

## ARTICLE IV.

HARNACK'S "ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY"  
AND HIS CRITICS.<sup>1</sup>

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SINCE the latter part of the summer of 1900, a new definition of Christianity is being eagerly propagated, which at the same time is to serve as a basis for a corresponding practical reorganization of the Christian religion. The originator of this definition, as well as his numerous adherents and admirers, seems to entertain the desire that it may influence the widest circles of our educated people, giving an impulse for a religious reformatory movement in the sense of this new formula. We are not able to join in this desire. The proposed formula does not appear to us to be adapted to the purpose mentioned, nor are we able to recognize it as new. We would not be able to see in its eventual use for laying a foundation for any attempt at improving our religious condition, a progress for the better, but only a relapse into errors that have long ago been overcome. The reduction of the Christianity of the church, after Kant's prescription, to a fellowship of believers in God, virtue, and immortality of the soul, as Harnack's book proposes, would, if generally accepted and worked out to its practical consequences, push back our religious intellectual life by more than a hundred years. The attempt of Harnack is intended to be apologetic; its originator "speaks as a historian, but the historian has not suffocated the theologian and the Christian." "Yes,"—this is the

<sup>1</sup>[Translated from the German (*Beweis des Glaubens*), by Rev. J. G. Fetzer, Wandsbek, Germany.]

opinion of one of those admirers,—“the entire work, from the first to the last word, becomes a strong, effective apology of Christianity.”<sup>1</sup> We cannot assent to such eulogy. Even as historian, Harnack does not satisfy us in his judgment as to the foundations and the original form of religion—far less as an apologete. His statements do not benefit the true faith of the Bible and of the church at all, but a deistically diluted and shallow religiosity, which is satisfied with an essentially moral substance of Christianity. What his book offers the educated of our day, instead of the positive evangelical Christianity, is—in spite of the elegant and ingenious words in which he clothes his thoughts—only re-erection of that rationalism which was proclaimed from all pulpits and professors' chairs in Germany at the beginning of the last century.

We had rather kept silent as to the publication which accomplishes so little of that which Christian apology, according to our view, ought to accomplish, but the enthusiastic overestimation of the work, by so many of its panegyrists, requires a contradiction. In opposition to the would-be apologetic, which in fact robs Christianity of its positive contents, since it reduces it to a shallow God-father religion, the real apologetics must step in, which bear testimony for the entire and full faith of the Christian, and not only for the first article of faith. In consequence of the impulse given from Berlin, a number of manifestations followed, which declared themselves in full accord with that reduction; but not less numerous voices have been raised against it, and the number of those protesting against it is steadily increasing. In connection with some of the most important of these, it is intended to give in this paper a condensed view of the development and present condition of the controversy.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Drews (professor in Giessen, formerly in Jena), in his review of the book in the *Christliche Welt*, 1900, Nr. 46.

The sixteen lectures by means of which Harnack expresses his view of Christianity, divide themselves into two nearly equal parts.<sup>1</sup> The first of these treats of "The Gospel" *per se*, and the second of "The Gospel in History." In the first series, that which is of fundamental importance for the entire treatment of Harnack's theory of the Essence of Christianity, is already completely represented, so that that which is characteristic of his view of God and the world can be sufficiently understood from it. Most critics, therefore, tarry at length at this fundamental part; yea, some exclude the contents of the second part, which considers the matter historically, from that which they especially undertake to treat. The praise spent, as well as the objections and protests which have been uttered, relates to the first half, which is fundamental. Some ideas unfolded in it, about the "chief relations of the gospel in particulars" (viz., its relation to the world, to poverty, to the social question, to labor, or to civil laws), have been also applauded in the camp of his opponents,—yea, even by strictly orthodox critics,—and *vice versa*; many sentences have been contradicted by representatives of the school to which Harnack belongs. Just as that theologian who praises the book as an effective apology of Christianity, does not agree with Harnack in the attempt which he makes, at the close of the first part of the book, to banish everything Christological from the original form of the gospel; so, on the other hand, he finds the sentence (p. 91 ff.), "Not the Son, but only the Father, belongs in the gospel as Jesus has proclaimed it" as going too far, and expressly refuses consent.

From the already large number of critical works against the book, we single out some of the more important for

<sup>1</sup>Das Wesen des Christentums. Sechzehn Vorlesungen vor Studierenden aller Fakultäten in Wintersemester 1899-1900 gehalten von Adolf Harnack. Leipzig 1900, J. C. Hinrichs. (189 S.)

closer consideration. The first German criticism that appeared in book form was that of Dr. *Ed. Rupprecht*.<sup>1</sup> The reply considerably exceeds the book it combats in size. It belongs to those replies whose criticism includes the historical part of the book, though the first or fundamental part, with its exclusion of John's Gospel from the number of sources, its denial of the miracles on principle, its putting-aside of everything Christological from the gospel of Jesus, forms the principal object of attack.

