

Church History.

(From the Advent Herald, 1846.)

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION.

ABRIDGED FROM D'AUBIGNE.

(Concluded.)

Six weeks had elapsed since the Confession, and yet no reply. "The Papists, from the moment they heard the apology," it was said, "suddenly lost their voice." At length the Romish theologians handed their revised and corrected performance to the Emperor, and persuaded this prince to present it in his own name. The mantle of the state seemed to them admirably adapted to the movements of Rome. "These sycophants," said Melancthon, "have desired to clothe themselves with the lion's skin, to appear to us so much the more terrible." All the states of the empire were convoked for the next day but one.

On Wednesday, 3d August, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the Emperor, sitting on his throne in the chapel of the Palatine Palace, surrounded by his brother, and the electors, princes, deputies, the Elector of Saxony and his allies were introduced, and the Count-palatine, who was called "Charles' mouthpiece," said to them: "His majesty having handed your Confession to several doctors of different nations, illustrious by their knowledge, their morals, and their impartiality, has read their reply with the greatest care, and submits it to you as his own, ordaining that all the members and subjects of the Holy Empire should accept it with unanimous accord."

Alexander Schweiss then took the papers and read the refutation. The Roman party approved some articles of the Confession, condemned others, and in certain less salient passages, it distinguished between what must be rejected and what accepted.

It gave way on an important point; the *opus operatum*. The Protestants having said in their 13th Article that faith was necessary in the Sacrament, the Romish party assented to it; thus abandoning an error which the Papacy had so earnestly defended against Luther in that very city of Augsburg, by the mouth of Cajetan.

Moreover, they recognized as truly Christian the Evangelical doctrine in the Trinity, on Christ, on baptism, on eternal punishment, and on the origin of evil.

But on all the other points, Charles, his princes, and his theologians, declared themselves immovable. They maintained that men are born with the fear of God, that good works are meritorious, and that they justify in union with faith. They upheld the Seven Sacraments, the Mass, transubstantiation, the withdrawal of the cup, the celibacy of priests, the invocation of saints, and they denied that the Church was an assembly of the saints.

This Refutation was skilful in some respects, and, above all, in what concerned the doctrine of works and of faith. But on other points, in particular on the withdrawal of the cup and the celibacy of priests, its arguments were lamentably weak, and contrary to the well known facts of history.

While the Protestants had taken their stand on the Scriptures, their adversaries supported the divine origin of the hierarchy, and laid down absolute submission to its laws. Thus, the essential character, which still distinguishes Rome from the Reformation, stood prominently forth in this first combat.

As for Charles, little pleased with these theological dissertations, he slept during the reading; but he awoke when Schweiss had finished, and his awakening was that of a lion.

The Count-palatine then declared that his majesty found the articles of this Refutation orthodox, catholic, and conformable to the Gospel; that he therefore required the Protestants to abandon their Confession, now refuted, and to adhere to all the articles that had just been set forth; that, if they refused, the Emperor would remember his office, and would know how to show himself the advocate and defender of the Roman Church.

This Refutation gave the Protestants as much confidence, as that of the Confession itself:—it gave them an insight into the weakness of their opponents, and brought to view their ignorance of the Gospel. "Certainly," said they, "the church cannot be where there is no knowledge of Christ." They requested a copy of the Refutation. The emperor offered it to them on condition that they would not reply to it, would agree to it, and would not print or communicate its contents to any one! These

conditions were impossible, and of course were refused. "The Papists present us with their paper," said Chancellor Bruck, "as the fox offered a thin broth to his gossip the stork."

"The savory broth upon a plate by Reynard was served up. But Mistress Stork, with her long beak, she scarce could get a sup."

The mask was then thrown aside, and submission or the sword were the alternatives offered to the Reformation. The Pope's Legate said:—

"Let the Emperor and the right-thinking princes form a league," said he to Charles; "and if these rebels, equally insensible to threats and promises, obstinately persist in their diabolical course, then let his majesty seize fire and sword, let him take possession of all the property of the heretics, and utterly eradicate these venomous plants. Then let him appoint holy inquisitors, who shall go on the track of the remnants of Reform, and proceed against them, as in Spain against the Moors. Let him put the university of Wittenberg under ban, burn the heretical books, and send back the fugitive monks to their convents. But this plan must be executed with courage."

Thus the jurisprudence of Rome consisted, according to a prophecy uttered against the city which is seated on seven hills, in adorning itself with pearls that it had stolen, and in becoming drunk with the blood of the saints.

The Protestants everywhere resorted to prayer, as their only hope. Luther was undaunted. Says D'Aubigne:—

The man of prayer and faith was especially Luther. A calm and sublime courage, in which firmness shines at the side of joy—a courage that rises and exults in proportion as the danger increases—is what Luther's letters at this time present in every line. The most poetical images are pale beside those energetic expressions which issue in a boiling torrent from the Reformer's soul. "I have recently witnessed two miracles," wrote he on the 5th August to Chancellor Bruck; "this is the first. As I was at my window, I saw the stars, and the sky, and that vast and magnificent firmament in which the Lord has placed them. I could nowhere discover the columns on which the master has supported this immense vault, and yet the heavens did not fall.

