

John Morris

John Arndt



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John Arndt

By John G. Morris

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John Arndt.

By John G. Morris.

Among these illustrious characters, none of post-reformation celebrity, deserves higher admiration than John Arndt. None has received more. “His praise is in all the churches.” “He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost, and much people was added to the Lord.” His name, at least, is familiar to all Lutherans, and the title of one of his books is well known; but it requires only a slight acquaintance with his character, to cherish for him the most profound veneration.

Early Training

Nine years after the death of Luther, John Arndt saw the light of the world. The 27th of December, 1555, was his natal day, and Ballenstadt, in the Grand Duchy of Anhalt, the place of his birth. His father was a clergyman who enjoyed the universal esteem of the godly, for his own godly deportment and truly Christian spirit. But John Arndt had a mother also; not only a female parent — all children have that, but a mother, who was no less admired than her husband for her humility and piety. She was regarded as an ornament of that most responsible station, a pastor’s wife. Though poor in goods, and extremely limited in pecuniary resources, they felt themselves rich in the possession of their infant son, and in testimony of their gratitude to Heaven, they gave him the expressive name of *John*; that is, *the Lord is gracious*.

This was verily a Christian family. These pious parents knew that upon their training of this little immortal would depend, in a great measure, his religious character, and consequently his usefulness in the world, and hence at the very earliest period, they commenced that course of Christian instruction and discipline which will *always* insure the blessing of Heaven. They

have set an example of conscientious fidelity and unwearied zeal in the religious education of their child, which was sanctioned of God, and which may be safely imitated by others. It need scarcely be mentioned, that they regarded his religious culture as the most important, and accordingly they employed every effort at a very early period to develop the spiritual character of their darling boy, and gradually to elevate his uncertain hopes and fears to an enlightened, living and heart-felt faith. They considered it undeniably certain that religion must be deeply rooted in the soul in order to control the life, and that where this principle is sound and active, its salutary influence would be exhibited in every act of the man. If that be once secured, there need be no painful anxiety about anything else. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added to you." This declaration of our Lord was properly appreciated by them. They knew no higher gratification than to conduct their cherished son in the way of righteousness and truth. By fervent prayer, judicious instruction and holy example, they instilled into his soul the principles and love of the gospel, and were happy in observing their pious exertions blessed of God. The mother, of course, as it should be in every family, undertook the earliest training of the child. She was eminently qualified for the office. Would that all female parents were *mothers* to their children, in this most exalted sense!

What was the result of this course of Christian instruction? "From a child he knew the scriptures." In his earliest years he became practically and intimately acquainted with his Savior; from a child he was a true believer. He could have said with Baxter of a later period, "that he could not remember the time when he did not love God." Thus it would be with every child properly trained by Christian parents. Christianity is designed to save us from our very birth, and there is no necessity that we should be gross, practical sinners, or grow up to a certain age in rebellion against God, before we can become truly pious. Who will limit the operations of the Holy Ghost? Who will set bounds to the sanctifying energy of divine truth? Hence the question, whether children of tender years can be converted, is entirely superfluous and nugatory.

When young Arndt was sent to school he distinguished himself as one of the most studious of the pupils. He united an unwearied industry to a most retentive memory, and a ready comprehension to an unusual facility for acquiring knowledge. He was endowed with extraordinary gifts of mind and

heart. "The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and increased in wisdom and years, and in favor with God and man." The mother — so mother like — cherished the pleasing hope of once seeing her son arrayed in the clerical robes of his father, and of saluting him as a faithful minister of Christ. But they were poor, and how could they furnish the means of supporting him at the University? The father soon after died. The widow was bowed to the earth. The son was left without a father's care or counsel, and the future was dark. But their fears were groundless. God has said he will be a father and helper to the widow and orphan. The hearts of several benevolent persons were inclined towards this desolate little family. Means for prosecuting his education were furnished to young Arndt, and such a beneficiary as he was! so humble, so godly, so diligent, so self-denying, so modest; he may well serve as an example to that class of recipients of the church's charity.

But alas! for the mother's hopes, her son decided to devote himself to the study of medicine. Though disappointed, yet she did not despair. As she well knew, that desire and inclination for a profession are essential conditions of its happy and successful prosecution, she resolved not to oppose any obstacle in the way of his choice, and much less to persuade him, perhaps contrary to his inclination, to study theology. She still cherished the secret hope of seeing her ardent wish fulfilled. She had some ground for this hope. His favorite books were the Bible, the writings of Luther, Bernhard, Tauler, Thomas i. Kempis, and other pious authors. The candidate for medical honors was, after all, a diligent reader of the works of pious divines. His subsequent numerous writings give unequivocal evidence of their commanding influence on his opinions, and even his style.

At Helmstadt, Wittenberg, etc.

Thus, without in the remotest degree intending it or anticipating it, did Arndt in the most effectual manner prepare himself for the sacred profession to which he subsequently devoted himself with all his heart. "The Lord reigns." His previous determination to study medicine was changed by a remarkable circumstance which Providence employed to direct him in the way which had been marked out for him. He was brought nigh to death by sickness. All hope of recovery was abandoned. Yet the sufferer prayed most fervently. To his frequent and ardent prayers, he added the most solemn

vow, that if God would restore him, he would thenceforth consecrate all his gifts and strength to him in the service of the church. His supplication was heard. His vow was accepted. He recovered as by a miracle. The vow was fulfilled, and Arndt gave himself up exclusively to his new vocation. His earlier studies were renewed with double diligence, and in 1576, at the age of twenty-one, he entered the University of Helmstadt. Here he was a pattern of piety to all around him; he resisted all the temptations, which assailed him. His conduct was so exemplary, that his presence rebuked the ungodly. The voice of blasphemy was silent when young Arndt approached. The heart of piety was cheered when he entered the social circle. His favorite recreation was instructive conversation with intimate friends. He delighted also in the contemplation of nature around him, the hidden powers and wonders of which he studied with zeal. We are not, however, to presume that he belonged to that class of melancholy Christians, who decry every enjoyment of life, even the most innocent, and believe that a dejected countenance and a stern demeanor are essential features of Christianity. So far from favoring this fanatical view in his behavior, he was regarded by his intimate friends as the most cheerful of them all. He however carefully avoided those pleasures which are enjoyed without God, or rather against God, and hence he passed his whole University life without even in a single instance having purchased any enjoyment at the expense of conscience.

From Helmstadt he went to Wittenberg, well furnished with scientific learning and a rich treasure of practical experience. The hallowed memory of the great reformer, Luther, still threw a magical lustre around this school. An additional attraction was the fact that recently a new corps of professors, who breathed the spirit and taught the theology of Luther, had been recently appointed. Among these was the celebrated theologian Polycarp Lyser, at that time only, twenty-five years of age.

Thence Arndt proceeded to Strasburg, where he pursued his theological course with diligence, under teachers distinguished for their erudition and talents. He afterwards studied at Basel, where he gratuitously read some lectures on Natural Philosophy, Ethics and Eloquence, to a private class of friends. He also lectured with great approbation on the epistle of Paul to the Romans. Here he became the private tutor of a young Polish nobleman. This engagement not only aided him in the payment of his expenses, but it was also employed by Providence to furnish him with an additional evidence that the Lord gives his angels charge over us, and preserves us in all

our ways. One day as he was walking with his pupil on the banks of the Rhine, Arndt accidentally fell into the water, and being unable to swim, would have been drowned, if the Pole had not rushed in and dragged him out by the hair of his head.