Of the seven chapters of Rupprecht's book, the first four, which form more than two-thirds of the whole, occupy themselves predominantly with the matter mentioned as of fundamental significance. Chapter I. treats in an introductory manner of religion and Christianity in general; Chapter II. treats of the question of the sources and of the miracles; Chapter III. of the relation of the Baptist's preaching to that of Jesus (occasioned by Lectures III. and IV. of Harnack, which deal with just this); Chapter IV. with the "gospel of Jesus," as reduced, according to Harnack, to a bare *God-father* religion, the inacceptability of which, for the representatives of a positive faith in the Bible and the church (*Bibel- u. Kirchenglaubens*), is discussed on more than one hundred pages (94-205). The transition to the criticism of those parts of the book in which Harnack considers the ecclesiastical history (the Apostolic period, the Genesis of the Catholic Church, Greek Catholicism, Romanism, Protestantism, which fill the last five lectures of Harnack) is found in portions of the fourth chapter, particularly in the severe censure of Harnack's estimate of Luther and his position regarding the Bible and the Church with which it closes (pp. 197 f.,

<sup>1</sup> Das Christentum von D. Ad. Harnack nach dessen sechzehn Vorlesungen. Eine Untersuchung und ein Erfahrungszeugnis an die Kirche der Gegenwart aller Confessionen, von Ed. Rupprecht, Kirchenr. D. Theol. Gütersloh, C. Bertelsmann (XIII, 278 S.).

203 ff.). Several contributions to the criticism on Harnack's survey of the historical development of Christianity up to the present time are given in the closing chapters,—Chapter V., "The Synthetical Close of the Criticism, and its Consequences"; Chapter VI., "The Outlook into the Future of the Church according to Type and Prophecy"; Chapter VII., "Our Watchword for the New Century." This parole given at the close, to which is added a powerful "appeal to theological students," is "*Back to the full and entire sources of Christianity!* Back to the old faithful witnesses who have drawn *only* from these *purissimi fontes Israelis* of the Old and New Testaments. Above all things, back to the greatest of Paul's scholars, the prophet of Germany, whose lamp has been lighted for all the latter days, by the Lord of the church!—*Back to Luther,*" while, on the contrary, Harnack preaches a return to *Kant's* standpoint. The Lutheran "Confession of Faith" of the year 1528 (Part III. of the "Great Confession" of the Lord's Supper) is almost in its entirety reprinted (pp. 260–266). Annexed to this, some of the later theological witnesses for the unabbreviated truth of the Word of God are quoted; on the one hand Hengstenberg and the Erlangen professors Hofmann and Frank, and on the other, J. T. Beck, of Tübingen, and C. H. Spurgeon. With three stanzas of Luther's hymn

"Keep us, O Lord, close to thy Word,"

he closes his appeal to the students, and also the entire book.

The brisk, impassioned tone of the work is partly to be explained from the individuality and the habit of the author, but still more from the fact that he sees in the influence of Harnack and his book a serious danger to our younger generation. This danger is not only to be found in its elegance and fascinating rhetoric, with which Harnack knows how to attract youthful hearers and readers, but

much more in the fact that he represents his conceptions of Christianity as won by strictly historical research, while, in reality, they rest on a dogmatically prejudiced valuation of the sources of primitive Christianity. The Berlin scholar has earned real merits in some departments of historical research, especially concerning the older and oldest patristical literature, and this fact may create the impression that his historical methods were at any rate above the possibility of erring. And yet the contrary is the case. In his treatment of the questions concerning the Gospels, which is fundamental for his conception of the Essence of Christianity, he allows himself to be influenced by his preconceived dogmatic theory, viz., the modern dogma, that Christ cannot have been true God and true man in one person (p. 37), to such a degree that he is incapable of forming a sound and scientifically correct judgment concerning this question. Contrary to what an unbiased examination of the historical witnesses of the Fourth Gospel ought to teach him, he disputes the apostolic origin and the real historical value of this source. And not even concerning the first three Gospels, which alone he considers authentic and authoritative, does he preserve for himself a judgment not preoccupied. He approaches the miracles reported in these Gospels with the skepticism of one who firmly holds to the dogma of the "individuality of natural connection." And where the contents of the discourses of the Synoptists bear public testimony for the historicity of the words of the Johannean Christ concerning himself and his relation to God the Father, he, either by a weakening exegesis or by willfully ignoring them, avoids the consequences to which the passages in mind force the really unprejudiced Bible student.

The result of such dogmatically preoccupied dealing with the sources of the gospel history is the construction of a gospel story from the birth of the Saviour to his res-

urrection (imagined only as spiritual) purged of the true miraculous events; it is, further, the Christological free formation of the Lord's doctrine and the derivation of all that which does not fit, in this simplified, deistically beveled, yes Judaizing, scheme, from Hellenistic influences; it is, in short, that phantastical Christ of his imagination which the author calls historic, who is, however, entirely different from the real living Christ of history (pp. xii, 37, 62, 164, 247, etc.). Inexperienced readers, who are not able to form an independent judgment (especially those of the younger generation), and to whom the authority of the celebrated Berlin professor is infallible, are impressed very forcibly by the confident tone with which everything having reference to this matter is expressed. Thus, then, they come under the charm of his teaching.

