

ARTICLE II.

CHURCH THEOLOGY AND FREE INQUIRY IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

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It is often the fact that the qualities which mark a particular period in history are seen vividly portrayed in the lives of prominent individuals. The complexion of an age is the result of great moral causes, which are working widely and effectively upon the public mind. A revolutionary idea reaches its dominant energy by slow accretions and by a gradual widening of the sphere of its influence. It agitates many minds. Some men of congenial temperament it awakens; it sets them in motion. At first they are only subjects of a general movement. They identify themselves with it, they go before it, become leaders; and while they themselves are formed by the age, they assume the direction and, through the moral and intellectual force which circumstances have imperatively demanded, give the direction to the movement upon which they were thrown, and shape it after their own pleasure. Cromwell did not originate the historic epoch of which he was the life. He was called up by the political convulsions which shook Great Britain; the spirit of the times gave the direction to his imperious will, till that will seized the reins, and the whole train of events followed his resistless dictation. This representation of an era in a man, this impression of a man upon his age, so that the times produce the individual, and the individual moulds the times, is a fact observable in all marked periods.

made respecting John Milton. "Our principal object in these remarks," he says, "has been to show, that as far as great names are arguments, the cause of Anti-trinitarianism, or of God's proper unity, is supported by the strongest. But we owe it to truth to say, that we put little trust in these fashionable proofs. The chief use of great names in religious controversy is, to balance and neutralize one another, that the unawed and unfettered mind may think and judge with a due self-reverence, and with a solemn sense of accountableness to God alone."
—*Channing's Works*, Vol. I. p. 477.

It has been often asserted that Abelard and Bernard were the representatives of two great conflicting movements of the days in which they lived. This is undoubtedly true; while it is also true that neither of them were in such a sense master spirits as to accomplish and settle, for their own age, a character which was distinctively their work. Society did not, in their lives, reach a crisis. There is no historic epoch of which either of them were artificers. Things were in a transition state. Intense agitations, bold innovations, rebellion against authority, were dominant on one side; and, on the other, aspirations and advances, a determined and irresistible progress towards an ascendancy which had been the ambition of a previous age, and was the triumph of the next. Abelard was the champion of freedom; Bernard, the champion of authority. Neither of them originated the movements with which they were identified; neither of them lived to see the full development of the ideas and doctrines which they advocated.

After the fall of the old Roman empire, there was no concentration of power like it. It was a mighty shadow in the past, the magnificent embodiment of regal supremacy, the summit of a dominion upon which the eager eyes of the ambitious potentates were fixed as the model of a kingdom which would satisfy their aspirations. It is remarkable that the only approach made, by a temporal sovereign, to a centralization of power similar to that of Rome under the Caesars, was the brief empire of Charlemagne. With a comprehensiveness of view rarely surpassed, with an executive energy almost ubiquitous he combined, under a vigorous rule, the distant and the near, established laws, promoted education, refined barbarism, advanced civilization and justice, and left a great kingdom, to be dismembered with such suddenness, that one almost feels that the life of the empire was in him, and its dissolution necessarily involved in his death. The two competitors for the sway of universal power were the church (through the pontiffs) and the German empire. The emperors claimed their right to crown the pope. The popes claimed the supremacy over the emperors. For cen-

turies the great collisions in Europe involved this contested point.

Just before the birth of Bernard, a man had died whose extraordinary powers and zeal had given vigor and success to the orthodox church movement. This man was the monk Hildebrand, afterwards Gregory VII. He was identified with the struggle of the church to rise to an independence of the secular power. Laxity of discipline, corruption of morals, the wide disparity between the type of the church in the scriptures and the existing church, had excited a strong desire for reformation. The more thoughtful among the clergy, and all who were inspired with just views of the Christian life, were aroused to seek a reformation. The line of their effort was in the direction of ecclesiasticism, the elevation of the spiritual power of the church, the enforcement of a more rigid discipline, the exaltation of the papacy to a supremacy over the secular power. This was the peculiar and characteristic church movement of the age, beginning about the middle of the eleventh century and advancing, with decisive steps, till it reached its highest point, near the end of the twelfth century. It was this advance of the papacy which Bernard promoted with all the zeal, fervor, and sanctity of his energetic mind. He was the real pope of his active years, reproducing the spirit of Hildebrand, and working out, with a temper hardly less firm, and with a genius hardly less versatile and comprehensive, the same dominant idea.