Arndt was twenty-seven years of age before he conceived himself qualified to mount “that awful place, the pulpit.” He even then hesitated, and determined to devote himself for some time to the profession of teaching, and regarded this as a stepping stone to the ministry, believing that after he had fed the lambs of Christ, he would be better fitted to lead the whole flock into the rich pastures of his word. He was soon called an assistant preacher to Badenborn, in Anhalt, in connection with his office as teacher. Many of his pupils, in after years, thankfully acknowledged Arndt’s pious instructions, next to the grace of God, as the means of bringing them to a knowledge of the truth. He most industriously and conscientiously discharged his duties as a teacher, for he regarded nothing in the world so important as the early training of children in the truths and ways of religion. He remembered and experienced the blessed results of his own mother’s instructions on his youthful heart. He very properly held that if Christianity is to be maintained in its full vigor in the world, we cannot begin too early to instill its principles into the mind. He devoted his best energies to this duty, and extraordinary success attended his labors. He was not intimidated by difficulties, nor disheartened by apparent want of success. He persevered without weariness, until he had accomplished the desired end. As a preacher, he must have been popular with the pious, for when he was afterwards called to Quedlinburg, some of the people of Badenborn, which was not far distant, were among his hearers, whenever he preached. Arndt was of Luther’s opinion, that no one should become a preacher who had not for some time before been a teacher, and learned simplicity among simple pupils. In later years, when he became superintendent of schools at Celle, he thankfully acknowledged the goodness of God, which in early life had invested him with the office of teacher, that he might gain personal experience, and thus be better prepared to discharge his duties.

Marriage with Anna Wagner

His marriage with Anna Wagner, the daughter of a judge in Eisleben, was the great event of this period of his life. She was in all respects well suited to him; modest, pious, intelligent and active as a Christian, he considered himself blessed in the possession of such an inestimable treasure.

His Character As A Preacher

We feel strongly tempted thus early in our sketch of Arndt, to delineate his character as a preacher, for his character as such was developed in the very beginning of his ministerial career. That a man like Arndt should be most conscientious, faithful and diligent, may well be presumed. In these respects he may well serve as a model to all his clerical brethren. In all his official services he acted on the well established principle that he who as a preacher, teacher, or parent, or in any other relation, wishes to exert a happy influence on others, must above all, begin the work in himself. He very properly thought, that as a preacher, Christ should be formed in himself before he was qualified to represent him in his real character to his hearers. He was further convinced that he himself must most distinctly know the way of the truth before he could safely guide others into it, and that he could never successfully combat the enemy of souls as long as he himself was held bound by him; and finally, that he could not oppose the vices of the times, if he himself did not keep free from them. Before he undertook to feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made him an overseer, he most deeply impressed on his mind the words of the apostle; "Take heed to thyself." He knew no better means of ascertaining the character of his own heart, and at the same time of qualifying himself for his Christian as well as pastoral calling, than the pure word of God. Hence he daily and diligently studied the scriptures, that he might constantly improve in the knowledge of God and of himself. He always commenced his biblical reading with prayer. He well knew that the circumstance which gave such impressiveness to the preaching of the apostles, and spread abroad their influence so extensively, was the exemplification of the truth which they preached, in their own lives, and the practice of the virtues which they commended to others. The apostles could without hesitation say, "be ye followers of us, and mark them which walk so," as ye have us for an example; hence, that he might not himself be a cast away whilst preaching to others, and not be a stumbling

block in the way of the truth, he aimed first above all things at the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and laid it down as an inviolable rule, not only to preach practical sermons in the pulpit, but also and particularly to preach by his own example.

He bestowed the most careful attention on the preparation of his sermons and other public discourses and it was only in cases of extreme necessity that he preached without first having devoted much study to the subject. It was with extreme impatience that he heard some men, proud of their presumed acquirements, boast of being able to preach without special preparation. His practice was very different. Before he ever sketched the plan of his sermons, he sought by diligent reading of the scriptures and fervent prayer, to acquire a proper frame of mind, and vividly to depict to himself the truth, which he conceived most appropriate to his hearers at the time. The grand design of all his discourses was to build up his hearers on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. In order to prepare their hearts for the reception of this faith, he regarded nothing more important and necessary, than to lead them to a knowledge of their own fallen condition, and to awaken in their hearts a sense of their corruption by nature and practice. He very properly maintained that so long as a man does not feel himself to be a grievous sinner before God, he cannot appreciate the blessing of salvation through Christ, and will not accept of him as a Redeemer. Then, after he had convinced the sinner of his personal guilt, and humbled his proud heart, he opened the treasure of the gospel, and demonstrated to the penitent, that though our heart condemn us, yet God's grace is greater than our heart, and that if we confess and forsake our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Hence, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, by whom we have access by faith into this grace, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It was not a dead, inactive faith that he preached, but a living, practical godliness. He vindicated the claims of the moral law with extraordinary power. He taught with Paul, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." The consoling doctrines of reconciliation through Christ, and of justification by faith, did not serve in his hands as a soft and luxurious cushion for the uneasy conscience to repose on, but he insisted strenuously on moral reformation, self-denial, a daily growth in grace, and the rigid practice of all the Christian virtues, as the only sure evidence of a hearty acceptance of

these doctrines. He inveighed severely against those formal Christians who vainly imagined that a heartless repetition of certain forms of prayer and well arranged words was sufficient, and who depended solely on their profession of faith and membership in the church. No less impressively did he rebuke the sins and vices of the day. He did not come to preach the gospel “with wisdom of words,” but to declare the uncorrupted message with all simplicity. He proved it to be the power of God — a light that shineth in a dark place — a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces — a sword that divides asunder the soul and spirit. To those who desired to be Christians without repentance and holiness, his preaching appeared severe, and they took no pleasure in hearing him. They hardened their hearts against his faithful admonitions. Those, on the other hand, who earnestly sought salvation, felt the power of the truth, and heard him willingly.

As A Pastor

He did not regard his office as pastor as less important than that of preacher. As often as time and circumstances allowed, he visited the members of his congregation, and embraced every opportunity of doing them good in private. He was indefatigable in reconciling those who were at enmity, in rousing the lukewarm, reminding the careless of their duty, encouraging the disheartened, cheering the disconsolate, instructing the ignorant and rebuking the perverse. The poor and needy he aided to the extent of his ability. In this work of mercy, he was essentially aided by his wife, who obtained food and clothing for the destitute and sick, visited the poor families of the church, and interested others in their behalf.

The children of the church, particularly, claimed much of his attention and care. Confirmation was, at that time, not generally practiced, although it had been introduced into Pomerania by Dr. Bugenhagen, in 1534, and hence there was, properly speaking, no instruction given to candidates for that ancient but then obsolete rite. Still, he was most industrious in his catechetical instruction of the young, and these lessons were also attended by many of riper years.

In this spirit Arndt labored for nearly seven years in Badenborn, and the blessings of his ministry survived him so long, that even at this late day, the descendants of his parishioners revere his memory not only as a distin-

guished servant of God, but as having been the pastor and preacher of their ancestors. These seven years were the happiest of his life. It is true, that even here some unpleasant circumstances occurred to interrupt his perfect happiness, but on the other hand his domestic felicity was a full compensation for all his troubles. The affectionate concern of his wife in all his labors and trials, her profound sympathy in all his sorrows and successes, was a constant source of the purest enjoyment. Finally, however, a terrible storm gathered and broke over his head with tremendous violence. It terminated sadly. The pious, meek, inoffensive and useful John Arndt was not only deposed from his pastoral office in Badenborn, but was even banished from the duchy of Anhalt. He had committed no heinous offense against God or man, but merely maintained the rights of his conscience in an affair of church discipline, and refused to submit to the tyrannical and persecuting edict of his government in the abolition of the ancient ceremony of exorcism.

