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ART. I.—*Guerike's Manual of Church History.\**

THE rapidity with which this work was sold, is a sufficient proof that it was wanted. The German press teems, it is true, with valuable books in this department, nor are there wanting in that language convenient manuals for the use of students. But research is continually adding to the stock of knowledge; and the favourable change, which has occurred of late years, in the religious views of many, has created a necessity for a compendious work, which should not only furnish the results of recent investigation, but present them in a form consistent with evangelical belief. This task Professor Guerike has undertaken in the work to which we now invite the attention of our readers. He is *Professor Extraordinarius* of theology in the University of Halle, and is well known as a strenuous adherent to the creed of Luther, but at the same time as an humble and devoted Christian. Some of our readers may perhaps recollect him, as the author of a life of Francke, which was reviewed in a former volume of this work,† and from which the late lamented Rezeau Brown

\* Handbuch der Allgemeinen kirchengeschichte. Von H. E. Ferd. Guerike. a. o. Professor der Theologie zu Halle. Halle, 1833. 2 vols. 8vo. pp. 1120.

† See Bib. Rep. for July 1830.

prepared a succinct biography for the American Sunday School Union.

Professor Guerike is not to be considered as belonging to the highest rank of German theologians; nor is it on account of his celebrity at home that we think the present work entitled to attention. We notice it because it is the kind of book, precisely, which is wanted in America, and because upon perusal we have found it to be, in some important points, decidedly superior to any other work which we have seen upon the subject. These points we wish to bring before the reader.

We may premise, that there is no branch of theological learning upon which the modern Germans have expended more successful labour, than the science of church history. It is a singular fact, that, with all their characteristic wildness in matters of mere feeling or of mere speculation, they are unsurpassed as accurate, laborious, and sagacious workmen in the vaults of archaeology. With respect to the foundations of historical truth, and the credit due to historical evidence, they have run, in certain cases, to the extreme of skeptical extravagance. But when once the fundamental principles are settled, they erect the superstructure with unrivalled skill. The world has seldom seen such sifting scrutiny, such scrupulous attention to the minutest points of evidence, as the German writers upon history exhibit. This arises, in a great degree, from their invariable practice of resorting, so far as possible, to primary authorities. Plagiarists and second-hand dealers may be found in Germany as elsewhere. But the fact is certain, that their writers of distinction cannot venture to construct their works, as too many works are constructed among us, by picking shreds and patches from the handiwork of others, and combining them anew. The very rage for novelty compels each new aspirant to employ the raw material, in the hope of developing some undiscovered attribute or evolving some fresh product. And the law which public sentiment and practice have enacted, is relentlessly enforced by the unsparing critic. Any attempt to palm off stolen wares upon the public, is instantly detected and exposed to general scorn.

There can be no doubt, that this perpetual recurrence to the elements of knowledge has its disadvantages. Where every man begins at the beginning, there is not much hope of ulterior progression; and accordingly we find, that those who carry out the process of improvement and discovery to new results, do it, not by taking up a subject where their predecessors left it, but by spending such a vast amount of time and labour on it, as to overtake and outstrip those who went before them.

It must, however, be admitted, that this evil is counterbal-

anced by the signal profits which accrue to science by means of this continual agitation of the elements. This is particularly true of history. While English and French writers on this subject are, for the most part, satisfied with copying the citations of some other modern author, with no further change than that of language and arrangement, and sometimes without even the correction of mistakes, the German throws aside all secondary means of information, interprets the original authorities *de novo*, and when this is done, combines them and applies them for himself. In doing this he often makes himself ridiculous by misplaced ingenuity and wanton deviation from the beaten track. But the method he pursues imparts a life and freshness to his treatment of the subject, which atones for many errors, and is in itself conducive to correct conclusions. While with us error is frequently perpetuated by a sluggish reference to unread authors, such appeals expose a German writer, not to censure merely, but to laughter and contempt.

