

SCIENCE AND CHRISTIANITY

but it is certainly wrong when we look to its practical side. The deliberate and indiscriminate attacks of the ultramontane Church on science, supported by the apathy and ignorance of the masses, are, on account of its powerful organization, much more severe and dangerous than those of other religions.

In order to appreciate correctly the extreme importance of Christianity in regard to the entire history of civilization, and particularly its fundamental opposition to reason and science, we must briefly run over the principal stages of its historical evolution. It may be divided into four periods: (1) primitive Christianity (the first three centuries), (2) papal Christianity (twelve centuries, from the fourth to the fifteenth), (3) the Reformation (three centuries, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth), and (4) modern pseudo-Christianity.

I.—PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY

Primitive Christianity embraces the first three centuries. Christ himself, the noble prophet and enthusiast, so full of the love of humanity, was far below the level of classical culture; he knew nothing beyond the Jewish traditions; he has not left a single line of writing. He had, indeed, no suspicion of the advanced stage to which Greek philosophy and science had progressed five hundred years before.

All that we know of him and of his original teaching is taken from the chief documents of the New Testament—the four gospels and the Pauline epistles. As to the four canonical gospels, we now know that they were selected from a host of contradictory and forged manuscripts of the first three centuries by the three hundred and eighteen bishops who assembled at the