Banishment

In order to have a proper understanding of this singular affair, and of the numerous controversies which grew out of it, it is necessary, briefly, to consider the history of the times. — The period was one of great excitement in a political as well as in a religious and ecclesiastical respect. We shall confine our observations to the church. It will be remembered that the light of the glorious gospel, through the instrumentality of the illustrious Luther, had shone over the whole of Germany, and had awakened a new ecclesiastical life, the influence of which the most lukewarm could not resist. But where there is much light, there is much shadow. This newborn activity brought out vast differences and varieties of religious convictions and views, which alas! too soon degenerated into violent controversies and mutual accusations of heresy. It is well known that even during Luther's lifetime, some discontented and litigious spirits had occasioned the most acrimonious dissensions, and sowed the seeds of discord among the people. As long as Luther himself held the rudder with a firm grasp, and steered the ship of the church, the danger was not so great, for he was a master pilot, and could navigate the storm tossed vessel into a safe and peaceful harbor,

but no sooner had he himself entered the haven above (Feb. 18, 1546,) than the tempest burst forth fearfully from every quarter.

Now followed one of the most unpromising periods of all modern church history. The theological war raged with terrible severity, not only between the Lutherans and Reformed, but the most bitter dissensions arose in the bosom of the Lutheran church itself. The peace of the church was seriously threatened, and the most fearful apprehensions were entertained of an open rupture. All the friends of order and harmony felt the urgent necessity of putting a stop to this lamentable condition of things. Some of the Princes of Germany offered their aid in the work of restoring peace to the distracted church. But the noble and pious August, Elector of Saxony, particularly exerted himself to reconcile the contending parties. After many fruitless attempts to accomplish his laudable purpose, he at last ordered several learned and distinguished divines to prepare the celebrated Formula of Concord, which was completed in 1577. The work aimed at two objects: first, to check the controversies in the Lutheran church, and to harmonize the views of theologians; and secondly, to refute the opinions of the Reformed church, particularly in reference to the Lord's Supper. It however accomplished this object very imperfectly. On the other hand, it originated new controversies and widened the breach instead of closing it. A majority of the countries of Germany willingly adopted this Formula, as a faithful exposition of their doctrinal views, and awarded to it the dignity of a church confession of faith. Others, and among them the duchy of Anhalt, of which Arndt was a subject, obstinately resisted the reception of it, partly on the ground that the people were already strongly inclined to the doctrine of the Reformed party. Notwithstanding this opposition, the Elector August had it published in connection with the other confessions of the Lutheran church, and it first made its appearance in Dresden, in 1580, under the title of the Evangelical Book of Concord, just fifty years after the delivery of the Augsburg Confession.

This was the signal for fresh and violent provocation and dissensions. The Reformed felt themselves much aggrieved, and raised a loud outcry against it, because it severely handled and conclusively refuted their peculiar theological doctrines. In some countries the princes now openly embraced the confession of the Reformed. This roused the Lutherans to the highest pitch of excitement, and the mutual dislike of the parties was carried to a fearful extent. This blind zeal led to the employment of most unright-

teous means to gain the victory, and to the use of the most abusive and disgraceful language.

This custom has always been reckoned by our church among the adiaphora, or things non essential, about which every man may exercise his private judgment. No controversy would ever have risen on the subject, and the practice would have been peacefully abolished if the Reformed had not violently opposed it on doctrinal grounds which the Lutheran divines regarded as erroneous. As an ancient church custom, the latter were willing to abolish it, but as significant of the doctrine of innate depravity, many defended it. Exorcism was nothing more than a significant declaration of the spiritual captivity of the infant in the kingdom of Satan (for a bodily possession of the devil was never thought of.) The language of the formula, "I adjure thee thou unclean spirit," etc., etc., has indeed an imperative tone, but it is to be taken in the sense of a prayer to God against the influence of the spiritual enemy of the baptized infant.

What was Arndt to do in this case? to yield against his convictions, merely for the sake of bread? Never; and even if all the clergy in the country succumbed, as they afterwards really did, it was impossible for him to abandon his principles. He adhered to his position unchangeably, and continued to practice exorcism. What would be the result of his refusal, Arndt could anticipate very well from what had before occurred. Few can have a proper conception of his feelings in this predicament. Even if for himself he could endure the severity of his lot, in being deprived of his office, and the only means of support, what were his feelings when he looked on his wife, who would share his sufferings, and on his congregation, to which he was attached with all his heart, but which would in this event, be left destitute and forsaken? His devoted Anna did not betray, by the slightest word, any dissatisfaction with her husband's course. She was not only too refined and sympathizing, but she had too much faith and courage, and besides, had too high an estimate of the value of religious conviction and freedom of conscience, to complain of the stand he took. We may conceive that a separation from his office and congregation would be the most painful sacrifice he could make. But should these minor considerations lead him to deny his convictions and purchase these benefits at the expense of conscience? No; and though still heavier storms should burst over his head, and the future should be dark as midnight, yet he was firmly resolved to endure every

thing, that Providence might please to lay upon him. Arndt resolutely took his stand; the threats of the prince could not move him. He wrote a declaration on the subject of exorcism, and sent it to the prince. He makes known his unalterable determination not to yield, but entreats his sovereign to deal tenderly towards him. But John George was unrelenting, and on the 24th of September John Arndt was deposed from office, and exiled from his country. His fate was decided, but he submitted to it with calmness. A mind like his, fast anchored on the immovable rock, which is Jesus, could not be violently shaken by any tempest, nor could anything disturb his Christian serenity and inward peace with God.

The first intelligence of this event fell like lightning from a clear sky on his congregation, and sent, as it were, an electric shock through every heart. Though there was some expectation of the circumstance, yet when it really happened, the report was astounding. The occasion presented an opportunity of testifying the exalted esteem, in which he was held by the people. The congregation rose as one man, and petitioned the prince most fervently to remove the sentence of deposition from their beloved pastor. The prince was immovable, and they were compelled to yield to their severe destiny.

Who would suppose, that there were men capable of filling the cup of sorrows with wormwood and gall, which was already bitter enough for poor Arndt. But he was even now in a most trying manner to experience the fate of so many great men who are most liable to be misrepresented and envied. For it was not only his opponents in the Reformed church, not yet satisfied with his banishment and fall, but even some of his former colleagues, who perhaps in this way could best silence the voice of their own conscience, and palliate their inconstancy and unfaithfulness before the world, sought in a most dishonorable manner to excite distrust in him, and to represent his character in the worst possible light. Some regarded his conduct in this affair as the result of an unyielding and selfish obstinacy; others sought to discover in it the efforts of an eccentric character to render himself notorious; still others decried it as the abortion of an untimely and unchristian zealotism, and finally, others pitied him as a well-meaning but weak minded fanatic, who did not know nor understand his own interest. Some, doubtless, in these modern days of ultra liberalism, will be disposed to censure Arndt for his inflexible perseverance in maintaining his principles, and his preference of exile to submission. But let it be remembered that it was an affair of conscience, and he was not the man to accommodate his conscience to the

caprices of a persecuting government. The question is not, whether exorcism is a scriptural or even a laudable rite, but whether any civil authority has the right of interfering with the religious convictions of any man? Arndt in resolutely vindicating his position, and suffering banishment rather than abandon it, carried out the principles of genuine protestantism, whilst (he prince who exiled him, displayed the persecuting spirit of the papacy, and violated all the rights of private judgment and of conscience, which the Reformation has secured to us.

Exile — Quedlinburg.

Compelled to yield to the mandate of power, abandoned and assailed of men, proscribed and exiled, deposed and houseless, Arndt seized the pilgrim's staff, and like Abraham, departed from his country and his friends, without knowing what course to take, or where to lay his head. But his mind was at ease. His God did not forsake him, though he was given up of men. He soon received two calls at the same time; one to Mansfeld, and the other to Quedlinburg. Here also he most faithfully discharged the duties of his office. His trials were numerous; whilst he was exceedingly beloved by the pious, he encountered severe opposition from a different class of persons. A regular war of persecution was waged against him. He was made the target of disgraceful attacks by those, who felt the force of his faithful rebukes of their sins. We do not know a man, who has been more unrelentingly persecuted than Arndt. Wherever he labored he encountered the most shameful opposition and the most disgraceful slanders. Satan seems to have had a particular dislike of him, and he roused his emissaries to the most violent attacks against this servant of the Lord. The enemy occasionally triumphed for awhile, but he was soon again vanquished, and Arndt conquered gloriously. His behavior amid all these severe trials was saint-like. None but a man who daily held the closest communion with God, and who breathed the very spirit of his Divine Master, could have endured such repeated and aggravated insults. The details of them, which we have not room to give, are most sickening, and yet it is refreshing to behold this man of God sustaining himself nobly by faith, and displaying a martyr firmness, while the flames of persecution were raging around him.

