

Church History.

(From the Advent Herald, 1846.)

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION.

ABRIDGED FROM D'AUBIGNE.

Interested as every Christian is in the progress of truth, its triumphs and the perils it has had to encounter, we can but occasionally look back and review the scenes where it has battled manfully with error, and encountered the direst obstacles. The "Augsburg Confession," in its history and consequences, is one of the great landmarks of the reformation, which indeed tried men's souls.

D'Aubigne, in the fourth volume which is just published of his History of the Reformation, has given us a detailed account of those times, which almost makes us fancy ourselves present in those theological controversies. As it may not be uninteresting to our readers, to know the trials, temptations, and discouragements those servants of God were called to encounter, we propose giving a condensed account of its history.

Charles the 5th, King of Spain and the Netherlands, being elected Emperor of all Germany, was the greatest, as well as the most energetic monarch of his day. The victor, by battle and treaties, over the King of France and the Pope, he turned his eyes towards Germany, in full confidence in his own power to compel the friends and opposers of the Reformation to see eye to eye, and thus put an end to the religious controversies which were rending that country, and astonishing all Europe. On his way to Germany, he arrived at Piacenza in Italy, where he was met by three burgesses, who were sent by the Reformers to propitiate him. They gave him a summary of the Christian faith, which he handed to a Spanish bishop, who, on reading it, found a *passage of Scripture*, in which Christ enjoins his apostles *not to exercise lordship*. He said to Charles, "This treatise takes the sword from the Christian magistrate, and grants it only to nations that are strangers to the faith." The anger of the Emperor was thus by a falsehood excited against the Protestants. He passed on to meet the Pope, made friends, and was crowned by him, and promised to subdue the heretics, if not by argument, by violence.

Dark clouds began to gather in the horizon, and the Papists, exulting over the prospect of soon being rid of Protestantism, wrote one to another in view of Charles' approach, "The Saviour is coming." But when the Emperor sent to them, demanding in the Pope's name, all the gold and silver of the churches to help him in the crusade, one of the papal canons replied, "Let the Pope go to the devil." "Yes, yes!" archly replied Luther, "this is your Saviour that is coming!" The indications, however, soon became so threatening that Luther concluded the end of the world was just at hand. Says D'Aubigne.

"The Reformer, dreading lest the end of the world should arrive before he had translated all the Bible, published the prophecies of Daniel separately,—a work," said he, "for these last times." "Historians relate," added he, "that Alexander the Great always placed Homer under his pillow: the prophet Daniel is worthy not only that kings and princes should wear him under their heads, but in their hearts; for he will teach them that the government of nations proceeds from the power of God. We are balanced by the hand of the Lord, as a ship upon the sea, or a cloud in the sky."

The Emperor having talked of the sword did not see fit to proceed at once to that extremity. He summoned all the States of Germany to Augsburg, and employed the following conciliatory language:

"Let us put an end to all discord," he said, "Let us renounce our antipathies, let us offer to our Saviour the sacrifice of all our errors, let us make it our business to comprehend and weigh with meekness the opinions of others. Let us annihilate all that has been said or done on both sides contrary to right, and let us seek after christian truth. Let us all fight under one and the same leader, Jesus Christ, and let us strive to meet in one communion, one church, and one unity."

This was, however, hypocritical in him, for he wrote to his brother Ferdinand, "I will continue negotiating, without coming to any conclusion; and should I be reduced to that, do not fear; pretexts will not be wanting to chastise these rebels, and you will find men enough who will be happy to aid you in your revenge." The papists did their utmost to irritate Charles, and expected, as one of

them exclaimed "We shall see the Protestants fly on every side, like timid doves, upon which the Alpine eagle pounces." But the Protestants quailed not. At first they thought of uniting the armies of the Protestant Princes to defend their faith. But Luther dissuaded them. Said he, "God is faithful: he will not abandon us." It was the will of God that his cause should appear before the Emperor without a soldier for its aid. The Protestants foresaw that in the proposed council, a few unimportant concessions would be first made to them, and that then they would be required to sacrifice their faith. They could only look to the God of battles; and Luther to encourage them, composed the following beautiful Hymn:

"With our own strength we nought can do.
Destruction yawns on every side:
He fights for us, our champion true,
Elect of God to be our guide.
What is his name? The Anointed One,
The God of armies he;
Of earth and heaven the Lord alone—
With him, on field of battle won,
Abideth victory."

This was sung in all the churches of Saxony, and greatly revived their dejected spirits. Fearing the impetuosity of Luther, it was considered advisable for him not to be present at the proposed Diet.

How to bring back the heretics to obedience to the church, was the great topic of conversation, among "nobles and priests, ladies and soldiers, counsellors and ambassadors," who composed the brilliant court of Charles. Some advised that they be made to ascend the scaffold; and others recommended other devices to make them bend the knee to the Pope. When the Emperor arrived in Germany, multitudes flocked to him, who, by an immense amount of money raised in Italy, became sensible of the justice of the Papal cause. They expected to see the "heretics" fall to the ground, and crawl to the feet of the Pope. The Papists were loud in demanding of the Emperor, that without giving the Protestants a hearing he should condemn their cause. "Do not hesitate," said the Pope's legate, "to confiscate their property, establish the inquisition, and punish these obstinate heretics with fire and sword." To the Protestants the Papists professed the greatest friendship, and represented as very trifling the distance that separated the two parties.