What we have said of history in general, may be said with special emphasis of the history of the church. While we repose upon the dicta of Mosheim as the ultimate results of historical research, his countrymen regard him as a venerable milestone on the road to knowledge, useful in its proper place, but now left far behind. Nor is this a mere symptom of their morbid taste for change. It is unquestionably true, that since the days of Mosheim, much has been accomplished. The process of research has been continued, by a succession of laborious scholars, in an unbroken series from the chancellor of Göttingen to Neander of Berlin. The last named writer is admitted to the highest rank in this department, by the united suffrages of the German literati; nor have foreign nations any pretext for dissent. His great work, now in progress, will certainly be an invaluable addition to the treasury of truth.

After what we have said, it will be needless to attempt to show, that American teachers and students neither can nor ought to be contented with a book like Mosheim's, if a better can be had. Dr. Murdoch, it is true, has enriched his new translation with a multitude of addenda drawn from later writers. But the form of notes into which he has thrown them, is entirely at variance with the object of a text-book. In spite of all that may be said and done, the reader will regard mere notes as something less important than the text, and will be fain to avoid distraction by letting them alone. To accomplish their design they must be wrought with skill into the body of the work, and meet the eye as ingredients of the general mass, not as supplemental patches or misshapen excrescences.

For the preparation of a manual or text-book, which should furnish the results of late researches, and especially Neander's, Professor Guerike is the better qualified, from having studied history himself, under that celebrated teacher, at Berlin. What he there acquired has since been brought to a repeated test, and no doubt much augmented, in the discharge of his own academical duties as a lecturer at Halle, for above nine years. As might have been expected therefore, he has introduced into his manual many improvements with respect both to method and matter, which distinguish it from former works. The plan of Neander has in fact been adopted, on a reduced scale, and the first part of the work before us may be regarded as, in some sort, an abstract of Neander's history, so far as that work has yet appeared. In the remaining portion, which is much the largest, the author could of course do no more than carry out the method in his own compilations and researches.

To those who are acquainted with the writings of Neander, it may possibly occur as an important question, whether that distinguished writer can be followed as a guide, consistently with what we are accustomed to regard as orthodox belief. We need scarcely say again, what we have said so often, that there is no individual German whom we could adhere to as a trusty guide in all things. The revolutionary chaos of opinion must be first subjected to a plastic influence. At present there are floating fragments well worth fishing for, and sometimes these are found in novel and fantastic combinations. But coherent systems of religious truth are not to be expected from that quarter, till the reign of idea shall give place to common sense. With respect to Neander, in particular, we must say, that in some points we believe him to be greatly over-rated. For the merits which we have already mentioned, he deserves all praise. His intimate acquaintance with the sources of church history, and his diligence in drawing from them are beyond dispute. The fidelity and clearness too, with which he places the results before the reader, give an extraordinary value to his published works. We are not prepared, however, to assent to all that we have heard and read, respecting his philosophic depth, and his masterly development of principles and causes. No one can study him without surprise at the extraordinary theory which seems to be the basis of his speculations, by which we mean his reasoning and deductions, as distinguished from the facts on which they rest. Look at his uniform attempts to do away with all essential distinctions of opinion in the ancient church, and to exhibit every heresy as a peculiar form of truth resulting from the idiosyncrasies of some distinguished teacher. Look at the constantly recurring notion

of a gradual *entwicklung*, or developement of truth from age to age, which is such a favourite hobby with him, that the very term has grown into a bye-word and been coupled with his name. Look at his most unmeasurable efforts to reduce the fundamental truths of Christianity, as it were, to a single point, and we may even say to a single word; a scheme for which he is so zealous, that he regards with abhorrence all contention for the truth, and is even more disposed to harmonize with infidel skepticism than with orthodox rigour. It is easy to call this Christian liberality, but call it what we may, the question still recurs, is this truth? There are some no doubt to whom Neander's laxity and latitudinarianism are extremely welcome, and who therefore represent them as arising from the depths of his philosophy. For our own part, we regard this as precisely his weak point, and while we set the highest value on the products of his industry, we hold his speculations, for the most part, very cheap. We are not among the number of those who believe, that all which grows in German soil is either totally corrupt or wholly perfect. Here, as elsewhere, to distinguish is the only safe expedient.

