelve other church hymns were added, namely, the Songs of Mary, Simeon, Zacharias, etc. At the instance of the Synod of North Holland, in 1796, all the provincial synods appointed a Commission from their number to prepare an evangelical hymn-book for the use of the churches. This was everywhere introduced in Jan. 1807, and was received in general with great approbation. Only in some villages of Friesland, and in the city of Vliessingen, was opposition publicly aroused; this was put down by church censure. Those who, in the silence of the return of the prince of Orange, in 1813, expected the removal of the hymn-book, were disappointed by the statement, which followed in the name of the prince, and which decidedly approved of the hymns. The contents of these hymns were by no means in opposition to the doctrines of the church; but that to which the adherents of the ancient church took exception, was the novelty and strangeness of any collection of hymns. Afterwards, the General Synod introduced other changes. Several ordinances followed for the abolition of some liturgical regulations, which related to the baptismal and eucharistic festivals. The public confirmation of newly admitted members of the church, a religious service on the last day of the year, and a festival in honor of the Reformation, were introduced. There was also a mitigation of church censures, in respect to the immoralities of the laity. The most important change, however, and which was effected by the synod of 1816, respected the regulation, which candidates for the ministry were required to sign at their examination, and which required a strict and unchangeable subscription to the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Articles of the Synod of Dort. This was altered into the following indefinite and ambiguous formula: "We, the undersigned, admitted by the provincial church authorities of * * * to the Christian ministry in the Netherlands Reformed Church, hereby sincerely affirm, that we will carefully consult the interests of Christianity in general and of the Netherlands Reformed communion in particular; that we sincerely adopt and heartily believe the doctrines which, *in accordance with the holy word of God*, are contained in the Symbols of the Netherlands Re-

formed church; that we will zealously teach and practise the same, and will devote ourselves, with all earnestness, to the promotion of religious knowledge, Christian morals, order and unity; while, by this subscription, made with our own hands, we engage to submit to all superiors and to the decisions of the lawful church authorities, in case our conduct may be found to be contrary to any part of this declaration and of this promise." It was this innovation especially on which the opposition of the strictly orthodox, which had been ripening in secret, grounded its complaint, that the Netherlands Church had apostatized from its ancient faith, and on account of which, it demanded a return to the old church doctrines.

We may here remark, in passing, that the literary organ of this school, i. e. of the majority of the Dutch church, is the "Theological Contributions", which, after the manner of the English journals, supplies very instructive articles on new theological works. "So far as the spirit of this journal is concerned," says an intelligent writer, "it rests on the grammatico-historical exposition of the New Testament, and takes unwearied pains to build on the basis of a rational supranaturalism. Of the German works which it now and then notices, those of Bretschneider, Winer, and Fritzsche receive special commendation." The boast of this journal, as well as of the school to which it belongs, is exegesis. In this department, it would seek to reestablish the old fame of Holland.

II. While this indifference to the doctrines of the church was increasing, while the church itself, silently or openly, was departing from its creed on many points, and while practical religion was losing all its fervor, a new school sprung up with determined energy, at once assuming the exclusive character of a party. Its true origin is undoubtedly to be traced to the necessities of the times, or rather to the wants of the soul. The individuals, who first gave an impulse to this movement were William Bilderdyk¹ and his two scholars, the converted Portuguese Jew, Isaac da Costa of Amsterdam, a lawyer and also a poet, and Abraham Cappadose, a physician at the Hague. The two last named, particularly, exhibited in their various writings, with great emphasis and in all its strictness, the doctrine of election which was

¹ The modern poetic literature of Holland lost its master in Bilderdyk. He died in 1831. The depth and copiousness of his talents, his mastery of the language, the warmth of his conceptions, the riches of his invention—are qualities, some one of which may be found in this or that living poet; they are united in the degree in which they were found in Bilderdyk, in no one." *Sup. Cons. Lex.* XXXII. 1840.