The antagonism of new and revolutionary ideas was less formidable during the life of Hildebrand than of Bernard. Abelard was only six years old when Gregory died, in 1085. He was more singularly individual and self-moved than was Bernard. The rebellion against authority, into which he threw himself, was unorganized. It had broken out fitfully. It had combined itself with other agitations, and was, therefore, not a well-defined and consolidated movement. It was rather one of the unavoidable but impulsive reactions which, even in days of the deepest mental subjection, will show themselves: the indications of the native freedom which is

an inextinguishable element of vigorous thought. The exclusion of reason from the domain of religious truth is the ultimate despotism of authority. The harmonious teachings of reason and faith lead to the highest attainments in divine knowledge. The powerful mind of Augustine had seized the scriptural notion of the dependence of intellect upon faith, without discarding the offices of reason in the defence and elucidation of the subject matter of belief. Preceding Abelard and contemporary with him till his thirtieth year, lived the celebrated Anselm of Canterbury. The beauty of his saintly life, and the splendors of his intellect, are not altogether obscured by the darkness of the days in which he flourished, or the clouds of error which then floated in the horizon of thought. With a clearness at that time unusual, he imbibed the comprehensive sentiment of Christian love as the basis and pervading spirit of the Christian life. He was a churchman in the strict sense of that word in his age; but, through the formal in his religion, there ever breathed a tone of piety caught only by listening to the inspired voices which speak to all times in the word. He was a theologian, indulging a profoundly speculative turn of mind, and bringing the acuteness of dialectic skill to the definition of the sublimest doctrines of the Christian system. The sharpness of his logic left unimpaired the simplicity of his faith and the sincerity of his affections. The grandeur of his intellect was in harmony with the simplicity of his love. His meditative life partook of the sublimity of the scenes amongst which he was born. "Brought up among the mountains," says an accomplished historian, "he fancied that heaven was above their peaks, and that there God sat enthroned, surrounded by his court of state." That such a man as Anselm should have received truth in the formal dogmas which tradition transmitted, is less remarkable than that any man should have imbibed so much of the genuine temper and life of the gospel, while involved in the dry husk of conventional symbols and restricted by the jejune ceremonials of a rigid external discipline. Notwithstanding his adoption of the Hildebrandian principles of ecclesiasticism, and the full convic-

tion with which he defended the Augustinian apothegm: "fides preedit intellectum," he was nevertheless properly a forerunner of Abelard in the application of a keen logic to the analysis and defence of truth. He was speculative, dialectic, and profound, as well as meditative, childlike, and emotional. He combined, in his life and writings, the worthy elements, which were separated in Bernard and Abelard, without running into the bigoted though enthusiastic fervors of the one, or the restless and Quixotic extravagance of the other. He united, as far perhaps as was possible at that period, a scientific theology with a devout Christianity.

These preliminary remarks will serve to introduce us, more understandingly, into the era in which, principally under the lead of the two men who have been called its representatives, the conflicting elements of thought came out in bold and relentless antagonism.

Bernard was the son of a respectable knight of Fontaigne in Burgundy. He was born in 1091. His mother consecrated him, with his five brothers and a sister, to God, in their earliest infancy. Her devout piety gave the direction to his life. At the age of twenty-two he became a monk in connection with the monastery at Citeaux, and after three years residence there, he was made abbot of a new monastery of the Cisterians, at Clara vallis or Clairvaux. It was in connection with this fraternity that his religious character was developed, and those displays of intellectual and spiritual energy were made which gave him an influence so unbounded and a reputation so enduring.

To the life and labors of a monk he was devoted with all his heart. One hardly knows whether most to admire his persuasive sincerity, or to be amazed at his intense zeal. He subjected himself to the most exhausting discipline, applied himself to prayer and study with unsubdued eagerness, and submitted, with uncomplaining diligence to a useless round of menial services, till he was reduced to a skeleton. Bernard's extraordinary power lay, not in a single endowment, but in a combination of qualities, which though often possessed singly in as great strength, are rarely seen united

so auspiciously as in him. There have been ascetics who have practised the severities of a torturing humiliation as unsparingly as he did ; but they had not the discernment which he had to distinguish true humility from the pride which wore its semblance. Others have been emaciated as he was by a pious abstinence, but few have been recalled to the use of food for the sake of an active benevolence. He united, as few of the monkish order ever did, a fervid love of the church and a burning zeal for the pope, with a genuine love of the souls of men, and a desire for the glory of God. In his eye a true priest was one who kept back nought for himself, of all the wealth that passed through his hands, whether it be the dew of heaven from above, or the vows of men that are offered unto God ; seeking not the gifts but the good of the flock, not his own glory but the glory of God. Bernard indulged in all the luxury of contemplation, which spreads its charms over mystical piety. At the same time he was earnest in an external activity, which not only checked the excess of a meditative life, but made him felt throughout the one hundred and sixty Cistercian convents, which had grown up under his influence, extended his power over magistrates and monarchs, and gave him the ascendancy in the college of the cardinals and in the palace of the Vatican. The retirement of the cloister did not dry up those sympathies which connect us with the masses of men whose hearts and natures are like our own. Bernard was a preacher, upon whose burning eloquence the multitudes hung with enthusiastic admiration. The meditations of his leafy bower, the favorite place of his retreat, came forth in the overpowering eloquence which, at once, melted and astonished his hearers. Nothing is more unlike the arid and empty formalism of monkish homilies, than the earnest, devout, and affectionate appeals of Bernard. " Serve God with love," said he to his brethren of Clairvaux, " with that perfect love which casteth out fear, which feels not the burden of the day, which counts not the cost of the labor, which works not for wages, and yet is the most powerful motive of action. When he rose to impassioned eloquence, as in his effort to pro-