The occurrence of the plague at Quedlinburg, in 1598, which in one year carried off three thousand persons, afforded him the best opportunity of giving the most unequivocal proof of his official fidelity and self-sacrificing spirit. During its continuance, he was constantly employed in the infected sick rooms of his friends and enemies. He often literally crept into the meanest hovels, where the pestilential odor was so horrible, that the occupants could scarcely endure it, and wherever he found dead bodies, he had them buried, accompanying them to the grave-yard himself. Besides this, he preached every day, in addition to delivering many funeral discourses. And yet for all this extraordinary labor, he received no adequate acknowledgment. On the contrary, he was cruelly calumniated, and his motives misrepresented.

About this time he published his first book, entitled *Iconographia*, or, the origin, use and abuse of images in the old and new Testaments. He wrote this book against the ecclesiastical changes in Anhalt, in which he showed that the ancient usage of bowing at the mention of the name of Jesus, and of making the sign of the cross, should be retained.

During Arndt's residence at Quedlinburg, he became acquainted with a youth, then only fifteen years of age, but who afterwards rose to a lofty eminence in the theological world. It was John Gerhard, the celebrated Lutheran divine. Young Gerhard attributed his conversion, under God, to Arndt, and over after, they lived on the most fraternal and intimate terms.

Brunswick and Political Strife

Arndt's next field of operation was the city of Brunswick, which, during his residence there, was most violently agitated by political strife. The Brunswickers were in open rebellion against their Grand Duke, who, however, finally subdued his refractory subjects, after bombarding the city for twenty-one days, and inundating it by damming up the river which runs through it. The history of these times is very interesting, but our limits will not allow us to dwell on them at length. The clergy were almost necessarily mixed up with the political broils that raged violently among the people. Arndt could not remain neutral. He rather inclined to the side of the government, although he did not apologize for its wrongs. He denounced its oppressive measures, whilst he exhorted the people to submit to the rightful

sovereign. There were horrible excesses practiced in Brunswick. Many citizens were most cruelly put to death. Superstition lent its aid to add a savage ferocity to the mode of execution, but Arndt did all in his power to mitigate the sufferings, and comfort the hearts of the victims of political rancor and governmental persecution.

True Christianity

The year 1605 was an important and decisive one for Arndt. He was now fifty years of age. Although he had previously published a small book, yet now properly speaking, begins his career as a writer and author. He entered a field of active usefulness, in which for over two centuries, and for millions of persons, he has been a substantial blessing, and will continue to be so until the end of time. The first of his “six books on true Christianity” was published.¹ This world-renowned work contains a series of week day sermons, preached by him. It has for its special object, as Arndt himself expresses it, to lead Christians from a dead to a living^[^cqX] faith; from a mere scientific knowledge of Christianity, to the real practice of faith and godliness; to show them what genuine Christian life is, and to teach them the meaning of the apostle’s language, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” As regards the sentiments and style of the work, Arndt’s previous ascetic training was plainly discernible. Not only were the spirit of Tauler, Kempis, and Bernard to be recognized, but even their modes of expression and shades of thought. If ever any man was competent to write on true Christianity, that man was John Arndt. It had become his very life; it entered into the very center of his own experience; it was an essential part of his being, and hence it was only necessary to let the mouth utter that, of which the heart was full. We need not be surprised that this book, at its first appearance, met with undivided approbation and an extensive sale. It was properly regarded as the first book of devotion in the protestant church, and soon established for itself the character of a masterpiece of unperishable value. The practical writings of Luther, Bugenhagen, Lorenz and Sarcenes were mostly written in Latin, and were limited to ministers or professors; hence the people had no devotional book, properly so called, until the publication of the first book of Arndt on true Christianity. It was not long before its fame was spread throughout all Europe, and to this day it is accomplish-

ing its work of blessing and mercy in undiminished vigor. In all European circles of pious Christians, it continues to be the chief devotional book. It has led millions to a knowledge of the truth; a countless number of the ungodly to repentance; thousands of lukewarm believers to Christian activity, and afforded comfort and refreshment to a host of the weary and heavy laden. Without hesitation, next to the Bible, no book can be more properly recommended to those seeking edification, than Arndt's *True Christianity*.

Opposition to *True Christianity*

We are not to suppose that the book met with no opposition. It encountered the severest and most denunciatory criticism, even from some of the clergy. They were envious and embittered at its popularity. They took advantage of every offensive expression, and condemned the book with vehement zeal. One party condemned him for being too orthodox, and for trying to bring the people under the iron yoke of a spiritual despotism, and the rod of a paper Pope, by which they meant the symbolical books of the church, and the other party, the blind zealots of a churchly orthodoxy, who made *True Christianity* and true Lutheranism to consist in inflexible party forms and fixed phrases, denounced him and his book for not being sufficiently churchly. Although he had now three times publicly sworn to adhere to the symbolical books, and in all his preaching and writings had zealously maintained the Lutheran faith to its fullest extent, yet these men charged him with defending principles which were directly adverse to the Lutheran theology, when all history shows that he was a more consistent Lutheran than they. The most superficial examination of his book shows that their accusations were false. It is true that, however strong his attachment to the doctrines of the church was, yet it was a matter of infinitely greater moment to him to be purely pious than merely orthodox (*nicht nur rechtgläubig sondern rechtgläubig*). He ascribed everything in and after conversion, exclusively to the divine grace, and acknowledged no other righteousness of life than that based on a righteousness of faith. Hence faith and godliness were, in his mind, two ideas so intimately associated, that he could never think of them as separated, as he himself tells us, where true faith exists, there is Christ, for Christ and faith are not divided. Where Christ is, there is also his life, for Christ and his life are never divided. Where the life of Christ is,

there is pure love, for the life of Christ is nothing but love. Where the love of Christ is, there is the Holy Ghost. Where the Holy Ghost is, there is the kingdom of God. If a man has one he has all; if he fails in one he has none. If then Christ dwells, lives and works in you, all the good you do is not yours, but it is the king's who dwells in you, so that you must not ascribe it to yourself, nor do you deserve anything on account of it, for it is not yours, but. everything that is good comes from God in us, etc., etc. This intimate connection of faith with newness of life, he did not prominently hold forth everywhere in his writings, for as he says in a letter to his friend Piscator, whose opinion he requested on his *True Christianity*, he did not write only for those who made no pretension to conversion, but for those especially who professed to be Christians, but who led immoral lives. Hence, it was not his design to engage in extensive discussions on the nature of faith, but to write against the unchristian conduct of those, who loudly professed the true faith, but denied it in their works.

Whilst Arndt was compelled to endure these attacks from various parties, he received not only from Piscator, in Jena, a very favorable opinion of his book, but from many other places, the most unequivocal testimonies of the good, which the book had accomplished. Many learned men even, and princes of high distinction, thanked him for it, and urgently requested him to publish the remaining parts of the work. This greatly encouraged him, but of what avail was all this? He was still vehemently assailed by the theologians. His own colleague, Deneke, was more violent, in his opposition than all the other zealots. He even employed the pulpit to warn the people against the dangerous doctrines taught by Arndt. He invaded Arndt's domestic sanctuary in his rabid reproaches, and assailed the character of his wife. Arndt tells us, that if God and his conscience had not supported him, this treatment would have occasioned his death, or at least, thrown him into a violent fever.