sinking into oblivion, and contended for the abstract predestination, maintained by the Synod of Dort. The educated part of the community was first affected by their writings and lectures. The movement then rapidly extended among the body of the people. The views of the party were first publicly preached in Ulrum, an insignificant village. They then spread into the provinces, particularly Gröningen, Drenthe, North Brabant and Holland. Among its earnest advocates were five preachers, De Cock, Scholte, Brummel Kamp, Van Rhee and Meerburg. The opposition assumed a definite shape, when De Cock and Scholte, in 1833, arrayed themselves against an ordinance, by setting aside the church hymns as Siren songs, and by complaining that the whole church had apostatized from the truth. On the thirteenth of Oct. 1834, a separation from the Reformed church was publicly effected. The new community, numbering, as its adherents reported, 80,000 persons, was organized under the name of the "true reformed church"; another account represents the communicants as only 4000, and these, almost without exception, from the lower and uneducated classes. In 1838, a church was organized by Scholte in Utrecht, under the name of the "Christian separate church." Other churches were soon established elsewhere. They adopted the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the canons of the Synod of Dort as the expression of their faith. The ministers, elders and deacons were chosen by the church. The ordination of a minister was preceded by an examination, when he was required to subscribe the symbolical books, "since they agree in all things with the word of God." Such members of the church as had the gift of expounding the Scriptures, might preach, with the consent of the officers of the church. The laws in relation to marriage, the watch over the moral conduct, and household religious instruction, bore the stamp of great strictness.

These decided movements could not, of course, escape the animadversion of the national church or of the civil government. The National Synod separated the true reformers from their communion, laid the doctrines under a kind of interdict, deposed the preachers, who had openly espoused the party, and ordered the schismatics to vacate the church edifices which they held, as these were the property of the national church. The government confirmed these decisions, and ordered the military to lend their assistance in executing them when it was necessary. In two places, detachments of curiassiers were stationed to exclude

the dissenters from the church. This precaution gave a character and consequence to the new doctrines, in the view of their supporters, and even of those, who were before indifferent, which they had not possessed. Instead of public worship in the sanctuary, numerous private meetings were held in the fields, in the woods, in barns, where the pastor addressed and animated his persecuted flock. The laws now interposed their authority. The meetings of the "true reformers" were broken up, on the ground of a statute which was in force when the French had possession of the country, and which forbade the assembling of more than twenty persons for a religious purpose, without the sanction of the government. This persecution was directed particularly against the preacher Scholte. In spite of his own defence and of able influential friends, he was punished with fine and imprisonment.

Already, numerous petitions had been presented to the king, in which the adherents of the new movement, appealing to the express words of the fundamental law, "freedom of religious opinion is granted to all," and "the public exercise of any form of religious belief cannot be impeded, except where the peace of society is disturbed," prayed for the right and freedom of enjoying these privileges. After the first sentence of the civil tribunal, and before the court to which the defendants had appealed had decided the case, the king, on the 13th of Dec. 1835, published a cabinet rescript, in which he expressed the great pain which the new schism had occasioned him, authoritatively required the dissenters to return into the bosom of the church, and refused their request to be authorized to maintain public worship so long as they did not submit the regulation of the same to his approval. Immediately the court of appeal at the Hague affirmed the judgment of the lower court, and, by a circular of the war minister, different detachments of the army received orders to render instant and efficient aid to the local authorities in carrying out the measures which had been decided upon against the "true reformers." Since the latter were not all frightened by these movements, but rather proceeded in their meetings as before, resort was again had to the courts. On one occasion, when Scholte and seven of his accused friends, left the court-house at Utrecht, they were attacked by an infuriated multitude. The house in which Scholte took refuge was assailed, and in spite of the presence of a company of soldiers, the doors and windows were broken in, and further excesses were with difficulty prevented. All such things,

however, only increased the courage and spirit of the "true reformers," who now began to regard themselves as martyrs to the pure faith. Their number increased, distinguished men defended them, and the government were made to feel that they could not violently suppress them.