mote the crusades, his voice, his gesture, his fiery sentences, his whole action, were such as to thrill his auditors, subdue their wills, break them off from their vices, inspire them with loathing of the world, hurry them into the seclusion of monachism or into the restless scenes of danger and glory opened before them in the Holy Land. And yet while pouring forth these torrents of passion, and kindling uncontrollable emotions of sorrow or zeal in the minds of sensitive or enthusiastic thousands, he retained in himself that calmness of reason which opposed itself to the wildness of frenzied excitement, and plainly declared, that the holy war demanded not saintly monks, but soldierly men. These contrasts are everywhere visible in the character of Bernard. He was a church theologian, a teacher of profound submission to the traditional dogmas and authoritative decrees of councils and of popes. His idea of the advancement of the church was the approach to papal absolutism, the church dominant over thrones, the church giving law to the state, the church regulating war and peace, St. Peter in the Vatican binding and loosing all on earth, as well as all in heaven. And yet, with a freedom, not of his creed, but of that spiritual understanding which received a light through the word itself, he declared that we must examine what we obey, or the scripture is denied, which enjoins to prove all things and hold fast that which is good. Bernard was a scholar in the learning of his times, a student of the scriptures, a reader in the days when learning, which had been buried, was just beginning to awake and re-illumine the minds of men, a philosopher on the church side; and yet, with a piety not unworthy to be imitated in a more enlightened age, he said, "my most sublime philosophy is to know Jesus Christ and him crucified." It is remarkable that a mind burdened with the rubbish of tradition, tethered by the dicta of ecclesiastic superiors, enveloped in the dreams of hoary superstitions, and impressed with a sacred and reverential homage for the church as the family of God and the bride of Christ, and of the pope as the true vicar of Christ, should still have retained so much of the childlike simplicity and affection of a devout believer, so

much of the benevolence of a disciple, the zeal of an apostle, the self-denial of a martyr, and withal that imperious and despotic will, by which he made himself the terror of thrones, the dictator of councils, the arbiter of disputes, and the real power behind the chair of St. Peter. To appeal from Bernard to Rome, it was said, was to appeal from Bernard to himself. Such was the thoughtful, saintly, earnest, and zealous man, who stood in the conflicts of this age as the champion of orthodoxy, the bulwark of the true faith, to defend it against the shocks of a proud philosophy, the aggressions of the spirit of free inquiry, the rising genius of an incipient democracy, and the reflex influence of that corruption which, abhorred by all simple minded Christians, was reacting upon the sacred institution which harbored and apparently sanctified it.

No open collision took place between Abelard and Bernard until the career of the former was nearly finished. He was older, by twelve years, than Bernard, and very early exhibited those traits of character which distinguished him through life. By nature bold, self-reliant, and acute, logic had for him an invincible charm. He sought disputation with the same enthusiastic relish with which a knight of the Middle Ages galloped to the tournament. Unlike Bernard, he began with philosophy, not with religion. His youthful impetuosity was neither directed nor chastened by pious sentiments and holy aspirations. Conquest was his motive, as truly as it is that of the martial hero; for he says, himself: "I preferred the triumph of disputation to the trophies of war." A mind so constituted, as much marked by aggressiveness as by alertness, ardent for conflict, confident in its own strength, and snuffing like the war-horse the scent of tumult from afar, could not fail to raise agitation and excite attention. His youth was spent in wandering through France, challenging disputes and winning laurels in every trial of logical skill. His fame as a philosopher may be said to have commenced in his twenty-first year. At that time he came to Paris, where the celebrated dialectician William of Champeaux was then "at the height of his fame." To

