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ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA.

ROTHE

ROTHE, RICHARD (1799-1867), theologian, was born at Posen, January 28, 1799, of parents in a good position. After passing through the grammar schools of Stettin and Breslau, he studied theology in the universities of Heidelberg and Berlin (1817-20) under Daub, Schleiermacher, and Neander, the philosophers and historians Hegel, Creuzer, and Schlosser, exercising a considerable influence in shaping his thought. From 1820 to 1822 he was in the clerical seminary at Wittenberg, and spent the next year in private study under his father's roof at Breslau. In the autumn of 1823 he was appointed chaplain to the Prussian embassy in Rome, of which Baron Bunsen was the head. This post he exchanged in 1828 for a professorship in the Wittenberg seminary, and hence in 1837 he removed to Heidelberg as professor and director of a new clerical seminary; in 1849 he accepted an invitation to Bonn as professor and university preacher, but in 1854 he returned to Heidelberg as professor of theology and member of the Oberkirchenrath, a position he held until his death, August 20, 1867. Rothe's mental and religious development was one of continuous progress. As a youth he was the subject of deep religious feeling, with a decided bent towards a supernatural mysticism; his chosen authors were those of the romantic school, and Novalis remained his life through a special favourite. In Berlin and Wittenberg he came under the influence of Pietism as represented by such men as Stier and Tholuck, though the latter pronounced him a "very modern Christian." He afterwards himself confessed that, though he had been a sincere, he was never a happy Pietist. In Rome, where he enjoyed the intimate friendship of Bunsen, and studied church history under the broadening influence of classical and ecclesiastical art, his mind broke loose from the straitened life and narrow views of Pietism and he learned to look at Christianity in its human and universalistic aspects. From that time he began to develop and work out his great idea, the inseparable relation of religion and morals, finding in the latter the necessary sphere and the realization of the idea of the former. He began then, and particularly after the revolution of July 1830, likewise to give a more definite form to his peculiar view of the relations of church and state. In consequence of this

enlargement of his ideas of the world, religion, morals, Christianity, the church and the state, Rothe gradually found himself out of harmony with the Pietistic thought and life of Wittenberg, and his removal to Heidelberg in 1837 and the publication of his first important work (*Anfänge der christlichen Kirche*) in that year coincide with the attainment of the principal theological positions with which his name is associated. During the middle period of his career (1837-61) he led the life of a scholastic recluse, taking no active public part in ecclesiastical affairs in any way. During the last six years of his life (1861-67), partly owing to his liberation from great domestic cares and partly to the special circumstances of the church in Baden, he came forward publicly and actively as the advocate of a free theology and of the *PROTESTANTENVEREIN* (*q.v.*). This important change in Rothe's practice was preceded by the publication of a valuable series of theological essays (in the *Studien und Kritiken* for 1860), afterwards published in a separate volume (*Zur Dogmatik*, Gotha, 1st ed. 1863, 2d ed. 1869), on revelation and inspiration more particularly. These essays were a very searching examination of the relation of revelation to Scripture, and provoked much hostile criticism in quarters previously friendly to Rothe, where the relation was usually treated as almost one of identity. In consequence of this publication, and his advocacy of the programme of the *Protestantenverein*, he was classed at the end of his life amongst the more decided theological liberals rather than with the moderate orthodox party, amongst whom so many of his personal friends were to be found.

Rothe was one of the most if not the most profound and influential of modern German theologians next to Schleiermacher. Like the latter he combined with the keenest logical faculty an intensely religious spirit, while his philosophical tendencies were rather in sympathy with Hegel than Schleiermacher, and theosophic mysticism was more congenial to him than the abstractions of Spinoza, to whom Schleiermacher owed so much. He classed himself amongst the theosophists, and energetically claimed to be a convinced and happy supernaturalist in a scientific age. A peculiarity of his thought was its systematic completeness and consistency; aphoristic, unsystematic,