The following observations upon the nature of this movement are made by Dr. Ullmann: "As we are here concerned only with that which is properly theological, we will advert simply to the germ of this movement, not to the rind that is partly sour and unfit to be eaten, and in which, besides, some things are found which do not at all belong to it. The essential, theological point, however, the object after which the party is striving, is to reëstablish in its entire compass, in its full strength, the old Dort orthodoxy. On the way to this object, they have sometimes proceeded in an excited and tumultuous manner, and have not always used philosophical means; still, this rather concerns the partial development and church usage; and on this point alone has it been laid hold of by the highest ecclesiastical and political authorities of Holland, since these authorities, altogether unwilling to place difficulties in the path of the orthodox on account of their creed, have labored merely to promote the unity and quiet of the church. We are far from regarding this theological movement as something merely fantastic, or an affected prejudice in favor of what is old, or mere obstinacy, or at all as hypocrisy; we rather find it, under the relations just specified, and in an entirely natural form, in men that have spiritual and deep-felt necessities; and we recognize its objective justification through the entire ecclesiastical and theological history of Holland. We see that what the party in question strives after is only a simple thing. These men, in whom theology is not merely the learning which has been wont hitherto to be so predominant, search for religion, and in this religion not that which in its main features is *theistic*, moral and abstract, but what is individual and living, that which tends to seize strongly and permanently upon the inmost feelings of man. They decidedly elevate above everything else those fundamental doctrines of Christianity, which, current in the church from the beginning, have formed especially the doctrinal basis of the evangelical, the reformed churches. Thus, as laymen, they have engaged, not in a critical, analytical process; they have rather followed the necessities of their own hearts; above all else, they have longed for something to quiet a troubled conscience, for the certainty of the forgiveness of sins, and of expiation; and these

they have found in a manner perfectly satisfying in the old church doctrine of the vicarious atonement of the Son of God. A theology, which would in the first place still investigate, and which might possibly lead to a solution of difficulties, or to mere negations; a theology always occupied with that which is *about to be*, subjected to the fluctuations of the spirit of the age, was to them a nullity, an abhorrence. They would have a firm creed and current once for all, a theology, that, arising from the church, should serve only and alone to uphold the doctrine of the church; they did not content themselves with the belief of the last ten years in divine revelation, held with tolerable uniformity, but they summoned all men to reestablish a sharply defined church orthodoxy. Hence they strenuously urged the Dort Confession, which had not been given up in the church of Holland, and they believed that the church could retain safe and unimpaired her sacred treasures of faith, only by binding all her servants strongly on this Confession. Now we cannot refuse to justify this feeling. The church doctrine has certainly the right, acknowledged in the church, of being taught and vindicated; a reaction against the earlier state of things, threatening mischief by its theological *indifferentism* and lukewarmness, might be salutary; it was good also to remember what treasures of faith and of thought are contained in the doctrines of the church, and which, accordingly, should not be neglected, or be cast overboard unnoticed. The party were far from wishing to bring back church orthodoxy as a mere external thing, as a mere law. Its genuine representatives, especially its original authors, who took no part in the subsequent schism, lived in fact, with their whole heart and soul, in the doctrines of the church, and endeavored, partly by means of spirited and persuasive writings, again to bring near and implant in the bosoms of their contemporaries the contents of the church creed.

Yet, notwithstanding all these things, this party has labored and still labors under defects that cannot be mistaken. In addition to a course of conduct objectionable in several respects, which it, as a party, has carried out, the following things cannot be denied: It is a very narrow limit in which to confine the thinking and life of the Christian. Not only Christian faith, but the form in which it is presented, is, with the adherents of this movement, made ready once for all; and as, on the one hand, its adherents misapprehend what is human, temporary and imperfect in the expression of the symbols of which the men of the 16th and 17th centuries were the authors, so, on the other hand,