Entertaining such views of Neander's merits as a church historian, we should not have thought so highly of the work before us, had it blindly followed him in all his singularities. We are happy to state, that Professor Guerike, so far from doing this, has essentially departed from his model in a number of particulars. And the points of difference are precisely those in which we think Neander an unsafe authority. While the author of the manual has taken full advantage of Neander's researches, and we may even say discoveries, he has carefully avoided that spurious philosophy which takes away the land-marks between truth and error, that spurious liberality which makes a stern attachment to the doctrines of the Gospel worse than unbelief, and that spurious simplicity which almost does away with all external institutions, and reduces the organization of Christ's body, not to a skeleton, but to a very shadow. In other words, Professor Guerike is not ashamed to own that he has a creed, and that he holds some doctrines to be strictly fundamental. That he grossly errs in one point, will be seen anon; but in the principle, that Christianity is not a vague abstraction, but involves certain definite articles of faith, we are sure that he is right. If this be bigotry, we glory in being bigots.

From what we have already said, without any particular description of the book, our readers will be prepared to find, that it surpasses Mosheim in two important points. In the first place, it presents the subject in accordance with the last results of scientific investigation. In the next place, it is animated by a

truly Christian spirit. From beginning to end this manual exhibits that impress of piety which defies all counterfeit. No one who reads the book can, for a moment, doubt that the author, whether right or wrong in his opinions of the church, is an humble follower of Him who is its head. The tone of religious feeling which pervades the work, is truly refreshing in comparison with Mosheim's frigid orthodoxy, if such it may be called; while to Calvinists at least, there is a pleasing contrast between the unevangelical bias of the one, and the cordial attachment to the doctrines of grace apparent in the other.\*

As the work before us is a manual of Church History in general, it is of course impossible to give the reader a minute description of it. With respect to the plan, we shall merely state that, instead of the arrangement by centuries, the subject is divided into seven great periods. 1. From the foundation of the church to the end of Diocletian's persecution. 2. From the end of Diocletian's persecution, to Gregory the Great (A. D. 311—590.) 3. From Gregory the Great to the death of Charlemagne (A. D. 590—814.) 4. From the death of Charlemagne to Gregory VII. (A. D. 814—1073.) 5. From Gregory VII. to Boniface VIII. (A. D. 1073—1294.) 6. From Boniface VIII. to the Reformation, (A. D. 1294—1517.) 7. From the Reformation to the present time.

Under each of these periods, the author describes, first, the progress and extension of the Gospel, together with the assaults upon the church. 2. The successive changes with respect to church government and discipline, under which he comprehends the history of the Pope and the monastic orders. 3. The state of religion, and the forms of worship. 4. The state of theological opinion, including the history of heresies and sects.

We have already stated, as the prominent merits of this manual, its evangelical spirit, and its scientific accuracy, or in other words, its conformity to the latest results of historical research. All that is needed farther to characterize the work may be found in the following observations :

1. It is not a mere collection of the raw materials of church history. The matter has obviously been digested, and carefully wrought into one consistent mass.

2. Though in some sense a popular work, it is nevertheless a learned one. We mean to say, that while an ordinary reader may derive from it a clear and impressive view of the fortunes

\* We may remark, by the way, that Professor Guerike, though a zealous Lutheran, is a no less zealous Predestinarian, and maintains that on this point the Reformers were unanimous.

