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Medicine



THE
HISTORY AND PROSPECTS
OF THE CHURCH.

THE
DISTRICT AND COUNTY
OF

THE
HISTORY AND PROSPECTS
OF THE
CHURCH,

FROM
THE CREATION TO THE CONSUMMATION
OF ALL THINGS,

WITH A SYLLABUS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

SECOND EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

CONVINCED of the prevalence and injurious effects of ignorance concerning "the times that have passed over" the church of God, the Author of the following Work delivered a Lecture on Ecclesiastical History, which, though rapid, and consequently incomplete, excited so much interest as to call forth a general request to see it in a more permanent form. Another Lecture having followed, on the Prospects of the Church, as unfolded by the signs of the times, and the promises made to religion in the volume of Revelation, a similar request was made for its publication. A third, on the scheme of prophecy, and the outline of the book of Revelation, was suggested by the wild theories that are now obtruded on the church and the world. This has been deemed a fit companion to the other two.

The author is well aware that such an account of the origin of the Work would not justify its

publication, if the book itself were not adapted to convey useful information, or devotional improvement. But, as he is not acquainted with any single volume which gives this comprehensive view of the whole fortunes of our globe, he deemed it right to gratify the wishes of those who asked to see the Lectures in print. Should this hasty sketch awaken the desire of Christians, and especially the young, for the perusal of more complete histories, and for more perfect information concerning "the ways of God to man," and should it call off students of Scripture from the delusive and pernicious expectations in which many are now indulging, the Author will feel himself much indebted to the friends whose favourable opinion led to the publication, and still more to the God who prompts to the conception, and aids in the execution, of every good work.

CONTENTS.

BOOK I.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT,
OR BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST.

	PAGE
CHAP. I.—From the Creation to the calling of Abraham	14
CHAP. II.—From the calling of Abraham to the reign of David	19
CHAP. III.—From the reign of David to the Babylonish captivity	23
CHAP. IV.—From the Babylonish captivity to the coming of Christ	27
SECT. 1.—From the captivity to the return of Israel	28
SECT. 2.—From the re-building of Jerusalem to the coming of Christ	35

BOOK II.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

CHAP. I.—The period which elapsed from the birth of Christ to the reign of Constantine	45
SECT. 1.—The Apostolic Age	<i>ib.</i>
SECT. 2.—The Age of Apostolic Fathers	54
SECT. 3.—The Age of Persecution	62
CHAP. II.—From the reign of Constantine to the Reformation	68
SECT. 1.—The Civil establishment of Christianity	<i>ib.</i>
SECT. 2.—The Corruption of the Christian Church	78

	PAGE
CHAP. III.—From the Reformation to the Present Time	90
SECT. 1.—Of the Waldenses	91
SECT. 2.—Of the Protestants	102

BOOK III.

THE PROSPECTS OF THE CHURCH.

CHAP. I.—Changes of favourable omen now taking place	119
SECT. 1.—The breaking up of old systems hostile to religion is one characteristic of the times	<i>ib.</i>
SECT. 2.—The increased activity of principles fa- vourable to religion	124
SECT. 3.—The separation of the Church from the World	134
SECT. 4.—The removal of other evils injurious to religion	139
SECT. 5.—Increased Spirit of Prayer	143
SECT. 6.—Effusion of the Holy Spirit	145
CHAP. II.—Prospects afforded by Prophecy	147
SECT. 1.—A general view of future events foretold in the New Testament	<i>ib.</i>
SECT. 2.—Outline of the Revelation	161
Conclusion	182

INTRODUCTION.

To those who lived in the earliest ages of the world, it must have been a speculation intensely interesting, to inquire what would happen on this newly-created earth, and they must have welcomed every glimpse into futurity which the light of prophecy would afford. History clearly and loudly tells us what prophecy never hinted or whispered to them ; and shall we fling away, by a willing ignorance, the lessons of six thousand years ? The sense of duty and of delight which leads Christians to study the Scriptures, saves them from entire unacquaintedness with that part of ecclesiastical history which is to be learned from the Bible ; though where this heavenly light fails, they too frequently seek no other help. But, as the inspired history terminates just where profane history ceases to be mere fable, and becomes a narrative of veritable facts, we are taught by this dispensation

to value the records of antiquity, and to avail ourselves of their light, where that of the inspired guide is withdrawn.

For this reason, a compendious history of the church should be welcomed, especially by the young, that, as far as the Scriptures go, we may be aided in the study of their narrative, and where this terminates, we may be supplied from other sources, with needful information. In the sketch of ecclesiastical history here furnished, what may be learned from Scripture, which is in every Christian's hands, is but rapidly glanced over, that what must be fetched from less accessible historians may be more amply detailed.