they mistake the demand of our times, which is to exhibit the articles of faith, in themselves unchangeable, in a form which springs from our own hearts and corresponds to our necessities; on the position of this party the principle of freedom and progress is lost;—a principle which not only lies at the foundation of the evangelical church, but which dwells unalienably in Christianity; a principle, without which a fresh and happy development of theology is inconceivable. Consequently, with all the zeal of this party for the church, they neglect, at the same time, that power—a sound culture of theology—without which the duration of a truly living church, especially an evangelical one, is not possible. This is shown in the fact, that in the Journals, successively originated by them, “The Voices of the Netherlands,” “The Olive Branch,” and “The Reformation,” the practical and the edifying widely predominate, while that which is properly scientific is altogether subordinate, yea in a measure, it plays a melancholy part. But if the evangelical church must be always so constituted, that a sound Christian theology and its free movement will have, throughout its entire organization, the adequate room and a corresponding interest, then a movement, which either neglects this scientific development, or hinders its vigorous action, can never be considered, whatever good it may do elsewhere, as the pure expression of the evangelical and Protestant principle and spirit.”

III. Since in the way just described, one of these parties, with all its zeal for theological learning, is deficient in a fresh religious and Christian life, as well as in doctrinal precision, while the other party, with its burning zeal for the church and the faith of the fathers, is lacking in free and fundamental views of science, the necessity occurred of a third party, to stand between the other two, whose proper office would be to combine, and bring into a higher unity, the spirit of inquiry belonging to one of the parties, and the inward, living piety of the other, and so avoid the defects of both. Thus, while at the same time, the elements of the modern German theology cooperated to excite and direct inquiry, and under the influence of the spirit which had been awakened by Professor Van Heusde, the active Christian Platonist,¹ there arose what has been commonly called the Grö-

¹ Philip Van Heusde was born at Rotterdam in 1778, studied under Wyttenbach at Leyden, and was appointed Professor of Ancient History, Eloquence and Greek Literature at the university of Utrecht, in 1803. He died, while on a journey, at Geneva, on the 23th of July, 1839. He was an enthusiastic stu-

ningen School. Its object was an attempt to effect a reconciliation between the other two parties ; still it does not anxiously seek to accord with the methods of thinking adopted by them, or to bring together, mechanically, a third party from the elements of the other two ; but it rests on a principle of its own, and proceeds with the fresh energy of a living development. This movement does not exhibit the fleeting indefiniteness of the old rational supranaturalism, nor the exclusive party character of the opposing orthodox school. At the same time, as it is occupied especially with the department of science, we may well name it a school, though one of its representatives protests against this appellation, because a sharply defined, sectarian mode of thinking cannot be affirmed of it. Its organ is the "Truth in Love," (*Waarheid in Liefde*). Its fundamental principle is, that the Christian life is the life of communion with God, as this life was exhibited in its untroubled purity and creative fulness in Christ, the God-man, and from him,—enlightening, sanctifying, redeeming,—spreads over the entire circle of humanity, for the edification of the people of God. Its position is that of Christian science, so far as it vindicates freedom of discussion and the use of criticism, while both these are employed on the fundamental basis, not merely of a religious, but of a specifically Christian sentiment.

The more exact distinctions, however, between the Gröningen theology and the opposing schools are these. It differs from the older supranaturalism particularly in the fact, that without neglecting exegesis, it, at the same time, makes use of a philosophical method, i. e. it seeks for the internal grounds of the Christian truths ; it treats Christianity more in its completeness, as a new principle of the entire life of man, than as a mere rule or doctrine. Accordingly, it does not find the central point of Christianity in rules or doctrines, but in the person of Christ,¹ in the person of the God-man, fully revealing the Divinity, and thus redeeming and atoning. From this central point, it seeks to represent Christianity as a living, organic whole, and by this mode of representation, it does not confine itself merely to the Scriptures, though in no manner does it put them into the back-ground ; but, placing it-

dent of Plato. Among his writings are, *Specimen Criticum in Platonem, Initia Philosophiæ Platoniciæ, Scholæ Socraticæ*, 4 vols., *Characterismi Principum Philosophorum Veterum*, and *Schola Polybiana*. His life has been published by his nephew, J. A. C. Rovers, Utrecht, 1841.