The manner in which Dr. Rupprecht illustrates this danger of our time, here delineated, does not conform exactly to the customs at present in vogue in a theological scientific discussion. The tone of his polemic is almost more a personal than a real one, and to the accusations, which he does not hesitate to express against D. Ad. Harnack,—the son of his teacher, the Erlangen, and afterwards Dorpat, Theologian D. Theod. Harnack (which circumstance is repeatedly and emphatically referred to, pp. 61, 172, 218, 250 ff.),—come very heavy charges, clothed in severe words; such as, "scientific dishonesty and dishonest tactics under the name of 'historical investigation'" (p. 164), "devil's exegesis" and "syllogistic of the devil" (pp. 158, 162), "antichristian science," "liberal antichristianity" (pp. 240, 275), and others. We do not commend this personally disposed polemic, which reminds one of familiar types of the sixteenth century; and while we do not recommend it for imitation, we can readily understand it, when a theologian, grown old in the Lutheran faith, in the face of such attempts as that of Harnack to

re-dissolve and destroy Luther's work of faith, is filled with a holy Luther-wrath, and speaks hard words in the style of the ancient prophets. Different things are to be considered, which, though they may not be sufficient to excuse the rough tone of Rupprecht's way of writing, serve to explain it. Besides his belonging to the genuine Lutheran Church, from which standpoint even the Prussian State Church Union, on to whose ground Harnack was transplanted a decade and a half ago, can easily become an offense (pp. 158, 223 seq., 238, 243), his coming-out of the venerable Erlangen school, which was in its glory about the middle of last century, forms for Rupprecht a conceivable motive for this severe decisiveness with which he declares himself against the modern liberal theology, as it is embodied in Harnack's "Essence of Christianity." A theological school whose teaching method entirely rests on a biblical soteriological foundation must feel grieved in its rights by such a method of historical inquiry and judging. The sentence of v. Hofmann in accordance with which, besides the doctrine of salvation and the Israelitic-historical definiteness (John iv. 22), the doctrine of the miracles belongs to the essential criteria of the biblical canonicity, is most definitely contradicted on the part of the Moderns, for whose theory Harnack contends. The ugly "broad ditch" by which Delitzsch in his time saw himself separated from the opponents of his point of view concerning the faith is yawning in undiminished breadth between the naturalistically diluted conception of Christ of the Berlin theologian and the ecclesiastical faith of his Bavarian critic. No wonder, therefore, that the latter does not tire to refer directly and indirectly to the impossibility of smoothing out this antithesis; that the barren "three-sentence Christianity" (p. 213) of the Berlin champion of enlightenment reminds him of the platitudes of Teller; that the manner in which Harnack, out of the fullness of the



biblical revelation of salvation, distills his moralizing "theology of three sentences" is represented by him as a "watered art," again as skilled "foambeating" or as "counterfeiting," as the art of "sifting," of considering things with a "diminishing pair of glasses."

Later on, we shall return once more to this criticism of Rupprecht, regarding a point which has as yet not been touched. For the present, we must consider a second anti-Harnack, who appeared nearly at the same time, and whose method and art of writing deviate considerably from the first, while his conclusion is essentially the same as that arrived at by Rupprecht.

The title of this work is "Ad. Harnack's 'Essence of Christianity,' examined for the Christian Church," by D. *Wilh. Walther*, Professor of Theology at Rostock.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the number of pages this book is not so large as Harnack's: it confines its critical examination to the fundamental part of Harnack's amplifications. But within these limits, drawn by the author himself, it is, as far as good judgment, strong and sound statement of the result of his examination, are concerned, so thorough that the absence of a fully carried out criticism of the second historical half is scarcely felt to be a deficiency. The author's plain diction, easily understood also by non-theological readers, subjects those sentences of Harnack with which he lays the foundation of his theory of the Essence of Christianity to a strictly methodical examination, following the train of thought of his opponent step by step. Only towards the end of his examinations, when the deeper problems of Christology and the question as to the relation of Paul's doctrine to the gospel of Jesus are to be discussed (pp. 118-152), he allows himself to reach over into

<sup>1</sup> Ad. Harnacks "Wesen des Christentums" für die christliche Gemeinde geprüft von D. Wilhelm Walther, Prof. d. Theologie in Rostock. Leipzig, A. Deichert (G. Böhme). (168 S.)

the first division of Harnack's second main part, and thus to deviate from the order otherwise followed in dealing with the matter in Harnack's book. But this little irregularity is nowhere disturbing. It rather completes the series of investigations which are necessary to secure a well-modified general opinion in a thankworthy manner, and at the same time furnishes an essentially sufficient substitute for the want of that critical analysis of the four last lectures of Harnack.