The link which connects the Old Testament with the New, is peculiarly needful for those who study history as a development of the counsels of God, a picture of his providence, and a record of the method in which he carries into execution the purposes of his grace. Of the early ages of Christianity, immediately after the Acts of the Apostles cease to be our guide, a more full record has been given than of the dark ages; for little is the instruction, and less the pleasure, afforded by the history of igno-

rance, superstition, misery, and crime. The rise of the Protestant Reformation was worthy of a copious detail, but the subsequent ages have unhappily furnished too little to instruct, improve, or delight the church.

Ecclesiastical history has so generally told her tale under the evil bias of that antichristian corruption which we have had to record, that the student may say,

“ And while I listen'd to your song
Your stream had e'en conveyed me there.”

It is nothing less than a duty, therefore, to supply the rising race of Christian readers with safer sources of information. Nor is there a sufficient variety of compendiums, for the instruction of those who have either not time to read, or not money to purchase, more voluminous works.

For those who pursue with devout interest the church's story, it is natural to inquire what shall be the history of ages yet to come. The lawfulness of such curiosity, and the desirableness of meeting it with some information, we learn from the manner in which the Author of all knowledge has constructed both the volumes

of divine revelation—opening them with a record of what is past, but closing with a prophecy of things to come.

The diseased curiosity which now afflicts the church, as it has ever done in times of excitement and of change, renders it desirable to give a scriptural and practical turn to the inquiries and expectations of the pious. As the simplest elements of knowledge are the best, the only introduction to its more recondite principles, the reader is here prepared for the depths of prophecy, not merely by being informed of the records of past history, but by being assisted in the study of those scenes which are passing under our eyes. By these steps, we have advanced to the investigation of those disclosures made in the book of the Revelation, of which a brief outline is given, that our little volume may, like the greatest, in the sense of the best of books, begin with the creation, narrate the history, and end with the glorious consummation of all things.

THE HISTORY AND PROSPECTS OF THE CHURCH.

As a large part of the inspired Scriptures consists of history, we are thus taught the value of this kind of knowledge, and the worth of the Bible, without which the narrative of the earliest ages, both of the church and the world, had been lost. What God has so kindly deigned to teach we should be diligent to learn from his lips, and in his fear. The two volumes into which Divine Revelation is divided, the Old Testament and the New, give their names to the two grand divisions of the history of the church.

BOOK I.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH UNDER THE OLD
TESTAMENT, OR BEFORE THE COMING OF CHRIST.

THIS includes a period of four thousand years, which is twice the length of the Christian history. The whole space must, therefore, be subdivided into shorter periods. Following the divisions which

Matthew* has adopted, I shall notice four distinct eras.

CHAP. I.—FROM THE CREATION TO THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM.

The world, which is shown by the Scripture history not to have been eternal, as idiot philosophers have dreamed, was probably placed at creation in the state of autumn—loaded with fruits for the food of man. The civil year of the Jews, and other ancient nations, began at the autumnal equinox. Our first parents were placed in the Paradise, or pleasure-ground, which God had planted in Eden, at the confluence of the Euphrates and Tigris, near the Persian gulf. The state of innocence, which the poets call the golden age, probably lasted longer than is generally supposed. Though, by the fall, Paradise was lost, our first parents carried with them the hope of mercy inspired by the promise, “the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.”

From the creation, or the fall, to the flood, there were 1656 years. This, which was a period of sin rather than of religion, was closed by a tremendous judgment, which displayed the horrible effects of the fall. Cain, its first-born child, hated and

* Matt. i. 17.

murdered his brother, Abel, whose righteous works, and acceptable offering of a lamb, expressive of faith in Christ, were rewarded with martyrdom; to show that there is another and a better world for the friends of God, to whom death is gain. The murderer, driven out from the presence of God, built a city, and his descendants, who excelled in arts, soon became exceedingly corrupt. Among these, Lamech had the bad pre-eminence of impiety, especially for violating the wise law of marriage, by taking two wives. Instead of Abel, God gave to Eve another pious son, Seth, whose descendants, called the sons or children of God, marrying the daughters of men, or the wicked offspring of Cain, the whole earth became so corrupt that God, speaking in the language of men, said, "He repented of making man, and would destroy him with the earth."

