

ARTICLE V.

AFFINITY OF ROMANISM AND RATIONALISM.

FROM THE GERMAN.

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[The substance of the following article is taken from the *Beiträge* of Dr. Ernst Sartorius, of Königsberg, Prussia, formerly of the University of Dorpat. He may be known to some of our readers as the author of "Lectures on the Person and Work of Christ." It is found in the First and Second Parts of his *Beiträge*, or Contributions to the Defence of Evangelical Orthodoxy, and in his Reply to Kant. I intended at first to translate the whole, but as the original occupies about 150 pages, and the arrangement and division were peculiarly German, I concluded to give the substance of it digested, and more adapted, I trust, to the taste of the English reader. Occasionally I have translated closely, and at other times I have condensed the argument, omitting the more obvious refutation of erroneous doctrines. I have retained everything of importance in this valuable essay. It is enriched with quotations from the Decrees of the Council of Trent, the works of the principal Rationalists and of the Reformers, many of which will be found here. The discussion of this subject is peculiarly seasonable at this time, and may be of service in the controversy between truth and error.]

It is the design of the present essay to prove the affinity of the systems of Romanism and Catholicism in their fundamental principles. Such an attempt cannot be deemed unreasonable at a time when true Protestantism is assailed in different quarters by both.

The striking difference between the two systems in *form*, might appear to many, at first sight, as highly unfavorable to our object. While, on the side of the Rationalists we find the most unbounded license of private speculation, and no apparent external or internal unity, we perceive on the side of the Romanists a compact and connected system, which pleases the eye of the spectator by its symmetry, and which he would look upon with complacency, if founded upon pure truth. So striking is this apparent difference, that my attempt to prove their fundamental agreement has been considered as paradoxical, nay, a ridiculous fancy. But, every one acquainted with the subject knows, that this argument is nothing new, that it is to be found in Schubert *De Naturalismo Ecclesiæ Romanæ*, 1750, and in Chemnitz' Examination of the Council of Trent, and that hints of this accordance are to be met with in the writings of Melancthon, Luther and Calvin.

The erroneous opinion that there is a wide and essential difference between the two systems, has been designedly kept up by those, who, to divert attention from themselves, and to repel any suspicion of such agreement, have always expressed the utmost horror of Rationalism; and who have been always ready to charge those with it, who are, in truth, the farthest removed from it, and the least in danger of it.

If our limits allowed, and if it fell within the scope of this essay, we might show from history, that the relation of the Reformation to the scholastic philosophy was the same as that of modern orthodoxy to the Kantian philosophy. The Reformation began in the attacking by the reformers, of the scholasticism of the Church of Rome. The most superficial historical research, and the slightest acquaintance with the writings of the reformers, will convince any one of this.

But, we proceed to consider some of the principal points of agreement between the two parties, dwelling upon some at greater length than upon others.

Both, then, we should first remark, agree in setting up a different *source and rule of faith* than the written divine word. They place the subjective word above the objective, and make the former the judge of the latter. They differ indeed widely in manner as to the nature of this human authority: the one holding to a Pope, governed by tradition and the decisions of councils, the other making of every man himself such a Pope, and maintaining, as Wegscheider expresses it, that everything is to be determined "by the precepts of sound reason, *tanquam verbum vere divinum internum.*" This difference in *form* is accidental, and in no way inconsistent with their identity in principle. In both, there is human authority; in the one case, that of the intuition of reason, in the other, that of Papal supremacy. Both alike leave the sure canon of the external word, and derive their true origin from the subjective. Both are natural religions, and we might also term them with propriety, fanatical religions; for as soon as we leave the written word, we have no security against falling into mysticism, or any other form of fanaticism. We might show, *pari passu*, that the system of mysticism remarkably coincides with those of Romanism and Rationalism.¹

But we proceed to show their remarkable agreement in the doctrines of sin and the justification of the sinner, of which Melancthon said, that error could be more safely admitted in any other than

¹ Beiträge 2. 4-13. The enthusiasm of Romanism in maintaining a successive inspiration for individuals.

these; and that he, who did not understand these, could not be called a Christian. It has been admitted by Kant, that outward differences in manner constitute no objection to inward affinity in principle in different systems; and that all systems which expect to merit the grace of God in any way, are accordant. But we would first remark generally, before going into detail, that the Romish and Rationalistic systems may be characterized as Pelagian, while the true Protestant system is anti-Pelagian. Nor do the Rationalists themselves, though wont to deal so arbitrarily with church history, venture to deny that their system is Pelagian, or call in question this assertion. They evade the charge of apostasy from the faith of the church, by alleging, that these distinctions are of little consequence, and that a man may hold what opinion he pleases about them, and yet retain the faith of the church.