"And here is the second. I beheld thick clouds hanging above us like a vast sea. I could neither perceive ground on which they reposed, nor cords by which they were suspended; and yet they did not fall upon us, but saluted us rapidly and fled away.

"God," continued he, "will choose the manner, the time, and the place suitable for deliverance, and he will not linger. What the men of blood have begun, they have not yet finished. Our rainbow is faint. their clouds are threatening. the enemy comes against us with frightful machines. But at last it will be seen to whom belonged the ballistæ, and from what hands the javelins are launched. It is no matter if Luther perishes: if Christ is conqueror, Luther is conqueror also."

Never had the Roman party, who did not know what was the victory of faith, imagined themselves more certain of success.

The doctors having refuted the Confession, the Protestants ought, they imagined, to declare themselves convinced, and all would then be restored to its ancient footing: such was the Emperor's plan of campaign. He therefore urges and calls upon the Protestants; but instead of submitting, they announce a refutation of the Refutation. Upon this Charles looked at his sword, and all the princes who surrounded him did the same.

The Protestants were still not intimidated. John of Saxony said, "The straight is always the shortest road." The Marquis of Brandenburg said, "If Christ is Christ, the doctrine I have confessed is truth." The Prince Wolfgang said, "I have broken many a lance for my friends in my time. My Lord Jesus Christ is assuredly worthy that I should do as much for him." Duke George offered to make Philip of Hesse his heir if he would submit to the Pope. His reply was, "They carried him to an exceedingly high mountain, where they showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof." The emperor asked him what he should say if elevated to the real dignity. He replied, "To deceitful goods of this world I shall always prefer the ineffable grace of my God." Thus the princes stood firm.

It was now evident that the princes must submit

voluntarily, or be compelled by force. Philip of Hesse suddenly left Augsburg for his states, leaving behind the declaration, "I shall fight for the Word of God, at the risk of my goods, my states, my subjects, and my life."

His departure filled the Papists with alarm; and they fancied they already saw him raising an army to unite with all the Protestants, and overrun Germany. They therefore suddenly became wonderfully mild, and spared no pains to convince the Protestants of their good will. They had desired war, but shrank back from the frightful prospect, and cried hastily for peace.

The next project of the Papists was to draw the Protestants into their net by "cords of humanity, and bands of love." A commission was formed for seven on each side to meet and agree on terms of union. Many meetings were held, and at times they seemed on the point of an agreement, and then some unforeseen obstacle would arise, and they would be farther from it than ever. The Papists complained that the Protestants condemned the church. They replied: "We do not condemn it; but as for them, they condemn the word of God, and the word of God is more than the church." Luther wrote them not to yield, "except what can be proved with evidence from the very word of God." This measure failing, it became necessary to resort to others; and Charles V. resolved to take the affair in hand himself, and cut the Gordian knot, which neither doctors nor princes could untie. He resolved on the moment to draw the sword; but soon decided on a general council, which he required of the Papists, but required in the mean time that the Protestants "should return immediately into the bosom of the Catholic Church, and restore every thing to its ancient footing," and not stir up new sects.

The Protestants replied on the morrow, the 8th September, that they had not stirred up new sects contrary to the Holy Scriptures; that, quite the reverse, if they had not agreed with their adversaries, it was because they had desired to remain faithful to the Word of God; that by convoking in Germany a general, free, and christian council, it would only be doing what preceding diets had promised; but that nothing should compel them to re-establish in their churches an order of things opposed to the commandments of God.

The emperor granted a delay of six months, for them to come to an arrangement with the Church, the Pope, the Emperor, and all the monarchs of Christendom. And he forbade them to do any thing to increase their sect, "since their confession had been soundly refuted by the Holy Scriptures!" Chancellor Bruck replied:—

"We maintain that our Confession is so based on the holy Word of God, that it is impossible to refute it. We consider it as the very truth of God, and we hope by it to stand one day before the judgment-seat of the Lord." He then announced that the Protestants had refuted the Refutation of the Romish theologians, and holding in his hand the famous Apology of the Confession of Augsburg written by Melancthon, he stepped forward, and offered it to Charles the V. The Count-palatine took it, and the Emperor was already stretching out his hand, when Ferdinand having whispered a few words, he motioned the Count, who immediately returned the Apology to Dr. Bruck.

All attempts at argument failing, the Diet was dissolved. The Protestants retired calm and happy; the Romish princes, confused and dispirited, uneasy and divided. They feared the Protestants would rush to arms and were terrified. Charles set out for Cologne. "The ruler of two continents had seen his power baffled by a few Christians." Never had the cause of God been in more danger, and never had it gained a greater triumph. The Diet of Augsburg, which was assembled to crush the Reformation, had given it new strength; and the Christians returned in triumph to their homes. It is thus that the wrath of man is compelled to praise the Lord.

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INGRATITUDE FOR BENEFITS.—In turning God's benefits into occasions of sin, unthankful man imitates the earth from whence he was taken, for that makes use of the heat of the Sun to send up vapours that obscure the beams of light he communicates to it.—Bishop Hopkins.

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Power of Habit.—The diminutive chain of habit is scarcely heavy enough to be felt, till it is too strong to be broken.—Dr. Johnson.