of the church, the theologian and the scholar will find in it a copious index to the bibliography and literature of the whole subject. The primary authorities are carefully referred to, and even the best editions of the standard writers are distinctly pointed out. This is a kind of learning which the Germans cultivate above all other nations, and which no doubt contributes in a very high degree to the value of their critical writings. No lecturer is there thought to have done justice to the science which he teaches, unless he has laid before his hearers a sketch of what is called the *Litteratur* of his department. This is a catalogue of the standard writers on that subject, with a concise account of their respective merits, and the progress of the science. In the department of Church History this statement must extend to the different editions of the writings of the Fathers, and their critical value. Nor is this designed merely for the amusement of the students. In one university at least (that of Halle) we know that the candidates in theology are examined strictly on Patristic-Bibliography. Whatever may be thought of this arrangement, as a part of theological education, there can be no doubt, that a correct enumeration of the standard authorities is of the highest value to the reader of a book like that before us, as it informs him precisely where he is to look for the proof of every statement, and where he may find that proof presented in the most advantageous form.

3. While the view here given of the history of the church before the Reformation, is as clear and as minute as a compendious statement could perhaps be made, the remaining part deserves still higher praise, as being not only accurate and perspicuous, but impressive and interesting in a rare degree. The author was not merely familiar with his subject. He felt it—he was full of it. So that some of his sketches have all the peculiar interest of historical romance. This is the case with his history of Luther, and account of the Lutheran Church, from the Reformer's time to ours, which is the best that we have seen within such limits, and is drawn from the best authorities. We must not forget to mention, among the merits of the work, that it brings down the history to the time when it was written, and includes all branches of the Christian Church. To the churches of this country and the missionary enterprise, the author assigns a conspicuous place.

We have not forgotten, in the course of these remarks, that the book is written in German, and that consequently few of our readers can feel an immediate interest in it, until it is translated. From the high praise bestowed upon it in the present article, the reader may possibly expect us to recommend an English version

of the work for the American market. There are two or three things, however, which conspire to render it doubtful whether this would be advisable. They are as follows :

1. The rigidly systematic method of arrangement, which would be very convenient in an extensive history, gives a manual like this a sort of skeleton air, which is not a little repulsive. The effect is aggravated, in the present case, by the formal inscription over every chapter, paragraph, and section. This is a German foible. The writers of that country seem to think that the *lucidus ordo* of a work consists in the multiplicity of its subdivisions, and the complex fulness of its nomenclature. They ought to know, that excess in the mere formalities of method tends to frustrate its design, whereas real perspicuity is promoted by a skilful concealment of the apparatus by which it is secured. Would the harmony of parts, and exactness of proportions, in an edifice, be any more apparent, if the nails, and pegs, and nice articulations were exposed to view? We are much amused at the blind servility, with which translators from the German sometimes copy all the faults of their original, not excepting those which are entirely formal and dependant upon taste, an attribute in which, we are bold to say, the Germans are as far behind their neighbours, as before them in some others.

2. Another circumstance which tends to make it doubtful whether the book would bear translation, in the proper sense, is its deficiency in point of style. We refer not merely to trivial faults in diction, but to the author's fondness for complex and sesquipedalian sentences, and his frequent use of idioms quite incapable of transfer into lawful English. These faults are not conspicuous in all parts of the book, but they affect so large a portion of it, that the task of 'doing it into English,' would require an uncommon share of taste and judgment, an accurate acquaintance with the idioms of both languages, and an entire freedom from that servile spirit which disfigures many versions.

3. Lastly, there is one point in the author's creed, to which he attaches such importance, and allows such prominence in his history of the church, as to give the book a peculiar tinge throughout. We refer to the doctrine of *consubstantiation*, which the evangelical Lutherans of the present day in Germany have restored to its former bad eminence, and almost coupled with justification by faith alone, as the test of a standing and falling church. With the theological question we have nothing here to do; nor can we suppose, that for American readers there is any need of proving, that if Luther had begun with the Scriptures, as Zuingle did, and reasoned from them as the supreme and sole authority, instead of beginning with the creed of a cor-