The theologians and politicians began to flock to Augsburg to the Diet. "Princes, bishops, deputies, gentlemen, cavaliers, soldiers in rich uniforms, entered by every gate, and thronged the streets, the public places, inns, churches and palaces." As soon as the Protestant Princes arrived, their theologians began to preach the pure gospel daily with open doors, hoping thereby to convert the empire. Immense and attentive crowds attended their preaching. The Papists looked on with amazement. They expected to see the Protestants as criminals confessing their faults; but met with men of might and power.

To counteract the Protestant preaching the papal bishop of Augsburg ordered his priests to ascend the pulpit. They did so; but understanding better how to say mass, than to preach the Gospel, they could only shout and bawl, so that their hearers, shrugging their shoulders, called them "stupid fellows;" which made the Papists ashamed of their own priests, and more angry with the Protestants.

To be prepared for the Diet, the Protestants deemed it necessary to be provided with a confession of their faith. The preparation of this was entrusted to Philip Melancthon. He worked at it night and day, weighed every expression, softened it, or changed it as was necessary, and made it as little removed as possible from the doctrine of the Latin church. It was at length completed, and entitled an "Apology."

On the 15th of June, 1550, Charles, in all his imperial magnificence entered Augsburg. "He was thirty years of age, of distinguished port, and pleasing features, robed in golden garments, that glittered all over with precious stones,"—"the handsomest man in the empire, as well as the mightiest prince in the world." He was received with all the honor due his rank, and soon turned his attention to the great question for which he had called the Diet. He first required the Protestant princes to order the discontinuance of the evangelical preaching.

"We entreat your majesty to withdraw your request, for our ministers preach only the pure Word of God, as did the ancient doctors of the

Church, St. Agustin, St. Hilary, and so many others. It will be easy for your majesty to convince yourself of it. We cannot deprive ourselves of the Word of God, and deny his Gospel."

The Emperor persisted in his demand. One of the princes then stretched out his neck, and exclaimed: "Rather than allow the Word of the Lord to be taken from me, rather than deny my God, I would kneel before your majesty and have my head cut off." It was finally agreed that both Catholic and Protestant preaching should be suspended, and that the Bible only should be read without note or comment. This the Protestants deemed a great victory. (To be continued.)

Religious Miscellany.

(From the N. Y. Evangelist.)

HOW TO KEEP A GOOD MINISTER, AND MAKE HIM BETTER.

BY REV. DR. HUMPHREY.

"Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake." Though he should not be so popular nor so great a scholar as some of his brethren, if he loves his Master and loves his work and loves his people, and preaches good sound doctrine, treat him as an "ambassador of Christ," sent to beseech sinners in his stead to be reconciled to God. If he is young and inexperienced, make such allowances as to show him that he is surrounded on all sides by friends, who expect less than they would from one of a riper age, and more power of physical endurance. This will encourage him to do the best he can, and he will grow as fast as you could reasonably expect. If he commits some mistakes, (and who, that sustains any difficult and responsible office, does not) overlook them; or if they are of such a nature that he needs to be put upon his guard, let the duty be discharged in such a way as to convince him that he still retains the confidence of his people, and has only to be more careful in future.

Attend punctually upon his ministry. Let no frivolous excuse detain you at home, either part of the day. It is very disheartening to a minister, when he has spent the week in laborious preparations for the pulpit, to look around upon a sparse attendance, and see how many are absent from their pews, whom he had hoped to benefit by shaping his discourse to meet their spiritual wants. How can he help feeling that much of his labor is lost? When the weather is inclement, or the skies are overcast, instead of looking out half a dozen times to find a plausible excuse for staying at home, just recollect that your minister must be as punctual in storm as in sunshine; that many of the congregation cannot safely get out in very bad weather, and that if you are well enough to go abroad upon business, you can have no valid excuse for absenting yourself from the house of God.

Encourage him to deal very plainly with you. When he preaches what are called "the hard doctrines," which you admit are found in the Bible, don't lay your heads down in token of your disapprobation, nor unmistakably show by your restlessness how much you wish he would let such subjects alone. Remember that he comes to you under a sacred commission, as an ambassador of Christ; and that he may not "shun to declare unto you all the counsel of God, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear." It is true, if he has the spirit of him who said "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel," he will "obey God, rather than man;" but if you constrain him to ejaculate "Who hath believed our report?" you will discourage him, and render yourselves unworthy of his faithful services.

Give him a chance to grow. In addition to the few books which he may be able to purchase, provide him with a good theological parish library, that he may have wherewithal to enrich his mind, and to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old. And having furnished him with the necessary tools, let him have time to use them. If he is disposed to appropriate his forenoons to study, as a good minister of course will be, don't interrupt him, except from necessity, or where the call cannot be postponed till afternoon without great inconvenience.

Give him a comfortable support. "The laborer is worthy of his hire. Even so hath God ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel." To say nothing of the injustice of it, half starving a good minister is the poorest economy in