The orthodox doctrine of the sinfulness of man, so clearly taught by the most explicit and decisive language of Scripture, especially in the 5th and 7th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, is refuted by a Decree of the Council of Trent, that concupiscence has not the true and proper nature of sin.¹ Bellarmin, the great defender of the Church of Rome, has devoted a long series of chapters to the defence of this Decree against the Protestants. The Rationalist, Wegscheider, in his *Manual of Theology*, and Paulus, have no hesitation in adopting this decision of the Council of Trent, as the correct one. "The Romish Catechism has correctly decided that concupiscence, if not wilful, is far removed from the nature of sin."

Both parties thus, in defiance of the most explicit language of scripture, coincide in opinion, that original sin is only so far to be considered sinful, as the man consents to it, and acts it out in what is forbidden. They both reason in the same way, that it is impossible that our natural desires should be sinful. This is true, as they were originally implanted in our frame; they were then pure and pleasing to God. They are not even now to be extirpated from human nature. And far be from us that iron system of philosophers and monks, which would require this of men, as Calvin says, "*Nihil nobiscum ferrea ista Philosophia!*" and Melancthon, "It is not to be supposed that all affections are to be expelled from nature, as the fanatics vainly talk of their stoical apathy." But while this is true, it is cer-

¹ Concupiscentiam, quam aliquando apostolus peccatum appellat, sancta Synodus declarat. Ecclesiam Catholicam nunquam intellexisse peccatum appellari, quod vere et proprie in renatis peccatum sit, sed quia ex peccato est, et ad peccatum inclinat. Si quis autem contrarium senserit, anathema sit.

tain that none of our passions now exist in their original purity and order, as the ornament of our nature. Their equilibrium has been disturbed; they now overstep their proper bounds, or lag far behind; they glow with heat, or are frozen with cold; they are selfish, and love the creature more than the Creator. This disorder within, which cleaves to us from our earliest childhood, since it is opposed to the standard of the divine law is sin, whether the will consents or not; nay, so far from being subject to the will, it brings the will unconsciously into subjection to it, as Melancthon says: *Tanta est vis concupiscentiæ ut malis affectibus sæpius obtemperent homines, quam recto judicio*; and as Pascal has strikingly remarked in his well known passage on this subject: "It is concupiscence which gives to the will itself a perverse tendency, infuses a selfishness into its volitions, robs the best services of man of their true value, and destroys the peace of the soul in the conflict within."

So emphatically is the orthodox doctrine taught in Scripture, that both parties have no other resort than to wrest such passages, by a common exegesis, from their plain and obvious meaning. The Rationalists, when the literal sense would oppose their system, have recourse to forced interpretations, accommodated, as they term it, to a "rational exegesis," and thus make Scripture suit their purpose. The Romanists not only do this, but appeal against Scripture to the Decree of the 5th Session of the Council of Trent. While the Rationalists avoid the term "*merit*" and instead of it use "make worthy," the Romanists likewise make a subtle distinction between *meriting de condigno* and *de congruo*.

What we have said is sufficient to prove the undeniable affinity of the two parties in the doctrine of *sin*; we proceed now to consider their agreement in principle as to the sinner's *justification*, and we shall be able to show that both have departed in equal degree from the truth.

From the false view of the natural condition of man, the common *σπῶντες ψεύδος* of the two systems, we should expect to find them equally in error as to the sinner's justification. Let us examine for a moment, more particularly, their view of man as a sinner, and of his ability to prepare himself for justification. According, then, to their systems, every man is a sinner, in so far as he now and then transgresses the divine law. With these occasional slips, he is in the main good and blameless, with sufficient natural strength of reason to teach him his duty, and of will to influence him to do good works, acceptable to God, and worthy of justification. While there is some-

thing sinful in every man, there is much that is good, and if the balance is struck, it would be in his favor. We quote here the whole of an important passage from Wegscheider, which shows fully the rationalistic view of justification: *Quicumque e vita turpi ad virtutem emergerit is eadem proportione, qua jam in virtutis studio progressus fuerit, in gratiam cum Deo reversus, ab eodem præmiis dignus judicabitur. Deus ex universo vitæ tenore dignitatem hominis cujusque aestimans, peccatori resipiscenti sortem æternam justa lance ponderatam tribuet, atque prout vera virtus in animo peccatoris creescet, in fiducia ei restituitur. Venia igitur peccatorum recte ponitur in conversione gratiæ divini ad peccatorem, et pœnæ imminutione, pro ratione dignitatis prae moralis justissime definita.*