It is not to be wondered at, that under such circumstances, instead of proceeding at once to prepare and publish the remaining books of *True Christianity*, three or four years should have elapsed before they appeared.

Under this melancholy condition of things, one would suppose that he would have accepted a call to Hallerstadt with joy, which he received about this time, if with no other view than to escape his persecutions and vexations in Brunswick. The call was subsequently renewed, and he finally accepted it, but the council of Brunswick would not grant him an honorable

dismissal, and positively refused him permission to leave the city. He consented to this abridgment of his liberty, and yielded without a murmur.

The opposition to his book continued with unabated violence. He sometimes even feared that the excited vulgar populace, who had been led to decry him as a fanatic, and who held all godliness in abomination, would lay violent hands on him, and put him to death. His solemn avowal, that he never wrote anything contrary to the teachings of the symbolical books, was of no effect. He writes to Piscator,

“I would with joy submit to banishment, that I might escape this wretched condition of things, if I did not fear that the cause of religion would suffer by it, for any one can easily imagine the effect of the banishment of a theologian on account of a false suspicion of religious error.”

He continued to receive congratulations on his book from various places, but considering the outrageous assaults made on him, these congratulations were like a few drops of honey in a vessel of gall. He was surrounded by implacable enemies; he everywhere felt himself under restraint, on account of the unfounded suspicion the people cherished of his orthodoxy; he was not on friendly terms with a majority of his colleagues; even the suppression and alteration of some objectionable passages in the new edition of his book, did not satisfy them; they still denounced him as the old synergist, and seemed determined not to cease their heartless persecutions. He wrote thus complainingly to his young friend, John Gerhard:

“I am privately and publicly assailed by the most cruel slanders, I am branded with suspicion before the common people, and I presume they are anxious to get rid of me. I have not had a happy day since you were with me, two years ago. If I receive no other call, I shall retire to some place, perhaps to Eisleben, and live a retired life. Really, the world is becoming too ungodly. I never would have believed, either, that there were such mischievous, wicked men among theologians.”

Call to Eisleben

How much more wisely, in the opinion of some men, Arndt would have acted two years before, if he had resolutely insisted on going to Halberstadt, (for the council must have yielded) and if he could have foreseen all the horrors of the long siege, and all the sufferings arising from his incessant

persecutions, which were in preparation for him, who knows, if he would have allowed himself to remain? But perhaps he was specially destined to endure such severe sufferings, that from his own experience he might be the better qualified to comfort others in the remaining books of *True Christianity*. These books were ardently longed for by many pious persons. Some of them begged the privilege of having them transcribed, for it was known they were written, so impatient were they to read them. So great was his popularity among that class of persons, that individuals even of rank, traveled one hundred miles to see the man and enjoy his society for a short time. But Arndt was far from being happy at Brunswick, with all these evidences of respect from strangers. However, a more favorable change than he expected, awaited him, and this was his call to Eisleben. He determined to go and preach the gospel in the birth and death place of Luther. The Burgo-master of Brunswick, and a large number of church members exerted themselves to induce him to change his determination. He would not yield. The Brunswickers allowed him to leave their city without paying him all the salary due him, and he was afterwards compelled to demand it by law. This was discreditable to the church, and yet, on the other hand, testimonials of the highest character were given him by the town council and some of the clergy.

He was most cordially welcomed at Eisleben, and it may well be conceived how grateful to his feelings all this was, after his severe persecutions at Brunswick, which he never visited again. He felt like one who in a dream had been attacked by savage beasts in a dark forest, but who on awaking, finds himself secure. He here again subscribed the symbolical books in the presence of the Prince and many other distinguished persons. He was not only pastor of St. Andrew's church, but was also a member of the consistorium, or council of ministers, it was not, however, Arndt's lot to enjoy many days of unclouded sunshine, and he was again called on to experience that "the afflictions of the righteous are many." A deposed colleague named Wolf, occasioned him unspeakable trouble, but the Lord knows how to bring the counsels of the ungodly to nought. In Count Mansfeld, and in the general superintendent, Dr. Schleussner, he found the warmest and most influential friends and defenders.

His numerous friends and distinguished patrons now importunately urged him to publish the additional book of *True Christianity*. He yielded to their request, and in 1609, the three other books were published under the

direction of John Gerhard. Thus was the work completed, and it will always remain one of the most suitable, uninspired books ever printed, for the instruction of the believer in the origin, progress, difficulties and practice of Christian piety. Christ in us, that is, the sanctification of man is the principal theme of all his books, but every where grounded on Christ for us, that is faith. The refutation of false doctrine is conducted very mildly in the work, and even where the prevailing sins of the day are rebuked, it is done in the gentlest manner. In such a work there must almost necessarily be much repetition. This, with Arndt's copiousness of language, imparts to some portions of it an amplitude and dryness, which prevent the admirers of a tasteful and finished style, from reading much of it at a time.

It was natural that the orthodox clergy should so fiercely oppose this book, and take offense at its mystical expressions and style, and the more so because the fanatics and mystics of that day glorified Arndt above all measure, and designated him as the third Elijah, and the restorer of true godliness. Arndt, with his strong tendencies in that direction, might have fallen wholly into the arms of the mystics, but for these furious assaults upon him. Perhaps we have to thank these orthodox divines for being the cause of the gradual expurgation of the book of these excrescences, and of finally rendering it what it has really become, the best devotional book of ancient or modern times.

Call to Luneburg

In 1610 he received a call to a still more influential post. — Duke Ernest, of Brunswick Luneburg, offered him the place of general superintendent of the Principality of Luneburg, in connection with the pastorate at Celle. He accepted it after various hindrances, and we now behold him elevated to a high office in the church, which involved an immense responsibility, as well as a most commanding influence. Before he accepted this call, he requested the opinion of the theological faculty at Wittenberg. They returned an equivocal and very unsatisfactory reply. This drew from him a rejoinder, which we wish that he had never written. It is one of the weakest and most objectionable acts he ever committed, and although he may have considered the provocation great, yet the severity of his rejoinder was not justifiable.

About this time he received the painful intelligence of the death of the excellent wife of his dear friend, John Gerhard. The letter of condolence which he sent to him is so beautiful, and affords such an interesting view of the character of the writer, that we cannot refrain from giving some extracts of it.

“From my inmost soul, I pray the Father of all mercies, and the God of all consolation, to grant you grace and comfort, my revered and excellent friend, whom I embrace in the arms of Christian fellowship, and whom I love with the affection of a father. With the most profound grief, I have heard of the death of your excellent wife. If my sighs, my sympathy, my tears could avail anything, I would do every thing to convince you that my services are at your command; but as the divine will must be obeyed, patience is necessary, and not tears and lamentations. The children of this world are estimated according to worldly prosperity; the children of God according to afflictions and trials. Choose now, which of the two would you prefer? Very seldom indeed does Christ allow those to be always happy whom he has destined for heaven. They who are to enjoy the bliss of Paradise, come up out of great tribulation. It is not granted to the inhabitants of heaven to partake of the pleasures of both worlds. You have sent before you a wife, a mother, a bride. A wife who was given you of God for a little while, in order through her to procure an heir for heaven; a mother, who through the leaven of regeneration has enriched the kingdom with an infant son; a bride, who betrothed to Christ, was to become a queen in heaven, whom the bridegroom of virgin souls would not allow to remain longer on earth, that she might no longer be deprived of heaven. God has made you the follower of the patriarch Jacob, who on his return to his native land, sent before his wife and children, and traveled after them by himself on foot. I ask you, which would you prefer, to leave your dear infant son with his mother behind you, or send them on before you? If it is safer to send them on before you, why do you mourn? Do you envy Christ’s joy? He has only demanded back his own, and not yours. How happy those souls, who freed from the dross and anxieties of this world, are enjoying an everlasting rest in the blissful presence of God. Soon did your sainted wife complete her earthly career, and during a brief period she was a daughter, maiden, bride, wife, mother; richly adorned with the true knowledge of the Son of God, crowned with the most brilliant virtues, and admired for her distinguished piety. She was a temple of the Holy Ghost. She bore the cross of Christ

without weariness; she was patient in tribulation without murmuring. She was faithful in prayer without doubting, and at last, full of confidence in God, and calmly committing her soul to Christ, she left the prison house of clay, and became a partaker of the heavenly bliss. What more do you wish? Is it not better suddenly to complete our course, and discharge our particular duties, than to drag out a slow and weary existence? He who performs his work soon, deserves rest soon.”