¹ To put doctrines in the place of the person of our Lord, was, according to the Gröningen school, an invention of neology, at the close of the eighteenth century.

self on a more general historical position, it includes, at the same time, the whole developed history of the church, in order to show how, in this history, the living influences, proceeding from Christ, have been proved and confirmed; and how, thereby, many things have been made clear to us, which we should not so fully understand by the representations of the Gospel, which rather presents germs and suggestions.

With the recent, high-toned orthodoxy, the Gröningen school has come, as it seems, into more earnest conflict than with the older, more quiet school. It stands in special opposition to the former from the fact, that though it recognizes, in a higher degree, the importance of history for the Christian faith and theological science, yet it can regard no point in the historical development as fixing a standard for all future times. On the other hand, it maintains, that every period, awakened to its spiritual wants, will always start anew the problem how it shall take up, in its *own* manner, the substance of the Christian faith (its integrity being unimpaired), and how it shall, in a corresponding manner, express its *own* stages of growth. Accordingly, it does not bind our mode of comprehending the faith to the formulas of church Confessions. In opposition to symbolism, it adopts the principle of freedom, of which it makes actual use in relation to several modes of representation adopted by the church. Still, it is to be remarked, that the Gröningen school by no means assume a negative or hostile attitude towards the church doctrines on essential points, but on the basis of Christian theism, it recognizes everything which we regard as fundamental in the church doctrines, namely, the godhead of Christ, native depravity, the positive character of sin, the need of the atonement, the effecting of redemption and expiation through Christ, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the church and its means of grace, the Christian eschatology, with the exception, so far as it is known to us, of only a single important point—the doctrine of satisfaction—which it actively opposes in the form adopted by the church.

If we now briefly recapitulate, it will appear, that in Holland, at the close of the last century, and in the first two *decenniums* of the present, theology was in a quiet state, still relying on the ancient faith, but yet in silence deviating from it more or less consciously; the theologian was Christian in his motives, and at the furthest remove from aught unchurchlike in his feelings; but still a mere learned interest predominated, while he was wanting in

fresh, living, spiritual activity.¹ On the other hand, since the second decennium of the present century, a decidedly *regressive* party has arisen, animated by great energy of religious feeling and regard for antiquity, very zealous for the faith of the fathers, yet looking, in a manner quite exclusive, only to the stability and absolute unity of the church—not to evangelical freedom, and that growth of science which rests upon it. But in the course of the third decennium, both parties, but particularly the last, are met by a living, *progressive* movement, striving for a new development, which is to rest on a Christian basis, mingling the interests of the church and science, treating the doctrines, which lie at the foundation of the Christian life, with spirit and learning; while, by means of the evangelical freedom which it has strenuously defended, it seeks to clothe these doctrines in new, higher, and more vital forms. A clear, practical understanding is characteristic of the first party; a warm, excited imagination, fervent feeling, and a will energetic and even violent, are predominant in the second party; the third strives for an harmonious union of thought and feeling, for a theology that can satisfy the entire man. In accordance with its leading principle, the orthodox party stands on the position of Calvinistic *Particularism*, while the two other parties represent the Christian *Universality*, with the exception, that the specific peculiarity of Christianity is brought out by the Gröningen school more prominently, while it also connects the attainment of salvation more definitely to the person and redeeming work of Christ. The only contest, of a very decided type, that has occurred, was between the *regressive* and the *progressive* parties, in relation to the binding nature of the doctrines contained in the Symbols of the Netherlands church. Between the older Holland theology and the modern Gröningen school, there is, properly, no opposition, but only a difference, and a difference of that nature as will again form, in various degrees, a transition from the one to the other.