After a short introduction, and after having characterized, in the first of thirteen chapters, the subjective arbitrariness of Harnack's criticism, Walther enters, with the second chapter, upon the criticism of the several chief moments of his exposition. First, he considers Harnack's position to the question as to the sources. To the one-sided preference of the synoptical relations and the rendering suspicious of the Fourth Gospel, as neither a direct apostolic, nor in its historical statements a trustworthy, writing, he sets in array a line of striking remarks in which the opposite view concerning the sources is shown to be the only correct one. "We have," so he judges, on looking back on the testimonies of the Gospels for its apostolic Johannine origin, "altogether, only the choice to see in the author either an intimate disciple of Jesus, or a matchless cunning deceiver. But, if ever a book testified the purity and truthfulness of its author, then this one does, who describes Jesus as the King of Truth, and calls the liars children of the devil" (p. 27). For the occasional inconsequent wheeling-about of Harnack, for his essential rejection of the Fourth Gospel (from which he nevertheless thinks it allowable to take "with discretion"), he receives a just and well-deserved reprimand; this course being a tactical artifice, consisting of a performance which "is altogether too arbitrary to pass as scientific" (p. 30).<sup>1</sup> With

<sup>1</sup> Conf. Walther's reverting repeatedly to this reproach in later chap-

the same decisiveness in regard to the question of sources, he takes his position in Chapter V., where he investigates the miraculous in the Gospel against Harnack's naturalism. As to his demand, that even the representatives of Christianity must accept and teach "the impossibility of God's interference in the world" as a firm conviction, he judges, "This is more than treachery to Christianity; that is—even when well meant—treachery to the faith in God. Since the opponents of Christianity direct their attacks to this nearest bulwark, faith in God's ability to perform miracles, some hope to save the principal fortress by giving up this citadel and thus silencing the enemy. They do not consider that this point which is to be given up to the enemy controls all the other fortifications, and that, after giving up the belief in miracles, no Christian position can be held. They hoped to bring about a reconciliation of culture and religion, of science and faith. But in sacrificing the miracles, religion itself has been sacrificed; for a God *bound* to the laws of nature is *no God*. To believe in such a God, is to believe in *no God*. What terrible consequences follow this denial of the miracles is evident. For then, also, Christianity in its origin is the result of a natural process; Christ's person and work lie solely in the natural domain; the miracles reported as having been accomplished by him have not been performed; the entire church history is a purely natural development, our faith a natural product; a termination of the world's history, as the Scriptures prophesy, is impossible" (p. 36 f.). How impossible it is to bring into execution the denial of miracles on principle, as Harnack generally does in regard to the several reports of the Gospels concerning the mirac-

ters, i.e. pp. 96, 98, 129, etc. Rupprecht also declares himself several times against this manner of treatment of Harnack to call upon the fourth evangelist, whom he rejects as historical authority, as a witness when it suits him, i.e. pp. 145, 149.

ulous in the history of Christ, is then shown (on p. 45 ff.) in a number of well-chosen examples. The contrivances by means of which some kinds of miracles of healing are represented as really accomplished by him, and the reports of others, however explained as "originated from gradations of natural impressive occurrences, or from discourses and parables, or from the projection of internal processes into the external world," etc., receive the well-deserved condemnation as acts of a partly coarser and partly finer arbitrariness, which cannot be called scientific. In a striking manner, the assertion is opposed, "that Jesus looked upon miracles very differently from his evangelists"; these had, as the Jews of that time, on the whole overestimated the value of witnesses; while Jesus attributed them but little weight, etc. In opposition to this, the message of Jesus is called to mind, which he gave to the messengers of the imprisoned John the Baptist. In this he refers not only to the wonders of healing of a common kind, but also to the cleansing of lepers and the raising of the dead, as belonging to his works; in a like manner the lamentations over Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Matt. xi. 20 ff.), because of the contempt with which they looked upon the powerful deeds accomplished in them (p. 50 f.).

On the solid foundation of these preliminary investigations regarding the value of the sources of the Gospels and the miracles, he continues to build. Harnack's denial that Jesus had in fact proclaimed anything new, he meets in Chapter IV., in which he particularly refers to the infinite loftiness of the New Testament conception of God over the monotheism of the Old Testament stage of revealed religion. Chapters V. and VI. deal with the superficial conception Harnack has of the Kingdom of God, as well as the superficial and at the same time hazardous, yea, dangerous, conception of the Sonship of God, as including all

men without difference. The first error is contrasted with the inseparability of the person of Christ and his kingdom (p. 74 ff.); and, in opposition to the latter, it is shown that such words of the Lord as those about the sparrows on the roof, and the hair on the head (Matt. x. 29 and paral.), were not at all directed to a large circle of hearers, but to his disciples, from which the inadmissibility of extending the conception of the sonship of God beyond the circle of such as believe on Jesus follows; and where, besides, the necessity is manifest to distinguish between the beginning consciousness of God's existence and the entrance of believers into the state of children of God in the strict sense. In Chapter VII. the almost Pelagian superficial interpretation which Harnack renders of the "Law of Love" and the "Better Righteousness" (pp. 87-94) in Christ's discourses, is contradicted. To the contents of the four following lectures of Harnack, in which he treats of the gospel in its relation to questions of asceticism, poverty, earthly laws of order, and civilization, Dr. Walther does not devote any time, probably because they contain only very little that one might critically object to. There is, in fact, much in them that is suggestive and solid, to which certain apologetical value must be attributed.

