

THE CONSERVATIVE REFORMATION  
AND  
ITS THEOLOGY

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ITS THEOLOGY:

AS REPRESENTED IN THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION, AND IN THE  
HISTORY AND LITERATURE OF THE EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CHURCH.

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In the Memory  
OF  
CHARLES PHILIP KRAUTH, D.D.,  
MY VENERATED AND SAINTED FATHER,  
THIS BOOK  
IS  
Dedicated.

## **PREFACE.**

**THAT** some form of Christianity is to be the religion of the world, is not only an assured fact to the believer in Revelation, but must be regarded as probable, even in the judgment which is formed on purely natural evidence. Next in transcendent importance to that fact, and beyond it in present interest, as a question relatively undecided, is the question, What form of Christianity is to conquer the world? Shall it be the form in which Christianity now exists, the form of intermingling and of division, of internal separation and warfare? Is the territory of Christendom forever to be divided between antagonistic communions, or occupied by them conjointly? Shall there be to the end of time the Greek, the Roman, the Protestant churches, the sects, and the heretical bodies? Or shall one or other of these specific forms lift itself above the tangled mass, and impose order on chaos? Or shall a form yet unrevealed prove the church of the future? To this the answer seems to be, that the logic of the question, supported by eighteen centuries of history, renders it probable that some principle, or some combination of principles now existent, will assuredly, however slowly, determine the ultimate, world-dominating type of Christianity. Unless there be an exact balance of force in the different tendencies, the internally strongest of them will ultimately prevail over the others, and, unless a new force superior to it comes in, will be permanent.

The history of Christianity, in common with all genuine history, moves under the influence of two generic ideas: the conservative, which desires to secure the present by fidelity to the results of the past; the progressive, which looks out, in hope, to a better future. Reformation is the great harmonizer of the two principles. Corresponding with Conservatism, Reformation, and Progress are three generic types of Christianity; and under these genera all the species are but shades, modifications, or combinations, as all hues arise from three primary colors. Conservatism without Progress produces the Romish and Greek type

of the Church. Progress without Conservatism runs into Revolution, Radicalism, and Sectarianism. Reformation is antithetical both to passive persistence in wrong or passive endurance of it, and to Revolution as a mode of relieving wrong. Conservatism is opposed to Radicalism both in the estimate of wrong and the mode of getting rid of it. Radicalism errs in two respects: in its precipitance it often mistakes wheat for tares, and its eradication is so hasty and violent that even when it plucks up tares it brings the wheat with them. Sober judgment and sober means characterize Conservatism. Reformation and Conservatism really involve each other. That which claims to be Reformatory, yet is not Conservative, is Sectarian; that which claims to be Conservative, and is not Reformatory, is Stagnation and Corruption. True Catholicity is Conservatism, but Protestantism is Reformatory; and these two are complementary, not antagonistic. The Church problem is to attain a Protestant Catholicity or Catholic Protestantism. This is the end and aim of Conservative Reformation.

Reformation is the means by which Conservatism of the good that is, and progress to the good yet to be won, is secured. Over against the stagnation of an isolated Conservatism, the Church is to hold Reformation as the instrument of progress. Over against the abuses of a separatistic and one-sided progressiveness, she is to see to it that her Reformation maintains that due reverence for history, that sobriety of tone, that patience of spirit, and that moderation of manner, which are involved in Conservatism. The good that has been is necessary to the safety of the good that is to be. There are to be no absolutely fresh starts. If the foundation were removed, the true course would not be to make a new one, but to find the old one, and lay it again. But the foundation never was wholly lost, nor was there, in the worst time of the accumulation of wood, hay, and stubble, an utter ceasing of the building of gold, silver, and precious stones upon it. The Reformation, as Christian, accepted the old foundation; as reformatory, it removed the wood, hay, and stubble; as conservative, it carefully separated, guarded, and retained the gold, silver, and precious stones, the additions of pious human hands, befitting the foundation and the temple which was to be reared upon it. Rome had accumulated greatly and given up nothing, till the foundation upheld little but perishing human traditions, and the precious things were lost in the heaps of rubbish. The revolutionary spirit of the radical Reform proposed to leave nothing but the foundation, to sweep from it everything which had been built upon it. The Conservative, equally accepting the foundation which has been laid once for all, proposed to leave on it everything precious,

pure, and beautiful which had risen in the ages. The one proposed to pull down the temple; the other, to purify it, and to replace its weak and decayed portions with solid rock. The great work of the sixteenth century, which bears the generic title of the Reformation, was divided between these tendencies; not, indeed, absolutely to the last extreme, but yet really divided. The whole Protestant movement in the Church of the West was reformatory as over against papal Rome, and was so far a unit; but it was divided within itself, between the conservative and radical tendencies. The conservative tendency embodied itself in the Reformation, in which Luther was the leader; the radical, in Zwingli and his school. Calvin came in to occupy a relatively mediating position, conservative as compared with the ultraism of Zwinglianism, and of the heretical tendencies which Zwinglianism at once nurtured, yet, relatively to Lutheranism, largely radical.