The preceding sketches will make the positions which we advanced at the head of this article, obvious to all, viz. That the entire condition of theology in Holland is incomparably more simple than that of the German theology. "The three parties, that have been characterized, stand on *Christian* ground; all acknowl-

¹ These are the words of Ullmann. That they express a somewhat too favorable view of the state of piety and orthodoxy, in the Dutch Reformed Church, there can be no doubt. The best authorities agree in representing that a sad degeneracy, both in religious feeling and opinion, had been long going on.

edge in Christianity, both historically and doctrinally, objective truth, and a divine revelation; all, in the last resort, would draw their Christian knowledge from the Scriptures; they desire an evangelical church in its purity and primitive character;¹ they would have it independent, and as a source of living, moral energy for the present times. The difference between them is, consequently, rather general than specific; it lies rather in the *how* than in the *what*; it has reference more to the means, by which the end should be reached, than to the end itself. This simpler, and, with all its differences, more homogeneous condition of things is very well adapted to establish not only for the combatants generally, a more quiet and a safer position, but to give to the leaders of the movement a more definite consciousness of the nature of the reformation that is sought. If these relations are in fact such as have been indicated, the new school, while in contrast with the old, it possesses a fresher life and in a measure new materials, and while in contrast with the strict orthodox party, it represents and employs the principle of a free, scientific development, it may very well, without presumption, cherish the feeling that it has a reformatory mission, because it has the necessary marks,—viz. its being grounded in the Gospel and in the essential doctrines of the church, joined with a more active progress, the holding on to the old and everlasting foundations, and the manifest inclination to use the elements of culture which exist in the present time.”

We subjoin a few facts in relation to the condition and modes of worship of the Reformed church.² The whole number of churches in the Reformed communion is 1229, of preachers 1449, with a population of 1,608,000. South Holland contains the largest number of souls belonging to this communion, viz. 322,000; Brabant, the smallest, 44,000. The three universities, Leyden, Utrecht, and Gröningen, contained in 1840, 1399 students, or one

¹ These assertions are to be taken with some abatement in relation to a considerable part at least of the first party, or the national church.

² There are in Holland 32,000 Mennonites, 5000 Remonstrants (Arminians), 66,000 Lutherans, 2000 members of smaller Protestant sects, 878,000 Roman Catholics, of whom three or four thousand are Jansenists, and 51,000 Jews, divided into one hundred and eighteen societies. Most of the Catholics are in the two provinces of Brabant and Holland. The Lutherans are divided into two parties, the smaller numbering a population of 12,000. The Lutherans are favored with more privileges than are conceded to any other class of dissenters. The Remonstrants have no creed whatever. Their preachers are educated at the Athenaeum at Amsterdam. Their number is diminishing. In 1809, they had thirty-four churches; now they number but twenty. They have exhibited strong tendencies towards Polish unitarianism.

student to 1626 of the population. About one half of the whole number were at Leyden. One third were studying theology; one third, law; four fifteenths, medicine and surgery; and one fifteenth, philology, philosophy and mathematics.

Public worship in the national church is here, as it is everywhere, an image of the character of the nation. No bell sounds to call the worshippers to the house of God. There are bells, indeed, but they are not rung for this purpose, even among the Catholic communities, at least where they are in the minority of the population. There is preaching twice on the Sabbath in the country, and still oftener in the city; in the forenoon from a text selected by the preacher; in the afternoon from the Heidelberg catechism. Four times a year the Lord's Supper is celebrated. On the Sunday before (in the cities a sermon is preached on one of the secular days), a preparatory exercise or examination is held. On the afternoon of the communion Sabbath, a remembrance, so-called, or a thanksgiving service is held. Baptism is administered before the whole church only on Sunday; in the larger churches every Sabbath, in the smaller on the first Sabbath in every month. In addition to the three great festivals, Good Friday and Ascension day are observed with religious services. Public worship commonly begins, where there are organs, (for their use has not been prohibited in the Reformed church, and they are found in many country congregations), with a voluntary on the organ. Then the reader recites a chapter of the Bible, selected by the preacher. All the passages which are read in the churches, and all the texts of sermons, must be taken from the authorized version—the State Bible of 1637. The preacher immediately upon his entrance into the church ascends the pulpit, awaits the reading of the chapter, and at its close makes a short prayer. He then gives out a psalm or hymn, from the psalm-book newly edited in 1773, or from the hymn-book introduced in 1807. After the singing, which is commonly monotonous and very imperfectly performed, there commonly follows an address, or some prefatory remarks, in relation to special events, or to the general circumstances of the times, and which point to the contents of the sermon. The preacher then offers a prayer, which, on account of its usual length, is called the great prayer. It is not framed according to any prescribed form, but the matter is left entirely to the preacher, who adapts it to the theme to be discussed. Then follows the singing of a short psalm or hymn,