At Celle, Arndt had the unspeakably great advantage of serving a prince who was truly pious. In all Christian duties, he was an example not only to persons of his own rank, but to the poorest of his subjects. The duke Christian was a conscientious observer of the Lord’s day. He did every thing in his power to maintain the dignity and honor of the house of God, and was a liberal patron of the servants of the church. Arndt’s external and financial condition was much improved by his removal to this place, but his liberality to the more needy around him, always kept him poor. The good things of this world could never have fallen into more generous hands, for nothing afforded him more pleasure than to do good and communicate. All the money which was laid on the altar as a compensation for sacramental services performed, (as was the custom at that time) was regularly deposited by him in the charity box before he left the church.

The sphere of his official operations was extensive. At one time we see him on tours of inspection and visitation; at another in the sessions of the Consistorium, proposing wise and salutary measures; again, visiting all the schools of the Principality, encouraging the teachers with friendly advice, and communicating the results of his own rich experience. The striking improvement in the religious life of the people, and the complete and wholesome reformation in all affairs pertaining to the schools, was a speaking evidence of the wisdom and conscientiousness, the care and fidelity with which he discharged the various duties of his profession. And if even to the present day, the Principality of Luneburg has many peculiar and excellent arrangements in these respects, superior to those of other sections of Germany, it owes them in part to the faithful zeal of its former general superintendent, more than two hundred years ago.

Exalted and influential as his position was, never for a moment did he forget his relation to Christ. He ever kept in view the language of John the Baptist: u He must increase, but I must decrease." Herein lay, according to him the whole mystery of godliness, the sanctification of the heart, and the

way of salvation. Hence, he gloried in his own weakness that the strength of Christ might dwell in him, for he knew that “when we are weak then are we strong,” and that we are only great in that proportion, in which we feel ourselves low, and daily become more convinced of our utter helplessness and unworthiness.

How, in the multitude of his engagements, he could yet find time, not only for his extensive correspondence, but also for his labors as an author, would be incomprehensible, if we did not know that he well understood the happy art of employing every hour of the day to some useful purpose, and that besides this, the most perfect system and punctuality characterized all his proceedings. He did everything in the right way, at the right time, and with untiring diligence. He was neither idle, nor slow, nor slovenly. Hence, postponed and half-finished labors, so common with most men, were almost strange to him, and if he had them on hand occasionally, he gave himself no rest until all was finished. Restless activity and constant application were real luxuries to him; a real, proper element of his life, in which he felt himself happy. — Overloaded as he was with business, to such an extent that many others would have sunk under it, he continued cheerful and undismayed. He laid hold of his work with the energy of a man, who was determined to perform it, and never was he so contented as when he was most laboriously engaged. He was an example of industry to all his colleagues, and thus urged on to activity many a man who tarried by the way, or groaned at the prospect of difficulties, real or imaginary, before him.

Of his writings that were published about this time, (1615) the following may be mentioned, sermons (*Postilla*²) on the Gospels and Epistles. In 1617 appeared his exposition of the Psalms, the German theology, and a German translation Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ*. In 1618 he prepared, at the command of Duke Christian, a church constitution and discipline for Luneburg, which would be considered too severe, even by the most puritanic of our congregations at this day. But those were the times of most rigid adherence to the symbolical books. In proportion as that adherence became lax, the exercise of discipline was relaxed, and all sorts of rationalistic error were introduced. That man has read church history to very little purpose, who has not learned that fact, and his opinion on the subject is entitled to no consideration whatever. The days of the church’s greatest purity are those, in which she clings to her confessions with most ardor, and cultivates the spirit inculcated in them with most zeal. It has always been so in the history of

our church. All the books show it; all the facts demonstrate it. The days of the revivals under Arndt, Spener and Franke, were the days of uncompromising allegiance to the symbolical books.

The number of Arndt's admirers increased in the same proportion, in which during this period, he multiplied the number of his writings. From near at hand and afar off, the high and the low, an immense number of letters were sent, expressing their cordial thanks, for the unspeakably great blessings which they had derived from his book. Princes and nobles, professors, ministers and laymen sent him their hearty congratulations, and related numerous instances of conversions through the instrumentality of his books. On the other hand, the number of those who envied and hated him also increased. — They assailed him most remorselessly, and renewed calumnious accusations which had been refuted a hundred times. But it is refreshing to look on the calmness and patience with which he bore this unrelenting opposition. Whenever he was assailed, he carefully and impartially inquired whether there was any ground for the attack. He was far from presuming himself to be infallible, nor did he deem himself so wise as to need no advice or correction from others. Hence, as soon as he was convinced that either in his conduct or his writings, he had committed an error or given offense without cause, he was not ashamed to acknowledge it, and no man was more ready to make all due reparation. Instead of being offended, when charged with error on good grounds, he felt sincerely thankful to the person who told him of his fault. But if, on the other hand, after conscientious investigation, he discovered that he was right, nothing could move him from the truth, or the execution of his purpose. This perseverance in a good cause, amid reproach and opposition, is often regarded as selfishness and obstinacy, by persons who never felt the power of conviction or the love of truth. When Arndt found men opposed to him in honest, open discussion, who he knew were in pursuit of truth, and discovered that a mere misunderstanding existed between them, he defended his position or his conduct with the most remarkable gentleness and modesty, seeking to convince them with the whole power of his extraordinary eloquence, without however attempting to force his convictions upon them by the employment of severity or dogmatism. If, on the other hand, he saw that the assault arose from a spirit of controversy, envy, obstinacy, malice or knavery, and that the only object in view was to occasion vexation, or injure his reputation, then, if he felt that the dignity of his office, or other important reasons rendered it nec-

essary, he engaged in the controversy with the firmest resolution and most unflinching courage, always, however, observing the law of love, and never attacking the personal character of his opponent.

In the discharge of his pastoral duties at Celle, Arndt was faithful and diligent. The many evidences of confidence and veneration, which he received from his civil rulers and the people, show conclusively that he did not allow his labors as an author, nor his numerous controversies to interfere, in the least degree, with his duties to his church.

Arndt's Death

Arndt had now attained his sixty-sixth year, and his strength began to decline. Though naturally of a strong constitution, yet his incessant toils as preacher, pastor, author and controversialist, at length overcame him. He preached his last sermon on the 3rd of May, 1621. It required extraordinary exertion to finish the discourse. This did not escape the notice of his hearers, for they observed that during the sermon his face turned deadly pale, and that his voice, usually strong, clear and melodious, frequently failed. Arndt, who for a long time before anticipated the approaching termination of his pilgrimage, did not attempt to conceal his present condition from himself. On returning from church, and meeting his wife at his own door, he observed with composure, "I have now preached my funeral sermon." He was not mistaken. He was obliged to take to his bed on that day, and never left it alive. From that moment he gave himself no more concern about his official affairs, that he might be undisturbed in his final preparation for death, and that he might not distress his family and friends unduly, he gave no evidence by word or action, that he looked for death with certainty.