The Church of England is that part of the Reformed Church for which most affinity with the conservatism of Lutheranism is usually claimed. That Church occupies a position in some respects unique. First, under Henry VIII., ceasing to be Popish without ceasing to be Romish; then passing under the influences of genuine reformation into the positively Lutheran type; then influenced by the mediating position of the school of Bucer, and of the later era of Melancthon, a school which claimed the ability practically to co-ordinate the Lutheran and Calvinistic positions; and finally settling into a system of compromise, in which is revealed the influence of the Roman Catholic views of Orders in the ministry, and, to some extent, of the Ritual; of the Lutheran tone of reformatory conservatism, in the general structure of the Liturgy, in the larger part of the Articles, and especially in the doctrine of Baptism; of the mediating theology in the doctrine of predestination; and of Calvinism in particular changes in the Book of Common Prayer, and, most of all, in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The Conservatism of the Church of England, even in the later shape of its reform, in many respects is indubitable, and hence it has often been called a Lutheranizing Church. But the pressure of the radicalism to which it deferred, perhaps too much in the essence and too little in the form, brought it to that eclecticism which is its most marked feature. Lutheranizing, in its conservative sobriety of modes, the Church of England is very un-Lutheran in its judgment of ends. The conservatism of the Lutheran Reformation exalted, over all, pure doctrine as the divine presupposition of a pure life, and this led to an ample and explicit statement of faith. While the Church of England stated doctrines so that men understood its utterances in different

ways, the Lutheran Church tried so to state them that men could accept them in but one sense. If one expression was found inadequate for this, she gave another. The Lutheran Church has her Book of Concord, the most explicit Confession ever made in Christendom; the Church of England has her Thirty-nine Articles, the least explicit among the official utterances of the Churches of the Reformation.

The Eclectic Reformation is like the Eclectic Philosophy,- it accepts the common affirmation of the different systems, and refuses their negations. Like the English language, the English Church is a miracle of compositeness. In the wonderful tessellation of their structure is the strength of both, and their weakness. The English language is two languages inseparably conjoined. It has the strength and affluence of the two, and something of the awkwardness necessitated by their union. The Church of England has two great elements; but they are not perfectly preserved in their distinctive character, but, to some extent, are confounded in the union. With more uniformity than any other great Protestant body, it has less unity than any. Partly in virtue of its doctrinal indeterminateness, it has been the home of men of the most opposite opinions: no Calvinism is intenser, no Arminianism lower, than the Calvinism and Arminianism which have been found in the Church of England. It has furnished able defenders of Augustine, and no less able defenders of Pelagius. Its Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy have been a great bulwark of Protestantism; and yet, seemingly, out of the very stones of that bulwark has been framed, in our day, a bridge on which many have passed over into Rome. It has a long array of names dear to our common Christendom as the masterly vindicators of her common faith, and yet has given high place to men who denied the fundamental verities confessed in the general creeds. It harbors a skepticism which takes infidelity by the hand, and a revised mediaevalism which longs to throw itself, with tears, on the neck of the Pope and the Patriarch, to beseech them to be gentle, and not to make the terms of restored fellowship too difficult. The doctrinal indeterminateness which has won has also repelled, and made it an object of suspicion not only to great men of the most opposite opinions, but also to great bodies of Christians. It has a doctrinal laxity which excuses, and, indeed, invites, innovation, conjoined with an organic fixedness which prevents the free play of the novelty. Hence the Church of England has been more depleted than any other, by secessions. Either the Anglican Church must come to more fixedness in doctrine or to more pliability in form, or it will go on, through cycle after cycle of disintegration, toward ruin. In this land,