What now is the Romish view of justification? The Romanist may say that he is justified by faith, using evangelical terms, but he means by faith something far different from the true Protestant. He does not regard it as confidence in the divine promise, appropriated to himself, so that faith and the word of God are correlative;¹ but as he terms it a *fides formata*. He considers it as put by synecdoche for love, and all the good works which flow from it. He looks upon it as a meritorious quality in us — a good disposition, which we are to manifest, before we receive justification. He introduces into the idea of faith as much as possible of obedience to the law, and declares that by this active faith men are justified. In the same manner the Rationalist speaks of obedience to the principle of natural religion and inward culture, as making us worthy of the grace of God. If the sinner now works in himself this acceptable state of heart, and gives the preponderance to his virtuous disposition, by this faith coöperating with good works, as the Council of Trent expresses it, *coöperante fide cum bonis operibus*, he cannot fail of obtaining a *justificatio prima*, of which we see his good works are the efficient causes and grounds. This justification, instead of being as Melancthon expresses it, *similis et æqualis est omnium*, varies in every man

¹ Beitrüge 1. 131. *Justificatio fit per verbum*. Mel. How strikingly similar is the language of Hooker on this subject! "We cannot be justified by any inherent quality; Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in him. God accepteth them in Christ, as perfectly righteous, as if they had fulfilled all that was commanded them in the law. Shall I say more perfectly righteous than if themselves had fulfilled the whole law? I must take heed what I say; but the Apostle saith, "God made him," etc. Such are we in the sight of God, as is the very Son of God himself. Man hath sinned; God hath suffered; God hath made himself the Son of Man, and men are made the righteousness of God."

according to the degree of his worthiness ; while justification, according to the orthodox view, is the pronouncing just through the obedience solely of Christ from his most holy nativity even to the most ignominious death of the cross. To use the language of the Conc. Form, "*sola sua, tota et perfectissima obedientia a nativitate sua sanctissima usque ad ignominiosissimam crucis mortem, est justitia.*" And again : "*Justitia fidei coram Deo in gratuita et benignissima imputatione justitiae Christi absque ulla nostrorum operum additione consistit.*" The Helv. Confess. : "*Passio vel mors sua, omniaque, quæ a suo in carne adventa nostra causa fecit et pertulit.*" Melancthon, in his Apology : "*Christi merita nobis donantur, ut justi reputemur fiducia meritum Christi, tanquam propria merita haberemus.*" Calvin : "*Eo solo nos habemur justi, quia Christi obedientia nobis accepta fertur, ac si nostra esset.*" But the Heidelberg Catechism is even more decisive : "*Sine ullo meo merito ex mera Dei misericordia mihi perfecta satisfactio, justitia et sanctitas Christi imputatur ac donatur, perinde ac si nec ullum ipse peccatum admissem, nec ulla mihi labe inhaereret, imo vero quasi eam obedientiam, quam pro me Christus præstitit ipse perfecte præstitissem.*" We have presented these passages as showing the unanimous agreement of the Protestant Confessions.

Let us now compare the Romish view. Justification, according to the Council of Trent, is not only remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation. Sanctification is not the fruit of justification, but a part of it, and enters into the act. The sinner is not regarded only, and pronounced righteous, but is made so by the operation of the Holy Ghost. He does not become righteous through a gracious sentence of God, but actually so through his indwelling virtue ; and owes his eternal life and salvation far more to his own inward righteousness, (*justitia inhaerens,*) than to the grace of God. This inward righteousness, meriting *de condigno* the grace of God, is thus partly a gift of God, and partly a work of man. But as a comparison of the Romish and Protestant view is just here so important, we give the Decree of the Council of Trent. "*Hanc dispositionem, seu præparationem, justificatio ipsa consequitur, quæ non est sola peccatorum remissio, sed et sanctificatio et renovatio interioris hominis. Non modo reputamur, sed vere justi nominamur et sumus, justitiam in nobis recipientes unusquisque suam secundum mensuram, quam Spiritus Sanctus partitur singulis prout vivet, et secundum propriam cujusque dispositionem et coopérationem. Quanquam enim nemo potest esse justus, nisi cui merita passionis Domini nostri Jesu Christi communicantur, id tamen in hac impii justificatione fit, dum ejusdem sanctissimæ*

passionis merito, per Spiritum Sanctum caritas Dei diffunditur in cordibus eorum, qui justificantur, atque ipsis inhaeret. Unde in ipsa justificatione, cum remissione peccatorum, hæc omnia simul infusa accipit homo per Jesum Christum, cui inseritur per fidem, spem et caritatem."