At first his condition did not seem desperate, for, besides great exhaustion, he suffered only from an apparently slight inflammation of the throat, which rendered speaking and swallowing difficult. However, there soon followed painful oppressions of the breast, associated with a burning fever, which very soon exhausted all his remaining strength. Amidst his severest sufferings, he did not betray the least degree of impatience. By the side of his faithful wife, who, from the first moment of his attack, never left his bed, and with whom he had lived in a happy though childless marriage thirty-eight years, he looked forward to his death with perfect composure

and filial submission to the will of his Heavenly Father. Why should not this have been the case? He had learned to die, before the final hour arrived. He prayed, not relying on his own righteousness, but on God's mercy in Christ, and comforted himself with the assurance that we are justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ. Supported on this foundation-rock of his faith, he calmly awaited his approaching end, and was not only satisfied, but fervently prayed, that God would deliver him from his misery and trials.

In order to unite himself still more intimately with his Savior on earth already, he sent for his friend and colleague, Storch, with the request to receive the Lord's Supper. He soon appeared, and after Arndt had been seated on a chair, and in deep humility had made a confession of sin, he partook of the holy sacrament in the presence of his wife, his colleagues and several other friends. After this effort he became weaker. Storch then addressed him in language, similar to that which Dr. Jones used in speaking to the dying Luther.

"I do not doubt that, as you have never entertained any doctrine contrary to God's word, but have always continued firm and steadfast in the unadulterated word, the writings of the prophets and apostles, the Augsburg confession and other symbolical books of the Lutheran church, so you will also, by God's grace, maintain to the end the same doctrines and faith which you have publicly preached and professed." Arndt replied several times, in a weak but intelligible voice, "yes, yes, that I will even to the end."

After these words he sunk back exhausted, and although the physicians employed all their skill to preserve his life; and his people, not only in the churches, but in private also, fervently prayed for his restoration, yet those around him could no longer doubt of the speedy issue. The hour had struck, when he was to enter the joy of his Lord, and receive the crown of eternal life.

The 11th of May finally arrived; it was Friday; which he spent for the most part silently, but yet in fervent aspirations to his heavenly father. Towards evening he interrupted that silence, and uttered the words of the Psalmist, "Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant;" on which some one present replied what is written in John 5, 24; " Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from

death unto life." He sunk into a brief, tranquil slumber, but soon awoke, and, casting his eyes towards heaven, he spoke with holy ecstasy.

"We saw his glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth." And when his wife asked when he had seen this glory, he replied, " I have seen it just now. Oh, what a glory it is! It is the glory, which no eye hath seen, no ear hath heard. Yet this glory have I seen."

Soon after, the clock struck eight, and he asked the hour. — An hour after he repeated the question, and when he was told it had struck nine, he joyfully responded, "now I have conquered." These were his last words. Surrounded by his friends, he lay with folded hands, and with the countenance of an angel, full of holy peace. When at half-past twelve at night, they bent over his tranquil face, believing that his breathing had become more faint, he had already departed; that noble heart had ceased to beat; his eloquent lips were sealed and his lustrous eyes closed forever. On his really beautiful countenance there was not the least trace of suffering or struggle, but there was spread over it a placid, holy serenity; that peace of God, which, during the whole of his active life, even amid the most threatening outward excitement, always reigned in his soul.

It was a remarkable fact, that on the day of his death there was an eclipse of the sun, which his friends considered portentous. With him, in fact, the greatest, purest and most brilliant light in the firmament of the church since the time of Luther was extinguished.

His Character.

If we take but a superficial view of this extraordinary man, if we accompany him to his solitary chamber, or in the stormy arena of his public life, we every where discern traces of character which elevate him among the noblest and most venerable of his race; a man equally distinguished for thorough, sound and solid science, and extensive, profound and practical knowledge of God, as well as for extraordinary purity of character, and unblemished Christian and apostolic deportment. Yea, truly as far as human infirmity is capable, he was richly endowed with all the virtues and graces of a faithful pastor, an eloquent preacher, a learned theologian, an affectionate husband, a sincere friend, an upright follower of Jesus Christ.

Nothing was more natural, than that his death should universally excite the deepest sympathy, and the most profound grief. On the 15th of May, he was buried in the church at Celle. His funeral was honored by the presence of Duke Christian, and an immense throng of citizens of every class.

If ever the words of Daniel could with propriety be applied to any great teachers in the church, among them was Arndt.

“And they that be wise (the teachers) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” He shone on earth already in doctrine, word and work. If he was not so brilliant a scholar as Melancthon or Erasmus, or so fearless a hero as Luther, yet he displayed in his writings and his life, a power, a love, a piety which cannot be contemplated without profit by any man. He bore the same relation to Luther, that the apostle James bore to Paul. Holding fast to purity of doctrine, he yet placed the practice of it in the foreground, and he often used the expression, “Christ has many disciples, but few followers.”

In his sermons, he was a true reformer of the taste of that age; for instead of making an idle display of learning and controversial acrimony, he expounded the scriptures plainly and faithfully. In his books, he stands forth prominently as the greatest practical writer of the whole Protestant church, and there is, perhaps, no book in the literature of practical theology, which at the time of its appearance created such a sensation, and met with so wide a circulation as his *True Christianity*. He never was a poet, but extremely fond of music. He loved the Latin language, and wrote it with great facility, but the German language he cherished with enthusiasm. In his intercourse he was friendly and sociable. He was often visited by strangers, desirous of making his acquaintance. He was always at the service of every body. He did not become vain when he was commended, nor displeased when he was blamed. He was willing to learn from any person, and was always ready to correct his errors when he was convinced of them. His riper years were, notwithstanding a continual conflict with the envy, impatience and bigotry of the theologians, many of whom were more zealous for an external confession than for holiness of heart and conduct.

Very peculiar to him, and probably the remains of the superstition of earlier times, was his anxious confidence in premonitions. Thus, he was dreadfully afraid of an approaching war, because one day a large number of storks had gathered on the roofs of the houses in the town of his residence; he regarded a circumstance, that occurred in a family in Brunswick, in

1605, as ominous of its downfall; thus also, the death of Duke Ernest, in 1611, was considered by him as a warning not to accept the call to Celle.

He was not only an uncommonly active and industrious man, who cultivated his own fields, but he was also very economical and temperate, satisfied with little, and leading a very frugal life. His wife contributed much, by her prudent and economical management of household affairs, to his comfort, and thus enabled him to dispense more liberal charities to the poor.

Great, as he was, as a preacher, yet he was still more distinguished for his gift of prayer. In the numerous vexations of his life, from his youth up, he had learned to pray with the most fervent devotion, and often with bitter tears did he commend to God the condition of the church. To this day, his book entitled the Garden of Paradise, remains unexcelled as a book of prayer.

All Arndt's writings were published in three folio volumes at Leipzig and Gorlitz — the first in 1734, the second in 1735, the third in 1736.

The most extensively read of his writings is, of course, the four books of *True Christianity*. If, during the life time of the author, this work was bitterly assailed, we need not wonder that after his death this opposition not only continued, but became even more violent than ever.

The work was attacked and defended by eminent men. The most influential and violent of its opponents was Dr. Lucas Osiander, junior, Professor, Provost and Chancellor at the University of Tubingen. In the preface he promises to say nothing with regard to the person or character of Arndt, but he is soon carried away in the heat of polemics, and charges Arndt with all manner of heresies. His design was to maintain the purity of the church doctrine, which he conceived to be tarnished by the writings of Arndt. Osiander belonged to a family in which the spirit of controversy seemed to be hereditary. The prejudice, which he cherished against Arndt, associated with his blind zeal for orthodoxy, carried him too far, and tempted him to unfairness and unwarrantable severity. He aimed at the total extermination of the book, and in order to accomplish its complete destruction, he published another book in 1624, entitled Simple Christianity. But his design so signally failed, that whilst Arndt's book was translated into many languages, and was circulated by the thousands in and out of Germany, Osiander's fell into such obscurity, that nothing is now known of it except the title. On his death bed, Osiander repented sincerely of his opposition to Arndt, and confessed that he was moved against him by envy and other evil passions. Numerous

other writing for and against the book, appeared, which we have not room to mention.