which seems the natural heritage of that Church which claims the Church of England as its mother, the Protestant Episcopal Church is numerically smallest among the influential denominations. Its great social strength and large influence in every direction only render more striking the fact that there is scarcely a Church, scarcely a sect, having in common with it an English original, which is not far in advance of it in statistical strength. Some of the largest communions have its rigidity in form, some of the largest have its looseness in doctrine; but no other large communion attempts to combine both. The numbers of those whom the Church of England has lost are millions. It has lost to Independency, lost to Presbyterianism, lost to Quakerism, lost to Methodism, lost to Romanism, and lost to the countless forms of Sectarianism of which England and America, England's daughter, have been, beyond all nations, the nurses. The Church of England has been so careful of the rigid old bottle of the form, yet so careless or so helpless as to what the bottle might be made to hold, that the new wine which went into it has been attended in every case by the same history, — the fermenting burst the bottle, and the wine was spilled. Every great religious movement in the Church of England has been attended ultimately by an irreparable loss in its membership. To this rule there has been no exception in the past. Whether the present movement which convulses the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church in America, is to have the same issue, belongs, perhaps, rather to the prophet's eye than to the historian's pen. Yet to those who, though they stand without, look on with profound sympathy, the internal difficulties which now agitate those Churches seem incapable of a real, abiding harmonizing. True compromise can only sacrifice preferences to secure principles. The only compromise which seems possible in the Anglican Churches would be one which would sacrifice principles to secure preferences, and nothing can be less certain of permanence than preferences thus secured. These present difficulties in the Anglican Churches proceed not from contradiction of its principles, but from development of them. These two classes of seeds were sown by the husbandmen themselves, — that was the compromise. The tares may grow till the harvest, side by side with the wheat, with which they mingle, but which they do not destroy, but the thorns which choke the seed must be plucked up, or the seed will perish. Tares are men; thorns are moral forces of doctrine or of life. The agitation in the Anglican Churches can end only in the victory of the one tendency and the silencing of the other, or in the sundering of the two. In Protestantism nothing is harder than to silence, nothing easier than to sunder.

If the past history of the Anglican Church, hitherto unvaried in the ultimate result, repeat itself here, the new movement will end in a formal division, as it already has in a moral one. The trials of a Church which has taken a part in our modern civilization and Christianity which entitles it to the veneration and gratitude of mankind, can be regarded with indifference only by the sluggish and selfish, and with malicious joy only by the radically bad.

The classification of Churches by tendencies is, of course, relative. No great organization moves so absolutely along the line of a single tendency as to have nothing in it beyond that tendency, or contradictory to it. The wilfulness of some, the feeble-mindedness of others, the power of surrounding influences, modify all systems in their actual working. There was some conservatism in the Swiss reformation, and there has been and is something of the reformatory tendency in the Church of Rome. The Reformation took out a very large part of the best material influenced by this tendency in Rome, but not all of it.

The object of this book is not to delineate the spirit and doctrines of the Reformation as a general movement over against the doctrinal and practical errors of the Roman Church, but to state and vindicate the faith and spirit of that part of the movement which was conservative, as over against the part which was radical. It is the Lutheran Reformation in those features which distinguish it from the Zwinglian and Calvinistic Reformations, which forms the topic of this book. Wherever Calvin abandoned Zwinglianism he approximated Lutheranism. Hence, on important points, this book, in defending Lutheranism over against Zwinglianism, defends Calvinism over against Zwinglianism also. It even defends Zwinglianism, so far as, in contrast with Anabaptism, it was relatively conservative. The Pelagianism of the Zwinglian theology was corrected by Calvin, who is the true father of the Reformed Church, as distinguished from the Lutheran. The theoretical tendencies of Zwingle developed into Arminianism and Rationalism; his practical tendencies into the superstitious anti-ritualism of ultra-Puritanism: and both the theoretical and practical found their harmony and consummation in Unitarianism.

The plan of this book is, in some respects, new. It aims at bringing under a single point of view what is usually scattered through different classes of books. It endeavors to present the Exegesis, the Dogmatical and Confessional development, and the History associated with each doctrine, with a full list of the most important writers in the literature of each topic. Its rule is, whether the views stated are accepted or rejected, to give them in the words of their authors. The citations

from other languages are always translated, but when the original words have a disputed meaning, or a special force or importance, they are also quoted. The author has, as nearly as he was able, given to the book such an internal completeness as to render it unnecessary to refer to other works while reading it. While he has aimed at something of the thoroughness which the scholar desires, he has also endeavored to meet the wants of that important and growing class of readers who have all the intelligence needed for a full appreciation of the matter of a book, but are repelled by the technical difficulties of form suggested by the pedantry of authors, or permitted by their carelessness or indolence.