As justification is thus obtained by man's worthy predisposition,¹ so is it to be preserved and increased by his own strength and good works; according to the Romish system, the man can go on from a first to a second justification.

If righteousness is an imputation of the perfect righteousness of Christ, it cannot admit of degrees of greater or less, higher or lower; it can neither be increased or diminished, but must forever remain one and the same, or we deny perfect righteousness to Christ. If we can become still more righteous by our works, and deserve a higher degree, we are imperfectly justified by Christ, he becomes a minister of sin, and the true idea of righteousness is destroyed. This the Romish system does in its doctrine of progressive justification. It has decreed thus on this point: "In ipsa justitia per Christi gratiam accepta, coöperante fide bonis operibus crescunt atque magis justificantur. Si quis dixerit justitiam acceptam non conservari atque etiam non augeri per bona opera; anathema sit."

It follows from this view of justification, that, as it has been earned by our own qualities and merits, and is to be preserved by the same, we can never be assured of our justification. The Council of Trent denounces accordingly an anathema against all who hold such a doctrine: "Nemini peccata dimitti, vel dimissa esse dicendum est. Neque aliud asserendum est, oportere eos, qui vere justificati sunt, absque ulla omnino dubitatione, apud se ipsos statuere, se esse justificatos. Quilibet, dum se ipsum, suam propriam infirmitatem et indispositionem respicit, de sua gratia formidare ac timere potest." It calls such a doctrine, inanis fides Haereticorum, and forgiveness is refused to those who hold it. That this doctrine flows naturally from the Romish view of justification, and is a gainful part of the Romish system, has been shown by Chemnitz. The man thus forced to look to himself, to his own infirmity and indisposition to what is good, the more conscientious he is, the more will he perceive his deficiencies, and stand in constant doubt of his justification. This doctrine of the Church of Rome must lead either to a careless security in sin and presumption, or else to despair, as Melancthon says: Hæc doctrina

¹ Beiträge 1. 118.

Legis vel ad præsumptionem vel ad desperationem adducit. It fails us in our greatest extremity, in the trying hours of life, when the oppressive consciousness of our unspeakable deficiencies fills the soul with alarm; it makes us ashamed in the decisive hour of death, and as the last and bitterest fruit of false doctrine will perish with us before the bar of an infinitely holy God.

If we compare the view of justification advanced by Wegscheider, which has been quoted, and the declarations of Kant, that by an imitation of Christ's example, and by forming in ourselves the ideal of humanity, which is acceptable to God, we are to be justified, we find no essential difference in the two systems. They know of no other justification than that by the law. Both are natural legal systems, and of both is it true, in the language of Melancthon: "*Non videt ratio aliam justitiam, quam justitiam legis.*"

And from the fundamental error, that justification is incomplete without good works, must necessarily spring an entire confounding of the proper office of the law and the Gospel. The highly important and essential difference between them is either falsely represented, or alike rejected by both. Both parties agree, that the object of the coming of Christ into the world was, as a new moral lawgiver, to prescribe a higher and more perfect moral law than Moses, and present in his own person a perfect example of its fulfilment, by imitation of which, men may be justified before God. They both regard him as a masterly teacher of a moral system, freed from the Mosaic ceremonial. They consider the gospel as differing from the law only in this respect, that the law requires external works; the gospel, besides, internal affections, a distinction which though sufficiently refuted by the tenth commandment, still Kant and his followers repeat. What is this, as Melancthon says, but to teach the law and destroy the gospel, and confound the proper office of both? How full and clear was the voice of the Reformers as to the office of both! Says Melancthon: "The office of the gospel is to receive good gifts from God, that of the law to offer our own. They divided the uses of the law into three parts; the civil, (*usus politicus*), to bring man to an external reverence; the pedagogic, to bring him to Christ; and the didactic use for the regenerate, and partakers of Christ by faith. Of this last use, Melancthon says: "The law is to be taught even to the regenerate, that as their knowledge and penitence for the sin that dwelleth in them increases, so may also their faith increase. The law is to teach us these good works, which God has prepared for us to walk in. We are not to invent such, but to be governed by his