The more extensively these controversial writings were read and discussed, the more decisive was the verdict in Arndt's favor, and hence we hear the most distinguished theologians of the Protestant church, expressing themselves in his behalf, and vindicating him against the charge of heresy. Some of them lauded him unconditionally; others did him full justice in all essential points, and greatly admired the genuine Christian principles, on which his book was founded, whilst they here and there censure some expression liable to misconstruction, and complain of the absence of discriminating doctrinal distinctness.

Among those, each of whose names is a host, who vindicated Arndt, were John Gerhard, the great Lutheran divine, Professor at Jena; John Valentine Andraeae, Professor at Tubingen; (of whose character our readers shall learn more in our next number) John Benedict Carpzov, Professor at Leipzig; Dr. Solomon Glasius, Superintendent at Gotha; John Andrew Quenstedt, Professor at Wittenberg; Polycarp Lyser, Spener, Beyer, Lange, Buddaeus, Walch, Bengel, who, in his commentary on Revelations 14:6, regards Arndt as the angel flying through the midst of heaven, proclaiming the everlasting gospel. We have collected the testimony of these, and a number of other celebrated Lutheran theologians, in favor of Arndt, but we have not room to give them.

It was not only the divines of the Lutheran church, but those of the Reformed church have also borne evidence to the exalted merits of this illustrious man of God. Even in the church of Rome, his worth has been acknowledged. In 1734, the *True Christianity* was printed in the Romish institute at Kempten, in Bavaria, but without the original title, dedication, preface and biography, and given out as though published by Dr. Arndt. Some alterations were made, but by some neglect or oversight, the third part, which treats of the Holy Trinity, has the whole of the title of the Leipzig copy, from which this surreptitious edition was printed.

But the numerous translations and editions of this work, for the last two hundred years, afford the most brilliant proof of the victory of Arndt over his enemies, and of the powerful influence it has had on the minds of men. There is, perhaps, no book, besides the Bible and Luther's smaller catechism, that has been so often printed, so extensively sold, and so much read, as this. From 1664 to 1780, that is, in 116 years, more than seventy princi-

pal editions were issued, without reckoning others of inferior and cheaper character. It has been translated into many European languages and dialects, and into Malabar by the missionary Schulze. In 1646, and again in 1712-14, English translations appeared in London. An abridgment in questions and answers, was published in 1750. In 1777 Fleddersen began to modernize the style, and adapt it to the literary taste of the times, and published it in three parts. It was finished by Sinterius.³

The English version of 1712 was dedicated to Queen Anne. The following is an extract of the preface: “Our Arndt was the ornament of the Lutheran church in the beginning of the seventeenth century. He endeavored to awaken the people from their lifeless formality to an inward sense of true Christianity, by restoring the doctrine of a living faith to its first integrity and practical application. Dr. Worthington, in the preface to his translation of the Christian Pattern, introduces Arndt as one of the brightest lights of the Protestant church, and having compared him with Salvian among the ancients, and Thomas a Kempis among the moderns, he likens him in the last place to the prophet Micah, with regard to the hardness of his lot, informing us how such a plain and sincere dealing met with great opposition and censures, even among protestants themselves, but how unjustly and undeservedly hath been observed by others.”

Several editions have been published in this country. The best is by H. Ludwig, New York. That issued by the American Tract Society is divested of every thing characteristically Lutheran.

He who longs after spiritual edification and deep religious confidence, can take up no book better adapted to exhibit the entire nothingness of every thing earthly, and the absolute necessity of divine grace, and of an internal life in God, than this work. It became the principal devotional book in all protestant Christendom, and it has continued to be such to this day, especially among those speaking the German language. With great propriety does Pritius remark in his preface to the small Leipzig edition, (1701) “What necessity is there of many words when the works speak so loudly? Truly this book has brought uncounted numbers to a knowledge of salvation. And if it were possible to state how many ungodly persons have been through it awakened to repentance — how many resting in previous security, led to a proper appreciation of *True Christianity* — how many luke-warm roused to active zeal — how many mourning souls comforted;—in a word, how many unbelievers truly converted, we would then have a proper

conception of the extent of the divine aid which was imparted to this holy man in writing this book.”

Some years ago, Dr. Anton, Professor at Halle, accompanied the Saxon prince, August, to Madrid as his traveling chaplain, and in company with the prince's physician, visited the library of the Jesuit college in that city. He asked the librarian, what book of a practical character they esteemed most highly? a Latin work without any title was shown to them, and highly commended as a most excellent production. Dr. Anton immediately recognized it as the Latin translation of Arndt's *True Christianity*, and remarked that he was well acquainted with the book. "That is John Arndt's work, one of our protestant divines." The puzzled Jesuit could not, of course, retract his unmeasured commendation, and only observed, he did not comprehend how that book should ever have found its way into Spain!

Count von Hohelohe, a convert to the faith of Rome, once expressed himself thus to Dr. Anton: "If you had many Arndts, it would be better for you, and much worse for us!"

A young man of the Protestant faith, residing in a Roman Catholic city, became much concerned about his salvation. He tried many expedients, but all in vain, to secure his acceptance with God. He thought, at length, he might find peace of mind in the church of Rome. He applied to a priest for advice. "Young man," said the priest, "return to your native country; read John Arndt's *True Christianity*; read it diligently and prayerfully, and your ardent longings after God's grace will be satisfied."

Thus Arndt has triumphed. His writings have materially contributed to the regeneration of the church in his native land. The most influential ministers of a later period have followed in his footsteps. Many imitated his style, but especially copied his example in holding up practical Christianity, repentance and faith, conversion and sanctification, thus entirely changing their mode of preaching, of which they soon beheld the happy results.

But the principles of Arndt were most fully carried out many years afterwards, by Spener and his pupils, and hence with great propriety, Lange designates Spener as the second Arndt (*Arndtium redivivum*). Since that time, devotional literature has received a new impetus. Dr. Gerhard wrote his *School of Piety*, Paul Egardier, his *True Christianity*, and many other pious divines published works of a similar character.

Whilst those books written against Arndt are lying covered with dust, and unread in old libraries, and their titles forgotten, Arndt's books are still

revered and studied, and the name of their author will live in grateful remembrance for ever. Those of his enemies have been proved to be hay and stubble, whilst his are gold and precious stones. For two hundred years they have been the source of blessings to millions, and they will continue to exert an influence for good from generation to generation to the end of time.

1. Properly speaking, there were but four, for the fifth and sixth, which comprise various treaties and letters, were only incorporated and printed with later editions.↩
2. Postiila. — A collection of sermons to be read in the churches after the gospel, especially by schoolmasters in the villages in the absence of the minister. Paul Warnefried, under Charlemagne, made a collection of sermons from the Fathers, and the Emperor ordered that they should be read in the churches post ilia, i.e. verba Evangelii. Hence the name post ilia. It is said that Luther first applied this name to this class of devotional books. It is very Luther like.↩
3. It was this work that was translated and published some years ago by the Rev. John N. Hodman, of our church in this country.↩

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Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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- [*The Great Gospel* by Simon Peter Long](#) and [*The Eternal Epistle* by Simon Peter Long](#)

“I want you to understand that I have never preached opinions from this pulpit; it is not a question of opinion; I have absolutely no right to stand here and give you my opinion, for it is not worth any more than yours; we do not come to church to get opinions; I claim that I can back up every sermon I have preached, with the Word of God, and it is not my opinion nor yours, it is the eternal Word of God, and you will find it so on the Judgment day. I have nothing to take back, and I never will; God does not want me to.”

- *True Christianity* by John Arndt
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