which is succeeded by the reading of the text and the sermon. This still retains, in many places, the old analytical divisions, first, the explanation of the text and context, word for word, exegetically; secondly, the exposition, in which the truths contained or implied in the text, are developed; and thirdly, the application. Still, in recent times, a greater freedom has prevailed. In accordance with the example of the eminent pulpit orator, Van der Palm, the synthetical mode of composing sermons has come into use, which often departs both from the letter and spirit of the Scriptures, thus abandoning the old method, without substituting anything better in its place. The sermons are generally long, and weary by their repetitions. It is customary to expound, for the afternoon service, whole books of the Bible in connection. This is called the biblical exercise. The sermon is succeeded by an extempore prayer, a hymn or a psalm, and the apostolic benediction, the organ playing while the assembly depart. Hence it will be seen that great liberty is allowed to the preachers in respect to the use of the liturgical and church formularies. The first liturgy was an extract from the Latin of Johann Von Lasco; the same was introduced in 1566, as the Heidelberg Catechism, amended in accordance with the Liturgy of the Palatinate, and in this form, it has come down to the present time. It consists of a number of church and family prayers, of several formularies for the baptism of children and adults, for the Lord's Supper, the excommunication of unworthy members of the church, the restoration of penitents, the ordination of ministers, elders and deacons, and for use in sickness. These formularies, of which only those relating to baptism and the Lord's Supper are now used, are commonly appended to the Psalm-book.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper is very similar to that in the Scottish church. The preacher sits at the centre of a long, white covered table, surrounded by the communicants of all conditions, even the king himself among his subjects. The preacher breaks the bread with the words, "The bread, which we break, is the communion of the body of Christ;" then he presents it, with the words, "Take, eat," to the two guests sitting at his side, and to the two opposite, partakes himself, and then hands it to those sitting near. When all have eaten, he takes the cup, with the words, "The cup of blessing, wherewith we bless, is the communion of the blood of Christ, take, drink ye all of it," and presents it to the guests at his side. The Supper is celebrated quarterly. Previously, the pastor and one or two elders, visit the

members of the church at their houses, in order to invite them to the ordinance. Then follows a preparatory service on the Sabbath, or in the week before the communion. In order to hold private religious meetings, the permission of the pastor is necessary. They are much less frequent than formerly. Attendance on public worship and upon the Supper is very general. Some members of the church, after public service, follow the preacher to his house, in order to hear further explanations of the topics brought forward in the sermon. The Sabbath is observed with great stillness; the hum of business is hushed; all shops, offices, etc. are closed. In no country, perhaps, is the ministerial office held in so great consideration as in Holland, though the income of the clergy is very small, while it has no perquisites or immunities. The title of the preacher is *Domine*.

ARTICLE VII.

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF OUR LORD.

By E. Robinson, Prof. in Union Theol. Sem., New York.

THE great fact of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, by which "he was declared to be the Son of God with power,"¹ and in which "God fulfilled unto the children the promise made unto their fathers,"² stands out everywhere prominently on the pages of the New Testament, as one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian's faith, and the earnest of his own future resurrection. The burden of Paul's preaching was, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."³ The apostle goes on likewise strongly to affirm, that "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."⁴

Yet with all this certainty as to the great fact itself, it is no less true, that in respect to the circumstances connected with this important event, difficulties are presented to the mind even

¹ Rom. 1: 2.

² Acts 13: 32, 33.

³ 1 Cor. 15: 3, 4.

⁴ 1 Cor. 15: 14, 15.