the astonishment of the scholars, who were attracted by the fame of the rising schools of Paris, Abelard tried his adventurous skill upon William, and was completely successful. His fame rose above that of his teacher. His own school, after various reverses, drew off all the patronage from that of William, and he had the gratification of finding himself the popular philosopher in the city where learning was cultivated with so great assiduity as to make it the central attraction for the scholars of Europe. Such a discipline, and a success so inflating, cannot but be esteemed unfavorable preparations for the study of theology. This sacred field was the arena on which the educated mind of the age was displaying its strength. The teacher of the previous period, Anselm, had combined a devout spirit with a vigorous speculative bent. But Abelard ventured upon theology with all the dangerous thirst for power and superiority which his early fame had excited in him. He brought to it, not merely a freedom from the shackles of authority and an ardent longing for investigation, but a pride in the weapons of logical warfare, which unavoidably encouraged his imperious and overbearing temper. He gave himself up to all the startling inquiries which shocked the submissive piety of devout churchmen. He claimed for philosophy the position of the guide to truth. He wrangled and disputed. He bore himself haughtily in the presence of his superiors. He gathered around him multitudes of young men, whose oracle he became. His name spread everywhere. The attention of men of letters and of theologians, from every quarter, was turned to him. His opinions spread. His errors created alarm. His impetuosity and zeal, his free inquiry, threatened the overthrow of the faith, which Christendom had been taught to receive, not as truths to be analyzed and known, but believed and obeyed. That so reckless and daring an innovator, a man who ventured to assert that if creeds were not understood, we might believe error as well as truth; a philosopher who approached the awful doctrine of the Trinity with the same weapons with which he had refuted the nominalism of Roscelinus, and the realism of William of

Champeaux; that a disputant so adroit and unscrupulous, and at the same time elated with a succession of triumphs and a breadth of fame which gave him adherents even in Rome, and in the very college of the cardinals; that such a leader of the restless enemies of the church system should have awakened great alarms, and set the adherents of the papacy to study their defence, is only reasonable. A progress such as Abelard exhibited, rarely goes unchecked. The cry of heresy was raised. The ecclesiastical power was summoned against him. He was compelled to burn his writings and to repeat, before a council, the Athanasian creed.

The fact that Abelard was so vigorously attacked, the populace excited against him to such a degree that his life was endangered, is significant of the prevailing tone of the times. The serious clergy wished a reformation. The Christian part of the community were indignant against the corruptions of the priesthood and the scandalous immoralities of the bishops. But both of these parties only desired such a reformation as would leave intact the dogma of traditional authority, and the absolute power of the church in all matters of faith and practice. While they were outraged by the licentiousness of the clergy, they were ready, at any time, to go to war for the mischievous doctrine of celibacy. The degree to which the idea of church purity had gained the ascendancy over a clean heart, is illustrated in the history of Abelard. He had passed through the period of life when the passions are most easily excited, without indulging in the irregularities which prevailed so frightfully around him, especially among ecclesiastics. But when near forty years of age, he entered upon that flagitious course of criminal gratification, which has made his name more familiar as the betrayer of Heloise, than as the champion of free inquiry. The fact to be noticed is, that his guilt was no barrier to church preferment or to philosophic renown; while an honorable marriage was the insuperable obstacle to any ecclesiastical advancement. The sin against an atrocious decision of council, was more injurious to the prospects of a divine

and theologian, than an outrage against the most precious rights of our nature, and the most flagrant violation of the law of God. But precisely such was the moral tone of the age. The most abject licentiousness was more tolerable in the church, than an infringement of a single conventional dictum of the successors to the apostles.

It is always cheering to trace the glimpses of right conceptions even in the midst of degradation and error. The movements of those who were attempting the reformation of the clergy and of religious houses, had its origin in a true but imperfect conception of the evil and its remedy. 'In fact, the mistaken remedy was, itself, the most fruitful cause of evil. The monastery had grown to be the centre of corruption. The introduction of stricter rules was a necessity demanded by every conviction of right. But the monastery itself was a mistaken contrivance. An imperfect apprehension of a religious life, a desire to be separated from the pollutions of the world, the constant force which wealth and luxury everywhere exerted against the cultivation of a life with God, very naturally led to the foundation of religious houses. Recluses, anchorites, and cenobites, the rigid rules of the earlier monks, all contained in them a true idea, a worthy aspiration after a greater freedom from worldly pollution, and a nearer communion with God. Even celibacy, as the reaction against licentiousness, was only a bad device erected upon a right desire. So strongly had the notion fixed itself, that purity was inseparable from celibacy, and that a life of seclusion was essential to a life of piety, that the recovery from abuses, the purification of the church, and the ascendancy of religion to the great mass of minds, meant nothing more than an absolute enforcement of monastic rules, and the absolute subjection of the clergy and bishops to the rule of the church. The valiant attacks upon false doctrine, the exposure of clerical vices, the incensed acclamations of the people against the villanies of monks and bishops, all indicated an existing but imperfect sense of the moral and spiritual diseases which had fastened upon all religious associations. The vital currents were not so low but that a health-

ful pulsation could now and then be felt, and the warm blush of shame would sometimes show itself, even upon livid countenances wasting under a spiritual consumption. But while the theory involved such monstrous incongruities and falsehoods as the church theory did, not even the sanctity and ardor of Bernard, his breathing piety, his soul-stirring eloquence, his spiritual expositions, and his indomitable zeal, could accomplish a reformation. It needed a volcanic agitation, working upward from a lower stratum than their convictions reached, to throw off the incumbrances and abominations which were crushing out the very soul of religion.