The last six chapters of Walther's criticism express themselves very energetically against Harnack's lectures on "The Gospel and the Son of God," "The Gospel and Doctrine," and "The Christian Religion in the Apostolic Age." Thus, in the first place, in opposition to the attempt of separating everything specifically Christological from the original gospel of Jesus (chap. viii. 96-107), and in opposition to the paradox, "Not the Son, but only the Father, belongs in this Gospel" (chap. ix. 108 ff.), our author teaches and maintains even a threefold belonging (*Hineingehörigkeit*) of the Son into the Gospel; "for, 1. Jesus has brought the blessed kingdom into which we en-

ter through faith in him; 2. By his conduct, he has acquired for us the right to have God for our Father, because, in our becoming disciples of Jesus, we become children of God; 3. He wants to make it possible for us to fulfill the indissoluble law of love, because, in loving him, we attain to the true love of God and of our neighbor. Who, therefore, wishes to enter into the kingdom of heaven without him, will not get in; who wants to have true love without him, will not find it" (p. 117). In close connection herewith, those problems which have reference to the work of salvation are treated, for the solution of which a dive into the testimony of the apostles, especially of Paul, is necessary; so that, concerning their contents, the fundamental divisions of Harnack's historical part must be drawn into the discussion (conf. above). To the sacrificial significance of Christ's death and the full actuality of his resurrection from the dead, belongs, therefore, the apologetic consideration of Chapters X. and XI. (pp. 118 ff.; 126 ff.), to which is added a refutation of Harnack's assertion that the original simplicity of the gospel had suffered under the modifying and misrepresenting influence of the theology of Paul (chap. xii. "Has Paul corrupted the Gospel?" pp. 138-152). Thus prepared, the closing chapter must of necessity deal with "Faith and Doctrine" to the purport, that, in opposition to Harnack's enmity to a doctrinally coined Christian faith, the dogmatical fixation of it is to be held fast as indispensable. "As doctrine the Gospel meets us; and, if it is more than doctrine to us, if it has become our personal possession, then, for this very reason, we must give it also a doctrinal expression" (p. 157).

In his concluding paragraphs, Dr. Walther refers to the antithesis, already spoken of at the beginning, between the strongly curtailed Christianity the lectures of Harnack offer to our educated people, and the full faith of the evangelical Lutheran Christian. Walther's judgment as to the

value of the former is not favorable. Not even as a useful stepping-stone, from which one might easily rise to the genuine Christianity of the church- and Bible-faith, does he recognize the God-father religion of Harnack. He emphasizes, "that he who accepts *this* 'Christianity' in fact, though perhaps unconsciously, severs himself from the entire Christendom, and puts himself at variance with Christ himself." And he censures the self-satisfied confidence with which Harnack, after "shaking off the authoritative religion," retains a wretched half-christianity; not, as one might suppose, as a lower first step to the truth, but as the latter itself, as a perfectly assured result of historical investigation. He asks, "whether it is permissible to treat such holy things in a popular book with the emphasis of a knowing one, as long as one belongs to the inquirers in all decisive questions"; and he compares Harnack's procedure, who offers his extremely reduced "Christianity" as a definite and full-merited remedy, with that of "a physician who . . . prescribes a powder to ease the pains of his patient for the moment, affirming at the same time it will bring entire recovery" (p. 167).

It is not without signification, that, with reference to this refusal to recognize in Harnack's reduced Christianity at least a relative value as a temporary provision for a want existing at the time (or as an instalment which would guarantee a full possession at some future time); the rigidly orthodox critics altogether agree, however differently their ecclesiastical standpoint may be modified and founded. With Rupprecht, so far the severest of the critics or rather judges, this is self-understood. He touches the question as to the provisional value of Harnack's formula several times, but always in a decidedly negative sense. "Harnack's Christianity does not cover our want and his defect" (p. 178). "They have put Harnack's book in a parallel line with Schleiermacher's 'Addresses on Religion';

it has been called a similar epoch-making achievement. The *Christliche Welt* [*Christian World*] has received it with shouts, and commanded to offer a prayer of thanks. I consider this parallel as entirely inappropriate. Will Harnack, like Schleiermacher, introduce a new era of prosperity in theology and church? We have no reason to expect anything of the kind. . . . Harnack has attempted, like all arch-heretics from the time of the Ebionites, to remove the *only* foundation God has laid from the center to the door of the 'kingdom of heaven,' to degrade it to the servant, who brings the message, but would be a strange body 'in relation to God and the soul.' Harnack has taken offense at the stone set at naught by the builders. . . . But the *person* of Christ was made the head of the corner in the kingdom of God by the deed and will of God, in spite of this or of many, who have tried to remove him. . . . The new impulse to theology and church with this epoch-making deed will likewise not take place" (p. 208 f.).