rupted church, and rejecting only what he could not keep, this mongrel doctrine would never have been heard of. We doubt whether any honest reader of the Bible would ever have thought of the Popish or Lutheran interpretation of the passages in question, unless they had been previously suggested, by scholastic speculations. The difficulty complained of is a factitious one. The subject, however, is not so viewed in Germany, we mean by the beloved few who really love the truth. While a small number, even among the Lutherans, (as, for instance, Tholuck,) hold the sentiments of Calvin, with respect to the Lord's Supper, the majority of real Christians, not excepting some who have been brought up in the *Reformed* communion, are disposed to look upon consubstantiation as a test of orthodoxy. Professor Guerike mentions, with the liveliest satisfaction, that such men as Hengstenberg and Theremin, though not educated Lutherans, are helping to unfold the "truth of the Lutheran doctrine of the sacrament," as a lofty banner on the field of theological dispute.\* Guerike himself considers the rejection of this dogma, by the Swiss Reformers, as the first step towards neology and deism; and with the utmost gravity, traces to this source the modern infidelity of England, France, and Germany!

This unfortunate infirmity is of course not without its effect upon his history. He strives to show the existence of the Lutheran doctrine in the ancient church, and the effects of Zuingli's heresy in that of modern times. He is, however, very far from being despondent. On the contrary, he entertains the pleasing hope, that all evangelical denominations will be ultimately brought to confess the real presence of the Saviour's body in the sacramental elements. This is the third and last particular which we designed to mention as detracting from the merit of the work before us. We are not afraid of any effect upon the doctrinal belief of the American reader; but we are afraid that this unhappy weakness would impair his respect for the real merits of this valuable manual.

In justice to the author, we must guard against any misconception, with respect to the spirit and temper of his work. Nothing could be more truly Catholic. Almost every page bears the impress of that wide-armed charity which embraces all who embrace the Saviour. With all his mistaken zeal for consubstantiation, he is far from making it essential to salvation, or to real union with the household of faith. His doctrine is, that no church can be perfect in its constitution, though it may exist, without acknowledging this solemn truth. It may have a divine

\* Vol. II. p. 956.

charter, but the charter is not sealed, or only sealed imperfectly. He does not, therefore, really attach so much practical importance to this doctrine, as bigotted prelatists attach to the imaginary pedigree of their bishops. He thinks his own views of the sacrament necessary, not to the existence of a Christian church, but to its symmetry, completeness, and security from error with regard to other doctrines. Instead of abandoning his fellow Christians to "uncovenanted mercy," because they do not symbolise with Luther, he hails them as members of the body of Christ, and prays that God would strengthen them wherein they are infirm. At the same time he is earnestly opposed to the amalgamation of those churches which, on this point, differ. He denounces, in particular, the darling project of the present King of Prussia, for the union of the Evangelical and Reformed, or as we should call them, Lutheran and Calvinistic churches. This measure, in our author's judgment, only tends to generate indifference with respect to important doctrines, and to effect a compromise between truth and error, without in reality promoting peace. On this principle he acts, as well as writes. The external union of the Prussian churches may be considered as accomplished. The ministers of both now form one *clerus*, and are appointed promiscuously to the vacant churches. A few, however, of the strenuous Lutherans still protest against the coalition. Among these is Professor Guerike, who refuses to do any act which can be construed as expressing approbation of the change. In this he differs from many of his best beloved friends, and the staunchest advocates of truth, who regard the union of the two communions as a token for good to the ancient desolations of the German Zion.

In this we think them right, and our author clearly wrong. We feel, however, that we cannot do him justice by this hurried statement, and take leave of him, therefore, for the present, with a determination to lay before our readers, at an early opportunity, his own account of this interesting matter, as well as other specimens of the work before us. From these the theological public will be able to decide, whether a translation of the manual is expedient. Our own judgment, after a perusal of the whole, is, that a work of about the same dimensions, founded upon this, and embodying all its valuable matter, yet without adopting all the author's sentiments, or retaining his expressions, would be a welcome addition to the store of our theological literature.