Even Abelard, with all his towering views and undaunted courage, did not comprehend the wants of the age. His opening career was too intense through the working of a philosophic pride, to augur either safety for himself or a successful revolution. His will was too lofty and arrogant. His aims were too selfish and worldly to effect a change in the spiritual tendencies which were strengthened by men so much more deserving of confidence than he was. He himself, after his mortification in the exposure of his base betrayal of Heloise, fell somewhat into the current of false notions prevalent around him, and retired into a desert, where he established the monastery, famous under the name of the Paraclete; his own resort for comfort in his calamity, and afterwards the asylum and the grave of Heloise.

His influence here revived. The wilderness was peopled by pupils that thronged to hear his discourses. Men of all classes subjected themselves to the hardships of the desert to enjoy his instructions. The Paraclete was unable to hold the votaries of this new monk, or the wilderness to supply food sufficient for his admirers. The exercises of the Paraclete, it may well be supposed, were unlike those of Clairvaux, Citeaux, or any of the regular monasteries. Disputations and discussions, lectures and philosophical speculations, the analysis and proof of doctrine, daring scrutiny into the profound mysteries of religion, occupied the time and thought of this community of scholars, rather than of religious recluses.

The early attacks upon Abelard were as much the fruit of jealousy as of zeal for truth. In these Bernard had taken no part. His first impressions of him seem to have been favorable. But when the intense activity of Abelard and his enthusiastic disciples had given so wide a currency to his opinions, and made his fame conterminous with the limits of Christendom, the more zealous defenders of the church system were alarmed. Bernard was exhorted to forego all ties of friendship for the cause of religion, and to part with Abelard though he were "a foot, a hand, or an eye." He devoted himself to an examination of the dangerous opinions, and sought a private conference with Abelard, in the hope that by personal appeals, and a faithful exposure of his errors, he might persuade him to rectify them. This praiseworthy and admirable measure was unsuccessful. Bernard then visited Abelard again, in conformity with the rule laid down by Christ, taking with him two or more others, and in their presence resumed the effort, but still without success. He then entered openly upon public measures to arrest the influence of the novelties and heresies, which were so rapidly corrupting the young and ardent.

It would extend these remarks too far to attempt even a condensed view of the separate doctrines upon which Abelard expressed opinions, or tried the power of his keen speculation. It will be only possible to exhibit the ground of the antagonism, and the opposite tendencies which brought these two great minds into conflict. It has already been mentioned, that in Bernard and Abelard were separated those peculiar movements which coalesced in the devout but intellectual Anselm. He had that calmness of temperament with the clearness of discernment which enabled him to cultivate a spiritual life, and a humble practical faith, while he studied profoundly, thought accurately, analyzed philosophically, and applied to the truths of religion all the known helps of science. The misfortune of Abelard was, that his ardor of inquiry was not kept in submission to the humble spirit of a subdued piety. The misfortune of Ber-

nard was, that his reverence for the church was so great that he lost sight of the fact that there was, below the basis of the church system, a deeper foundation of truth in the word of God, by which all dogmas and decrees of the church were to be rationally tested. His idea of the Christian life was mystical. Looking with a devout spirit upon the sublime truths of the gospel, he conceived that we could only reach an apprehension of them by a spiritual elevation, leaving behind what is human and assimilating to the heavenly. He could not look upon progress in the religious life as a work of intellectual development or culture. With him the highest religion was not an application of the plain teachings of the word of God to the duties which grow out of our relations to men like ourselves, and to God who is infinitely above us, so that Christianity would elevate man in the social sphere, enlarge and purify his activity while it cultivated feelings of reverence, submission and love towards God, by which he would be prepared for the divine presence. It was rather a separation from the human, rising above earthly relations and ideas, and in a contemplative and devout frame, as if by an inspiration, reaching an intimate communion with God. Thus he himself says: "The greatest man is he, who despising the use of things of sense, so far as human frailty may be permitted to do so, not by a slowly ascending progress, but by a sudden spring is sometimes wont to reach those lofty heights." The highest, he taught, was attained by prayer and purity of heart, after the preparation of a worthy life. He did not wholly deny the value of knowledge, nor its power to minister to our happiness; but always made it subservient to faith. He not only took the Augustinian ground, that spiritual knowledge was not like other objects of knowledge, to be sought by the unaided understanding, a moral preparation being necessary, but maintained that faith reposed on authority, possessing the truth enveloped and hid under a veil. Intellectual apprehension possessed it unveiled and revealed. Hence it was his life's work to receive, and then by contemplation and after study to realize the power of truth in his own soul.