The review<sup>1</sup> of Professor *E. Cremer* does not judge much more favorably. "It would be sad for the church of the Gospels if she would not with all her might protest against such a representation of the Gospel, till it [the representation of Harnack] shared the fate of its predecessor, the Rationalism. . . . It harmonizes badly to speak in high-sounding words of the love of God, as the sum of the gospel, and to have for the deeds of this love, where it shows itself for the first time as wholly love,—the Incarnation, the Cross, the Bodily Resurrection,—nothing but a critical shaking of the head. . . . The question 'What must I do to be saved?' is not raised in the soul by these lectures. The opinion that in Ritschlianism the means have at last been found for curing the educated from their aversion towards Christianity is therefore a great mistake, and does not well become a historian of Harnack's standing.

<sup>1</sup> Theol. Litteraturblatt, 1900, p. 366 f.



*We fear the contrary.* From this form of the gospel it cannot be said what Harnack maintains even of the worst of ecclesiastical forms, that it conserves the kernel," etc.

Not quite so severely was Harnack's proposition of reform criticised by the preacher *Rahlenbeck*.<sup>1</sup> He does not compare this latest attempt at a popular apologetic with Schleiermacher's orations, but with J. C. Nitzsch's Lectures on "Christian Doctrine" before students of all faculties, with Ullmann's "Essence of Christianity," and with Hundeshagen's "Way to Christ." But yet this was not done in the sense of a real comparison. The near approach to the platitudes of the old vulgar rationalism is also deplored by this critic. He is of the opinion that "the best fruit of Harnack's book will only grow where the Christian world of thought is deeper and goes back to the true apostolic-reformatory proclamation of the gospel" (p. 430); essentially also Dr. *M. v. Nathusius* in his "Monthly for City and Country" (p. 1099 ff.).<sup>2</sup> He expressly declines the comparison with Schleiermacher's Orations, because through these "an entirely new element was brought into the religious development," with which a rising movement was begun, while Harnack has only given skillful expression to that which has been fermenting in (liberal) theological circles for the last thirty years. Concerning the endeavor of the Berlin theologian to give a summing-up of the religious contents of the gospel for those circles that stand at a distance from it, v. Nathusius does not express himself, without any further consideration, negatively. But yet finally he confesses, "The reading of these sixteen lectures has impressed me painfully and sorrowfully. We see a noble mind wrestling for expressions which cannot satisfy any one. The most sorrowful, however, is the short passage treating of the perception the primitive

<sup>1</sup> In the *Deutsch Evangel. Kirchenzeitung*, 1900, Nos. 51, 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Monatsschrift für Stadt und Land*, 1900.

churches had of the death of Christ; here his expositions become really miserable," etc. (p. 1001).

Besides the reviews just spoken of, there are still several larger and more extensive replies to be considered. One of the best of these is the cycle of lectures by Professor Dr. *L. Lemme* (Heidelberg)<sup>1</sup>: "The Essence of Christianity and the Religion of the Future." The sixteen lectures of Harnack are here opposed by seventeen "Addresses on Christian Religiosity." The fundamental fault of Harnack concerning the Essence of Christianity, and the principal cause of his want of appreciation of this essence, Professor Lemme shows to be the one-sided placing of the momentum of serious religious experience behind historical investigation and scientific reasoning. What position we take towards Christianity, and how we judge it, never depends on the manner and proceeds of historical investigations, but "it is always the result of the religious-moral development of the personality" (p. 3). "To him who really lives in the Christian faith, the novelty of it is not a question, but an experience of life" (p. 19). "The religious experience of regeneration" alone decides as to the value and essence of the Christian religion (p. 218). It is the one-sided historical appreciation of Christianity at which Harnack stops, and consequently he is unable to decide as to what is the real difference between our religion and Judaism. That gospel which formed the true historical original type of Christianity—a gospel into which Jesus does not belong—teaches, according to Harnack, nothing that the Jews had not already had at the time of Jesus. It is the one-sided God-father religion, without the full earnestness of human knowledge of sin, and without the consciousness of the accomplished expiation of sins by the work of salvation through the crucified Redeemer. Not a

<sup>1</sup>Siebzehn Reden über christliche Religiosität. Gr. Lichterfelde-Berlin, E. Runge.

Christian, but one of an essentially deistic character would the religion of the future bear, if such a program as that laid down by Harnack should be made the foundation.

It is one of the advantages of the criticism of Lemme, that, in spite of the pungency of its attacks, it is without any personal polemic, and confines itself solely to the scientific discussion of the question under consideration (partly from principle, partly of a biblico-isagogical and dogmatic-historical kind). Of a publication which appeared shortly before Lemme's book, by *Hermann Schick*<sup>1</sup> (Regensburg), this cannot be said. The polemic is conducted nearly in the same manner as was the case by Rupprecht, and hence is largely personal—to which the form chosen by the author (a circular letter) gave much occasion. Respecting Harnack's positions (or rather negations), which, point after point, are drawn into this examination, he says many striking things. He speaks favorably of none of his opponent's deductions, with the single exception of that which he adduced by way of criticism of Roman Catholicism (p. 66). He concludes with the sentence, "I consider your book to be a dangerous and harmful book," and with this accusation, "To the mills of those who continuously speak of the early decomposition and self-disintegration of Protestantism, you have conducted water in abundance" (p. 70).