Grace, however, first showed its triumphs, in Enoch, who walked with God, when the whole world walked contrary to him. As Abel, being dead, yet speaketh, "that the souls of the righteous, at death, enter into bliss;" so it was now shown that the body shares in the state of immortal felicity, to which Enoch was translated without passing through death. He first preached righteousness, and announced the coming of the Lord to

judgment, Jude 14, 15. Enoch's great grandson was Noah, who, being righteous, was chosen to be saved from the approaching flood, in an ark, which God taught him to make. It was an immense barge, or ship, without masts, 450 feet long, 75 wide, and 45 deep, more than capacious enough, at the lowest computation, to contain all the known species of animals, with food for man and beast. The flood, which covered the tops of the mountains, lasted five months, and destroyed man, and beasts, and birds, except those that were received into the ark. The proofs of this event, of which there are ample traditions, but no history except in the Bible, are seen in layers of shells and bones of fish, in such positions as nothing but the flood can account for. Skeletons of hyænas, which belong to a much warmer climate, are found in this country, showing a former state of the earth far different from the present.*

After the waters had subsided, the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, near the Black Sea.

* The date of the flood is made out by the lives of the Patriarchs, thus :—

Adam was, on the birth of Seth,	130 yrs. old, Gen. v. 3.
Seth..... Enos	105
Enos..... Canaan	90
Canaan..... Mahalaleel	70
Mahalaleel..... Jared	65
Jared..... Enoch	162

Noah's three sons divided the earth among their descendants. Asia was peopled by Shem, who was probably the most pious, as religion flourished in his family, from which Christ was to descend. Ham was the father of Canaan, on whom fell the curse due to him that mocketh his parents. Ham's descendants, who settled in Canaan and in Africa, were smitten with the curse of slavery. Japheth was the ancestor of the Europeans, who, according to Noah's prediction, have entered into the tents of Shem, by possessing the territory of Asia, and by enjoying the religion of Christ.

After the flood, the flesh of animals was granted for the food of man, who was forbidden to eat it in the blood, that is, while the animal was alive; the punishment of death was denounced against murder; and the rainbow was made a sign of a covenant of peace, to secure us against the dread of a second deluge.

While the whole earth spoke one language, of which Hebrew is a dialect, men built the tower of Babel, as a landmark for a rendezvous, that they

Enoch.....	Methusaleh	65
Methusaleh.....	Lamech	187
Lamech.....	Noah	182
Noah was, at the Deluge,		600

1656, the age of the world
at the Deluge.

might not be dispersed. But God, giving them up to discordant counsels, compelled them to desist, and thus, accomplishing his purpose of scattering them over the earth, produced a variety of languages, which gave the name of Babel, or confusion, to the tower. The earth was 1757 years old when the tower was built. For Arphaxad was born two years after the flood, and he was thirty-five when Selah was born, who was thirty when he begat Eber, who, after four and thirty years, had Peleg, when the earth was divided. At Babel, idolatry seems to have commenced; for the tower being used as an observatory, men turned, from studying, to worship the heavenly bodies. Nimrod made his skill and prowess in hunting the occasion of founding the Babylonish monarchy; Ashur commenced, at Nineveh, not far distant, the Assyrian empire; and Mizraim began to rule in Egypt, which the Arabs called Mezr. In the line of Shem there were ten generations, until Abraham was born to Terah. The following list and dates will show the order of succession:—

From the flood to Arphaxad	2 years
From Arphaxad to Selah	35
From Selah to Eber	30
From Eber to Peleg	34
<hr/>	
When the earth was divided } at the building of Babel }	101

From Peleg to Reu	30
From Reu to Serug	32
From Serug to Nahor	30
From Nahor to Terah	29
From Terah to Abraham's birth	130
	<hr/>
	352
To Abraham's call	75
	<hr/>
	427

Which, added to 1656, the age of the earth at the deluge, gives 2083 years, the age of the world at the calling of Abraham.

Terah is said to have been seventy years old when he begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran. But as it is not probable that all these sons were born in one year, it must mean that then the oldest was born. Abram, being the youngest, was not born till his father was a hundred and thirty. This number added to 75, the age of Abram when he left Haran, makes two hundred and five, according to Gen. xi. 32.

CHAP. II.—FROM THE CALLING OF ABRAHAM TO THE REIGN OF DAVID.

This was the era of the triumphs of providence and grace. That 430 years elapsed from the calling of Abraham to the Exodus, or the going out of Egypt, we know from Exod. xii. 40. The former half of this period was spent by the patriarchs in a pilgrim state. For, when idolatry became so pre-

valent that the holy seed was corrupted, and the ancestors of Abraham began to serve other gods (Josh. xxiv. 2), Jehovah called Abraham out from his country, promising him the land of Canaan, on the coast of the Mediterranean, where his posterity might live as witnesses for God.