With such a mind, deeply read, long disciplined in his own method of prayer and contemplation, Bernard shrunk from a dispute with Abelard. His philosophical notions bore to the saintly champion of the church the hue of impiety. It was sacrilegious to bring out the pearls of the sanctuary from the Holy of Holies, where the piety of the church had enshrined them for ages, and expose them to the rough feet of unbelieving swine. Abelard's errors should be condemned, not confuted. It was the sacred duty of the bishop to convict the heretic, by comparing his innovations and subtleties with the standards. For, as the truth was already settled, discussion was out of place; comparison with the church doctrines, and the exposure of the variations, were all that was necessary. The refusal of Bernard to discuss the points of difference tended to inflame the pride, not only of Abelard's disciples, but his own also. The charm of his life was the spirit of free inquiry. He had been the defender of the old philosophers, as men who had been endowed by God with a discernment of the true and the good. He had claimed for them a close affinity with the followers of Christ, who were the true philosophers. He was admired for his bold attempts to define knowledge. His pupils boasted that he had cleared all the great truths of theology of their incomprehensibility, and reduced them to the sphere of human intelligence; and, although they greatly exaggerated the pretensions of their master, yet it was true that, in his speculation, as separated from practical religion, his purpose was to establish a belief in the truth upon the basis of reason. He would prove the doctrines of the Bible in a way that the sceptics who discarded inspiration would be compelled to believe them. He put human power first, and, after its work, came the blessing of God bestowing the unattainable knowledge. Paul knew more than Peter, because of his higher intellectual discipline, and not from his more adequate inspiration. He strove to make even the Trinity consistent with reason, while it was not inconsistent with revelation. Notwithstanding the absolute agreement of these two men, in much which enters into

the essentials of a religious life, and in much which comprises the object matter of faith, it was morally impossible that they should not be irreconcilably hostile. Their modes of thought and their religious bent were so opposite, that a discussion was not to be expected. While both would have admitted the validity of the scriptures, they differed so widely in the use to be made of them, and in the tests of truth that no reasonable hope could be entertained of harmonizing with each other, or of convincing each other.

Bernard realized the difficulty, but it was soon apparent that his refusal to meet the advocate of free discussion was trumpeted abroad as a triumph. Abelard gained wider fame than ever. Bernard was compelled to meet his adversary. But he says he went to the assembly unprepared, mindful of the words of scripture: "Do not premeditate how you shall answer; for it shall be given you, in that same hour, what ye shall say;" and of that other: "The Lord is my helper; whom, then, shall I fear."

The meeting at Sens, where the synod was at first called, was attended by the king, surrounded by eminent prelates and abbots. A great multitude were gathered. The adherents of Abelard were there in great numbers, anxious for the victory of philosophy. The occasion called up learned men, from all parts of France. Bernard was there; but he was there unchanged in all his views of conducting the controversy. Nothing can more vividly illustrate the two men, than the scene here presented: Abelard, after all his conflicts, defeats, persecutions, submissions, already past the vigor of manhood, stood ready and anxious to do battle with the oracle and renowned leader of his opponents. His most cherished desire would have been gratified in the use of his keen dialectics upon the fixed and unquestioned traditional belief of his opponent. But Bernard had no intention of arguing. He was not there to do the profane work of subjecting absolute truth, settled and established, and which every pious mind should humbly accept without investigation, to the rude shocks of a logical disputation. His only preparation was a selection of Abelard's errors. His only method of con-

futing him, an appeal to the standards and the Fathers. Here the two currents met ; or rather, here the church party, with the inflexible tenacity of purpose which the whole ecclesiastical power of the church, as well as the spirit of piety, sustained, presented the old stone-work and solid masonry which ages had slowly built up, to the flowing torrent which beat furiously, but harmlessly upon its massive abutments. Authority stood motionless in the front of the daring spirit of free inquiry.