word." And again he says very forcibly: *Hæc particula gratis facit discrimen legis et evangelii.* Luther, in his sermon on the office of law and-gospel, says: "The gospel does not tell man what God requires of him, but what he has done for him; it bids him believe and be sure that God will forgive him his sins, and receive him as his child." The whole sermon is worthy of an attentive study.

We have thus seen the remarkable agreement of the two systems, in their doctrine of justification. They both teach sinful man to trust in himself, in the works of his own hands, and in his inward righteousness. They would begin and end, as we have proved from their own words, the salvation of man in his sinful self. Both maintain that man, by virtue of the natural light of reason, and by the power of his free will, can attain to the favor of God and to eternal life.

It was against soul-destroying errors like these, that the Reformers, with the Bible in their hands and in their hearts, raised up a standard; and though the world and the rulers of its darkness set themselves against them, yet they boldly and loudly confessed the old Bible faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified, the Saviour of the lost, the eternal Son of God, whose power and glory are only surpassed by the greatness of that love which moved him to veil the splendor of his divinity in the form of a servant; the divine becoming human, that the human might become divine, and be restored to pure and holy fellowship with God. They declared that every thing that man put in his place must be rejected; and the word of God sounding forth in its power and greatness, penetrated the humbled hearts of thousands, and brought them in faith and love to the feet of Jesus, where alone the soul can find peace, sanctification and eternal life. They have bequeathed their faith, as their most precious legacy, to us. Their confessions have ever been the bulwark of Protestantism, the inviolable Magna Charta of its freedom. While these are preserved, like the ancient Palladium, the church is safe.

Are these the boasted advances of our age in Theology, that after three centuries, we should relapse into the same errors from which we were then happily relieved by these great hearted men? Shall we extinguish the Sun of Righteousness, that we may be enlightened by the ignes fatui of Reason? Truly the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God! The wise of this world receive not the wisdom of God; nay, they despise it as foolishness. They are forever erecting their children's houses, which fall down as fast as they are set up, while his foundation, other than which no man can lay, standeth sure and immovable. God often leaves his enemies now, as he

did of old, to turn their swords against each other, and thus destroys them by themselves. I would mention only the systems of Kant, Fichte and Schelling. How remarkable that just at a time when human reason is so highly extolled, and the divine word so greatly despised, these systems are in conflict with each, and some have already fallen! Did the preservation of God's truth in the world depend upon human faithfulness, we might well despair. But a divine power sustains it; it conquers by its own irresistible might. When most depressed, as all history shows, it has often risen and crushed its adversaries. We must be then indeed of little faith, if we despair of its final triumph. The grass of human doctrine withereth; the flower of human wisdom fadeth, but the word of the Lord endureth forever.¹

ARTICLE VI.

REVIEW OF RECENT FRENCH WORKS IN METAPHYSICAL SCIENCE.

Histoire de la Philosophie Allemande depuis Kant jusqu'à Hegel. Par J. Willm, Inspecteur de l'Académie de Strasbourg. Ouvrage couronné par l'Institut (Académie des Sciences, Morales et Politiques.) 4 Tom. 8vo. pp. 528, 630, 466, 648. Paris. 1846-1849.

De la Philosophie Allemande. Rapport à l'Académie des Sciences, Morales et Politiques, précédé d'une Introduction sur les doctrines de Kant, de Fichte, de Schelling, et de Hegel. Par M. De Rémusat, Membre de l'Institut. 8vo. pp. CLVIII. 210. Paris. 1845.

IN 1836, the Academy of Moral and Political Science of the French Institute, at the suggestion of the Philosophical section, proposed a critical examination of German philosophy, as a subject of competition. The result is contained in the above works.

The competitors were to adhere to the following conditions: 1. By extended analysis to render an account of the principal German

¹ Verbum Dei manet in aeternum. This was the motto of the Elector of Saxony, and his servants wore its initial letters embroidered in their garments. See a sermon of Sartorius, delivered at the Commemoration of the Third Centennial Anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, on The Glory of the Augsburg Confession.