The reproach expressed in this accusation, in accordance with which essentially decomposing effects, promoting destruction, proceed from the lectures of Harnack, deserves to be more closely examined, inasmuch as it refers to some actual proofs taken from the latest literary manifestations, from those inimical to the gospel. That in the Roman camp they with pleasure take notice of the mini-

<sup>1</sup> Ist das Wesen des Christentums von Ad. Harnack in 16 Vorlesungen wirklich das Wesen des Christentums? Offenes Sendschreiben an denselben. 2 Aufl. Regensburg, W. Wunderling.

num character of that which Harnack has still left as the essence of Christianity, and that older Cassandra-cries of woe regarding the early submerging of Protestantism are therefore gladly renewed, we do not wonder. In the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* and the *Germania*,<sup>1</sup> etc., one could read things of this kind for a number of years past. Also the special pamphlet which a Catholic professor of the University of Vienna, Dr. *G. Reinhold*,<sup>2</sup> has devoted to Harnack's book, does not hesitate to present to us Evangelicals the picture which he draws from it, showing the internal disruption and confusion; at the same time gratefully remarking that Harnack himself has spoken highly of certain favorable phases and advantages of Catholicism. Of more significance than such voices from the church of the Pope are the rejoicings of triumph in the organs of religious Nihilism, which see in the book of the Berlin academician a gratifying prognostic of the early submersion, not only of Protestantism, but of Christianity on the whole. The liberal minister *Georg Schneider* (Mannheim)<sup>3</sup> greets, with exultant joy, the effects the lectures of Harnack have already had, and he expects that more may be attained in the same line: "From the liberal camp of Protestantism it resounds as a mighty vote of thanks for the great deed of the effective apology of Christianity, and from the other camp, that of orthodoxy, the alarm-bell is rung to call to the attack against the pseudo-Christianity and the enlightening fanaticism of a conscious unecclasiastical university theology." "To us," he then goes on to say, "the book appeared a splendid justification of infidelity, and a declaration of war to the confessional church (*Bekennniskirche*)

<sup>1</sup>[The two most influential ultramontane daily papers in Germany.—J. G. F.]

<sup>2</sup>G. Reinhold, *Das Wesen des Christentums. Eine Entgegnung auf Harnacks gleichnamiges Buch.* Stuttgart, Roth.

<sup>3</sup>In einem aufsatze in *Karl Sängers Zeitschrift*, "Das freie Wort." Frankfurt am Main, 1901, No. 4.

of our day, as it could scarcely have been given more abruptly." The judgment of the Göttingen philosopher, Professor Dr. *Julius Baumann*,<sup>1</sup> at present one of the principal representatives of Positivism, does not differ essentially from that of Schneider. In his pamphlet entitled "New Christianity and Real Religion," to which he gave as subtitle: "A Polemic against Harnack and Steudel," in reality he sides in his polemic more with the Berlin theologian and the positivist pedagogue, Fr. Steudel, than he protects Christianity and the church against their negations. Harnack does not even go far enough for this religious reformer; still he gratefully accepts the approach to his (Baumann's) standpoint of a real-scientific religion (that is of a religion purified from every addition, exclusively based only on exact knowledge) which he sees in one part of his expositions. That in which Harnack's concessions towards the modern positivistic contemplation of the world do not satisfy him, is the measure of absolutely sound and lasting elements of doctrine which, according to Harnack, are still to be conceded to the sayings of Jesus. Dr. Baumann himself finds no doctrinal contents in the gospel at all. Jesus is supposed to have thought everything "eschatologically"; his narrow-minded Jewish way of viewing the times and history do not permit one to find anything in his discourses to be recognized as absolutely true and irreformable. This judgment of the critic, advanced far more to the left than the representatives of the religious-reforming principles, who halt, so to say, half way, is of instructive significance.

Not a few theological gatherings have expressed themselves against Harnack's book. One is reminded, by these still multiplying *protests* of pastoral and other confer-

<sup>1</sup>J. Baumann, *Neuchristentum und reale Religion. Eine Streitschrift wider Harnack und Steudel. Nebst einem Katechismus realer Religion.* Bonn, 1901, Strauss, S. 50.