Such a method was hopeless to Abelard. He found that all that was expected of him was to make such acknowledgment of his opinions as would authorize his condemnation as a heretic. The matter terminated in an appeal to Rome. The appeal was made by Abelard, with great confidence. Not only had his fame reached the imperial city, and the boldness of his philosophy, the power of his writings, and the lofty spirit of free inquiry won for him both a name and friends there, but he had also been felt, in this centre of Christendom, through the remarkable movements of one of his disciples. Arnold of Brescia had been kindled to a high enthusiasm amongst the thousands of ardent young men who listened to the inspiring words of Abelard. With a soul as intrepid, a zeal as intense, and an eloquence more impassioned than that of his master, he identified himself with the conflicts which were engaging all the active minds of Europe. His views were neither in harmony with those of Bernard, nor of his teacher. The current in which his impetuous energies ran, was directed against the church, but not against its doctrines. His burning indignation against abuses spent itself, not in erecting a purer organization upon the basis of the church system. He concentrated his attacks upon the secularities of the church. He was at the very opposite pole from Hildebrand, and so at the farthest remove from Bernard. He profoundly revered the church doctrine, and so did not harmonize with the reformatory purposes of Abelard. At the same time he was identified with the spirit which sought to reclaim the church from its worldliness, its licentiousness, its deep and shameful immoralities. But his idea

embraced a thoroughly renovated church organization — an entire renouncement of all secular jurisdiction, the absolute poverty of bishops, priests, and monks; in short, a church divested of all power, authority, and worldly position, and purely spiritual in its offices and dignities. This orthodox zeal for church reformation was allied with a patriotism as pure and, in that age, as impracticable. He aimed at the overthrow of all despotism in government, the whole fabric of feudal tyranny, and the narrow usurpations of aristocratic oligarchies. Arnold was a theoretic republican, launched upon the world at a period when power had long forsaken the people, and the supremacy of the pontificate was rapidly becoming the supremacy of the throne. Arnold was a practical man, boldly eloquent, impassioned, persuasive — the demagogue of his era. His appeals to the multitudes were effective. His revival of the old Roman spirit, which had for centuries been sleeping amid the tombs of the Cæsars, gave him currency even at Rome. Where he was felt, the hierarchy trembled. Where his doctrines produced effects, the enthusiasm for liberty was quickened, and its friends were encouraged. It was perhaps more directly through Arnold, than in any other way, that Abelard was known at Rome. Led by his natural, but somewhat exaggerated, confidence in the position and influence of Arnold, he entertained a strong hope that his hearing before the pontiff would result in his favor. But in this he was disappointed. He did not carefully measure the subtle influence of Bernard, not less the enemy of Arnold than of himself. All the energy of Bernard was aroused to shield the church against the popular violence to which it was exposed through the attractive eloquence and impassioned appeals of Arnold, and the presumptuous logic of the arrogant philosopher. He not only sent a partial account of the council to the pope, but wrote a private letter, filled with that pathetic argument in which he was preëminent, piously exhorting his supremacy to put a stop to these dangers, which threatened the holy church, and to silence the profane tongues which were filling the world with heresy and discord. With a boldness singularly indic-

ative of consciousness of his own power, he not only inveighs against the condemned opinions, in unmeasured invective, but urges, and almost commands, the pope to proceed, immediately, to pronounce sentence against the heretic. "For what has God raised thee up," he inquires of Innocent, "lowly as thou wert in thine own eyes, and placed thee above kings and nations; not that thou shouldest destroy, but that thou shouldest build up the faith. God has stirred up the fury of the schismatics, that thou mightest have the glory of crushing it. This only was wanting to make thee equal to the glory of thy predecessors — the condemnation of a heresy."

A second epistle, in the same strain of emphatic authority and urgency, followed. The pope knew his dependence upon Bernard. He owed to him his own elevation to the pontificate, and dared not resist him.

Thus without a hearing, upon the representations of his bitter enemies, Abelard was condemned by the pope. "The decree of Innocent reprov'd all public disputations on the mysteries of religion. Abelard was condemned to silence; his disciples, to excommunication."

Bernard was not satisfied. He still urged upon the pope further restrictions: He demanded that Abelard and Arnold should be put in safe custody, and their books burned. It was ordered that the books which contained their heresies should be publicly cast into the fire, and the "two heresiarchs imprisoned in some religious house." This sentence was eagerly spread abroad by Bernard. Arnold found refuge with a legate, afterwards a pope. Bernard still pursued him. He took refuge in Zurich; and the Waldenses still revere his memory, while they are reaping the fruits of those germs which he set in an ungenial soil, but which afterwards sprung up in a luxurious growth of free principles, in a land singularly blessed in escaping both spiritual and temporal despotism.