Abraham brought into Canaan Lot, his nephew, who, settling near Sodom, was carried off by the kings who had attacked it, but was recovered by Abraham, who routed them, after their victory. On his return, the father of the faithful was met, and refreshed, and blessed, by Melchizedec, who reigned at Salem, afterwards called Jerusalem, where he was cherishing, as a priest, the last remains of Jehovah's worship, among the descendants of Canaan. But the inhabitants of Sodom, and the neighbouring towns, became so corrupt that it was deemed necessary to make examples of them, by fire from heaven, after which the earth seems to have opened, and swallowed up the cities; so that the river Jordan, which formerly flowed on to the Red Sea, now terminates in the dreary lake of Sodom, whose peculiarities confirm the traditions of the east, concerning this event, of which the records are nowhere found but in divine revelation.

For the son, from whom it was promised that the Saviour should descend, Abraham was kept so long

waiting that Sarah his wife, in despair, introduced to his bed Hagar, her Egyptian bondmaid, of whom was born Ishmael, whose posterity have, ever since, inhabited the desert of Arabia, where they have been freebooters, as was predicted, Gen. xvi. 12. But, when Abraham was ninety years old, Isaac was born, and received the sign of circumcision, which was now made the seal of the righteousness of faith, handed down in the line of Abraham, according to God's promise, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed." Abraham, being commanded, laid his son on the altar, as a sacrifice, but received him back, at the critical moment, with the promise that God would send his Son, of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, to be a sacrifice for us.

From Isaac descended Esau and Jacob. The former was profane, and the inheritance of religion descended in the family of Jacob, who had twelve sons, of whom Joseph was the favourite. He, sold by the envy of his brethren as a slave into Egypt, saw his prophetic dreams fulfilled, in his elevation to power, and in the asylum he afforded to his family, who took refuge there from famine. Now the promised increase of Abraham's seed awakened the jealousy of Egypt, from whose persecutions they were delivered by the ministry of Moses. He was chosen to be the writer of the first five books of

Scripture—a written revelation having become necessary for the instruction of the church, since the duration of human life was shortened. On the very day promised,* Israel came out of Egypt, which had been smitten by ten plagues. Led miraculously across the Red Sea, which was divided to make them a path, they were supported forty years in the desert of Arabia, where they received, on Mount Sinai, the law of ten commands and the peculiar rites of their religion, designed to shadow forth the person and sacrifice of Christ. The tabernacle was erected, in the year of the world 2514, before Christ 1490, and carried about, during thirty-seven years of marches and counter-marches, in the desert.

Joshua, whose name was the same as Jesus, brought Israel into Canaan, across the Jordan, which was dried up to make way for them; and, the iniquity of the Canaanites being full, they were cut off by the people of God, who were marked out by miracles to be the chosen executioners of Heaven's vengeance. To the objections of infidels it is enough to say, that no people who cannot produce such credentials can plead this as an example for national conquest. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, and

* Anno mundi 2513, which is made up by adding 430 years of sojourning to the age of the world at the call of Abraham.

half the tribe of Manasseh, settled on the eastern side of Jordan. Israel lived under Judges,* until Samuel, who was raised up to write additional books of Scripture, probably Joshua, Judges, and Ruth; which last was designed to show that Christ descended from Judah, in the royal line of David. The school of the prophets, now formed, was a sacred college for the preservation and interpretation of the Scriptures, in opposition to the idolatry of the neighbouring nations, into which Israel was prone to fall. This tendency to imitate the heathen, from whom it was their glory to differ, leading Israel to ask a king, Saul was chosen; but he proving wicked, David was raised up to supersede him, and to be a distinguished type of Christ. This brings us to another era.

CHAP. III.—FROM THE REIGN OF DAVID TO THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY.

The son of Jesse was born at Bethlehem, and was

* From 1 Kings vi. 1, we learn that it was 480 years from the Exodus, anno mundi 2513, to the building of the temple, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign. The time of the Judges, then, must have been about 332 years; for 83 years must be allowed for the reigns of Solomon, David, and Saul; 40 for the wandering in the desert, and 25 for the time of Joshua: $480 - 83 = 397 - 40 = 357 - 25 = 332$.

A difficulty arises from Acts xiii. 20, which seems to assert that the time of the Judges was 450 years, which some endeavour to make out; but we may read the original thus, "After these things, there were 450 years when God gave them judges until Samuel."

not only a king and conqueror, but a prophet, who wrote the greater part of the Psalms. His history, like that of Christ, exhibits, in the first part, humiliation and suffering, and, in the last, triumph and dominion. Having extended the sway of Israel to the Euphrates, and fixed the seat of government and worship at Jerusalem, David wished to build a temple for God, as the tabernacle was now growing old. But this honour was denied to him, who had shed blood, and was reserved for his son Solomon, whose name signifies peaceful, which was the character of his reign.