ences, of a like movement nine years ago, when an attack of Harnack on the Apostolicum took place. I may be allowed to refer to the declarations by which the Bavarian Diocese-synod at Memmingen, the Berlin Pastoral Conference, the Hannoverian Whitsuntide Conference, the Saxon Pastoral Conference at Hohenstein, and the Prussian State Church August Conference, have each uttered a protest against the book in question.<sup>1</sup> Of that which in some of these meetings was proposed and voted upon, mention should be made of the "Five Theses on Harnack's Misrepresentation of the Theology of Luther," which Professor D. Walther submitted and defended in Hohenstein—as supplement to what he said in his particular pamphlet; also of Professor Dr. *Kähler's* treatment of the question "Does Christ belong in the gospel?" at the Berlin Pastoral Conference, which unanimously declared, that the contents of Harnack's Lectures "by the relapse into the superficial point of view of vanquished Rationalism, as well as by the putting-aside of the Essential in Christianity, meet the demands neither of history nor of the true gospel nor of human want"; that rather, "Christ, the Son of God, must remain in inseparable connection with the gospel in the Word of God, as the central point of Christianity." The eight theses proposed at the Hannoverian Whitsuntide Conference by Pastor *Wöhrmann*, which included some important matter, were defended with aptness by their author—among others, also, against Professor E. Schürer of Göttingen, a personal friend of Harnack. The third and fourth of these, having reference to Harnack's treatment of the person and doctrine of Christ, deserve special mention. Thesis 3. "Harnack conceives Christ only as the personal realization and power of his

<sup>1</sup> *Siehe die Berichte über diese Versammlungen in der Evangel. Kirchenzeitung No. 25, in der Allgem. evang. lutherischen Kirchenzeitung No. 28, im Reichsboten Nrs. 203, 204.*

gospel; the Christian conception of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins and the conquest of the power of death he does not take to be in any connection with the gospel preached by Jesus." Thesis 4. In the view of Harnack, Christ comes to be "only a human reformer of the independently developing human knowledge of God and his gospel, to be a correction and purification of religious thoughts and moral demands already extant." Concerning the relation of this rationalistically abridged and abortive gospel of Jesus to an ecclesiastical dogma, according to Harnack, Thesis 5 declares, "The church historical dogma-framing development is, according to Harnack, a sin against the plainness and simplicity of the gospel"; and, as to the question concerning the power of realization of Harnack's reduced Christianity for the evangelical doctrinal testimony of the pulpit or in ecclesiastical instruction, Thesis 7 says, "The question, whether the Christianity proclaimed by Harnack can and ought to give our people what it needs is decided in general by the consideration, that—without detriment to the pastoral regard for the weak and without detriment to his duty to adapt the manner of preaching to the wants of the time—no servant of the church is justified in shortening the objective contents of the truth of the gospel as the church understands it."

This examination of witnesses from German theological circles, if continued, would give many more notes of similar contents. We prefer, however, to close our review for the present by referring to the judgment of a celebrated French Catholic scholar, the Abbé *M. J. Lagrange*, an exegetical and archæological investigator of renown, and chief colaborer on the *Revue biblique internationale*. In the quarterly number of this Review (on pages 110-123), he reviewed the contents of the sixteen lectures of Harnack with thoroughness, strictly keeping to the matter un-

der discussion; towards the close of his review he then gives his judgment. For Harnack's demand of an uninterrupted scientific investigation in behalf of a most precise setting-forth of the doctrine of the gospel in its purity, this critic manifests a certain sympathy, but he will not consent to a union of the different modern views on the basis of a broader, general, enlarged religiosity. He thinks, that, with the sacrificing of all positive content of the faith of the church and the reduction of Christian religiosity to a minimum, such a *union générale* is purchased much too dearly; yes, such a doctrinal union, according to the idea of Harnack, would for the true Christian be equivalent to a capitulation (*l'union doctrinale sur un minimum pareil ne peut-être qu'une capitulation*). At the same time he calls attention to the inconsistency which shows itself in Harnack's endeavors that his religious reform should indeed serve the lowly and humble, yet only by blindly yielding to the results of the learned investigator. *La reduction critique de Mr. H., très vague et très floue malgré sous indigence, ne peut-être accessible aux humbles que par l'intermédiaire des savants, parlant comme savants d'après leurs recherches scientifiques!*

We doubt very much that the tactics of making the greatest possible deductions from the positive doctrinal contents of Christianity, to influence the public which has been estranged from the church, so as to draw and conciliate them, will be able to bring real, true gain to the religious cause. Many who will subject the proposition to an examination beside other modern reform proposals, will prefer Häckel's monism or Spencer's pure agnosticism as still more consequent in thought and better adapted to the world-consciousness of to-day. The few, however, who, with full conviction, will join the severely pruned "Christianity" of Harnack, signify for the religio-ethical total interest of our time an acquisition of pretty doubtful value.



In so far as they may learn "to dig deeper," and, according to the wish of one of the critics quoted, penetrate to the pearl of great price, to the true apostolic and reformatory Christianity, this vestibule Christianity of which the Berlin scholar preaches, may prove a useful stage of transition to them. But, according to the probable few that may be so happy, the phenomenon here considered cannot be measured. Its real signification may consist in this, that, to those who stand on a positive foundation of faith, this latest attack will give an impetus to a gladly testifying and powerful confirmation of their inner life of faith, so that once again, as with the polemic about the Apostolicum in the years 1892-93, the cause of Christ may come out of this conflict both strengthened and advanced.