Abelard found an asylum at Clugny, where Peter the Venerable cherished him with all the tenderness of a father and all the assiduity of a brother. In this retreat he spent two

years, occupied in pious studies, devout meditations, and humble religious acts. As life wore out, his fiery temper was chastened, his lofty spirit was humbled, his restless zeal gave place to quietness and submission. "I never saw his equal," says the Venerable Peter, "for humility of manners and habits. He allowed no moment to escape unoccupied in prayer, reading, writing, working, or dictation." The heavenly visitor surprised him in the midst of these holy works. He died, at the age of sixty-three, at Chalons, on the Saone, whither he had been taken for the benefit of his declining health; and his body was deposited in the tomb of the Paraclete, where Heloise continued, for twenty-one years, to mourn for him, and then rested by his side.

Bernard closed his memorable and active life in 1153, eleven years afterwards, at Claravallis, the beloved retreat which will ever be associated with his name and form.

Two such men cannot fulfil their earthly career without leaving impressions upon the minds with which they conversed, and the current of events in which they were actors. The thoughts which occupied them are living thoughts, which survive the generations and the ages which were engrossed by them. Not only the wisdom but the errors of such men are instructive. We learn from their worthy example, and not less perhaps from their unworthy mistakes. They were both great men, entitled to the gratitude and admiration of posterity. The faults of each were as prominent as their excellences were conspicuous. We admire the devotion, the humility, the earnest religious affection of Bernard. We deplore that reverence which was soiled by superstition, and that intemperate zeal which blighted the fair blossoms of charity. In Abelard we are attracted by the nobleness and independence, which, in its aims at truth, could close its eye to all the frowns of power and the authority of proscription. At the same time, we lament a recklessness and impetuosity of bearing, an arrogant and vaunting tone of superiority, which savors more of personal pride and ambition, than of the dispassionate temper of thoughtful philosophy. The practical religion of Bernard

was better than his creed. The uprightness and manliness, with which Abelard sought the promotion of a sound morality and a pure life, recommend him more than the severity of his logic. Both of these men had noble objects in view. They labored, one for the exaltation and greater power of the church, as the organ of religion and its earthly temple; the other for the freer scope and more intelligent conception of the truth, as the ground of all that is ennobling in life and hopeful for salvation. In their methods both were defective. The saintly monk, conscious of his power, used every available art to crush an adversary, with the seeming belief that the safety of the church justified the unscrupulousness of means. The philosopher, elated by his successes and proud of his artillery, was ardent for victory with an ambition which overlooked the triumphs of truth in a personal achievement. Both possessed a piety tinged with the vices and misconceptions of the age in which they lived. Bernard had the advantage. His lot was cast in harmony with the great movement of the day. It was easy to be self-consistent. Abelard was an innovator. His work was partly destructive. He wrangled in the midst of the transitions of thought and the emancipations of belief. It was hard to hold an even course. His later years are more in contrast with his life than are those of Bernard. His previous humiliations and concessions were brief, and soon retracted. The last quiet into which his restless spirit was brought, as it is given to us by his partial biographer, looks more like the serenity of a soul preparing for heaven. Bernard, just before his death, dictated these words: "Pray to the Saviour who willeth not the death of a sinner, that he delay not my departure, and yet that he will be pleased to guard it; support him who hath no merits of his own by your prayers, that the adversary of our salvation may not find any place open to his attacks." "Thus," says Luther, "died Bernard, a man so godly, so holy, and so chaste, that he is to be commended and preferred before all the Fathers. He being grievously sick, and having no hope of life, put not his trust in his single life, wherein he had yet lived most

chastely; not in his good works and deeds of charity, whereof he had done many; but removing them far out of his sight, and receiving the benefit of Christ by faith, he said, I have lived wickedly, but thou Lord Jesus dost possess the kingdom of heaven by double right; first, because thou art the Son of God; secondly, because thou hast purchased it by thy death and passion. The first thou keepest for thyself, as thy birth-right; the second, thou givest me, not by the right of my works, but by the right of grace. He set not against the wrath of God his own monkery nor his angelical life, but he took of that one thing which was necessary, and so was saved."

ARTICLE III.

LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT ADJUSTED.

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How may we attain the thought of a being who is personal, creative, and at the same time infinite and absolute? This general question, in some way, underlies all the speculations which, through varied processes, eventuate in theism, pantheism, atheism, and universal scepticism. Its comprehensiveness and complication of difficulties can be appreciated only after long and patient toiling for a solution. From the first dawns of philosophical thought, it has engaged and exhausted the powers of the human mind more than any or perhaps all other speculative inquiries, with which philosophy has been conversant. The position thus attained enables us, now, to look back upon the track gone over, and forward in the sure direction, to a satisfactory answer. The impassable limits, which have hitherto seemed to lie directly across the path, will be found in truth to be only guiding and