So far as the author's past labors were available for the purposes of this work, he has freely used them. In no case has a line been allowed to stand which does not express a present conviction, not simply as to what is true, but as to the force of the grounds on which its truth is argued. In what has been taken from his articles in Reviews, and in other periodicals, he has changed, omitted, and added, in accordance with a fresh study of all the topics. He has also drawn upon some of the Lectures delivered by him to his theological classes, and thankfully acknowledges the use, for this purpose, of the notes made by his pupils, Rev. F. W. Weiskotten, of Elizabethtown, Pa., and Messrs. Bieber and Foust. To Lloyd P. Smith, Esq., Librarian, and to Mr. George M. Abbot, Assistant Librarian, of the Philadelphia and Loganian Libraries, the author is indebted for every possible facility in the use of those valuable collections.

An Index has been prepared, in which the effort has been made to avoid the two generic vices of a scantiness which leaves the reader in perplexity, and a minuteness which confuses him. The positions taken in this book are largely counter, in some respects, to the prevailing theology of our time and our land. No man can be more fixed in his prejudice against the views here defended than the author himself once was; no man can be more decided in his opinion that those views are false than the author is now decided in his faith that they are the truth. They have been formed in the face of all the influences of education and of bitter hatred or of contemptuous disregard on the part of nearly all who were most intimately associated with him in the period of struggle. Formed under such circumstances, under what he believes to have been the influence of the Divine Word, the author is persuaded that they rest upon grounds which cannot easily be moved. In its own nature his work is, in some degree, polemical; but its conflict is purely with opinions, never with persons. The theme itself, as it involves

questions within our common Protestantism, renders the controversy principally one with defects or errors in systems least remote in the main from the faith vindicated in this volume. It is most needful that those nearest each other should calmly argue the questions which still divide them, as there is most hope that those already so largely in affinity may come to a yet more perfect understanding.

The best work of which isolated radicalism is capable is that of destroying evil. The more earnestly radicalism works, the sooner is its mission accomplished. Conservatism works to a normal condition, and rests at last in habit. Radicalism presupposes the abnormal. Itself an antithesis, it dies with the thing it kills. The long, fixed future must therefore be in the hands of conservatism in some shape; either in the hands of a mechanical conservatism, as in the Church of Rome, or of a reformatory conservatism, as represented in that historical and genuine Protestantism which is as distinct from the current sectarianism, in some respects, as it is from Romanism in others. The purest Protestantism, that which best harmonizes conservatism and reformation, will ultimately control the thinking of the Christian Church. The volume which the reader holds in his hand is meant to set forth some of the reasons in view of which those who love the Evangelical Protestant Church, commonly called the Lutheran Church, hope to find pardon for their conviction that in it is found the most perfect assimilation and co-ordination of the two forces. It has conserved as thoroughly as is consistent with real reformation; it has reformed as unsparingly as is consistent with genuine conservatism. The objective concreteness of the old Apostolic Catholicity, Rome has exaggerated and materialized till the senses master the soul, they should serve. The subjective spirituality of New Testament Christianity is isolated by the Pseudo-Protestantism, which drags the mutilated organism of the Church after it as a body of death from which it would fain be delivered, and which it drops at length, altogether, to wander a melancholy ghost, or to enter on the endless metempsychosis of sectarianism. To distinguish without separating, and to combine without confusing, has been the problem of the Lutheran Church. It has distinguished between the form of Christianity and the essence, but has bound them together inseparably: the Reformatory has made sacred the individual life and liberty, the Conservative has sanctified the concrete order. Nor is this claim extravagant in its own nature. No particular Church has, on its own showing, a right to existence, except as it believes itself to be the most perfect form of Christianity, the form which of right should and will be universal. No Church has a right

to a part which does not claim that to it should belong the whole. That communion confesses itself a sect which aims at no more than abiding as one of a number of equally legitimated bodies. That communion which does not believe in the certainty of the ultimate acceptance of its principles in the whole world has not the heart of a true Church. That which claims to be Catholic de facto claims to be Universal de jure.

A true unity in Protestantism would be the death of Popery; but Popery will live until those who assail it are one in their answer to the question: What shall take its place? This book is a statement and a defence of the answer given to that question by the communion under whose banner the battle with Rome was first fought, - under whose leaders the greatest victories over Rome were won. If this Church has been a failure, it can hardly be claimed that the Reformation was a success; and if Protestantism cannot come to harmony with the principles by which it was created, as those principles were understood by the greatest masters in the reformatory work, it must remain divided until division reaches its natural end,- absorption and annihilation.

**MARCH 17, 1871.**

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