After David had swayed the sceptre forty years, Solomon succeeded, and built the temple, a type of Christ, "in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."* Solomon reigned in piety, peace, and splendour, till his wives drew him away to worship their heathen gods; for which Jehovah threatened to rend ten tribes from the house of David. It has been supposed that Solomon, when brought to repentance, wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes, as he had already written Proverbs in the middle of life, and Canticles in the ardour of early piety.

On his death, after a reign of forty years, Reho-

* 480 years added to 2513, the date of the Exodus, make 2993 for the founding of the temple, and seven spent in the building, bring us to 3000.

boam, his son, by pride and oppression, alienated the people, and induced ten tribes to make Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, king. He, to keep his subjects from going to worship at Jerusalem, where they might be induced to return to their allegiance to the house of David, set up two golden calves, at the northern and southern extremities of the land, to be worshipped. The two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with many of the Levites, adhered to the throne and the altar at Jerusalem; but this division into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, weakened, and finally destroyed, the nation. Samaria was eventually made the capital of the kingdom of Israel, or of the ten tribes, whose wicked kings made Israel to sin, till they were carried off captives by Shalmanezzer, the king of Assyria.* Amos, Hosea, and some other prophets, had previously been raised up, to give warning, and to add their prophecies to the volume of Scripture.

On the throne of Judah there were several pious kings, such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah; while many prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, by their prophecies, added largely to the stores of divine revelation, and for a while checked the progress of corruption. But idolatry, and its attendant

* A. M. 3283.

wickedness, at length provoked Jehovah to give up his people, in the reign of Zedekiah, to the power of Nebuchadnezzar, who burned the city and temple* of Jerusalem, and carried the inhabitants captives to Babylon, which was then the golden city, the

* It has been calculated, with an accuracy which has never been impugned, that the temple of Solomon stood 427 years. Of these, thirty must be assigned to the reign of Solomon. From the accession of his son, under whom the people was divided into two kingdoms, there were 390 years, under the following kings.

Rehoboam	17
Abia	3
Asa	41
Jehoshaphat	25
Joram	5
Ahazia	1
Athalia	6
Joash	40
Amazia	29
Azariah, or Uzzia	52
Jotham	16
Ahaz	16
Hezekiah	29
Manasseh	55
Amon	2
Josiah	31
Joahaz	3 months
Jehoiakim	11
Jeconiah	3 months
Zedekiah	11

390 years and a half,

answering to the 390 days during which Ezekiel was commanded to bear the sin of the people, Ezek. iv. 5, reckoning from 1 Kings xii. 33.

From the year 3000, in which the temple was built, to the year 3427, when it was destroyed, there were several periods when it was profaned. Ezekiel was commanded to lie forty days on his side, to indicate the sin of Judah, probably referring to the relapse into idolatry, after Josiah's reformation. The destruction of the temple and city was

mistress of the east. Thus was fulfilled the warning of Moses, when Israel entered into Canaan, Deut. xxix. 63.

Shalmanezzer, the Assyrian monarch, who had carried off the ten tribes, placed people from other countries in that land ; but the wild beasts, which had multiplied while the country was desolate, produced such havoc, that the idolaters thought the God of the country was angry with them. Priests were, therefore, sent for from the captive tribes ; and as these priests were, perhaps, ministers of the golden calves, a corrupted form of Judaism was introduced, and mingled, by the new settlers, with their own idolatry, forming at length that mongrel religion of the Samaritans, of which the New Testament speaks.

CHAP. IV.—FROM THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY TO THE COMING OF CHRIST.

This was the age of preparation for the advent of the Saviour. It is so important that it should be better known than it generally is ; and as the his-

gradual ; and as the captivity may be dated from several periods, so may the restoration, making seventy years, by several different commencements and terminations, amounting to a difference of twenty years. Taking, then, 2993 for the year when the foundation of the temple was laid, and adding 427 for the time it stood, we make 3420 the date of its destruction. The seventy years of the Babylonish captivity extend the period to 3490.

tory of the former ages may be learned from the Scripture, we have passed rapidly over them ; while on this we should dwell longer ; because we are soon left to those uninspired writers who began to make history their theme, but are not so well known to those who are most familiar with the Bible.

SECT. 1.—*From the captivity to the return of Israel.*

We have still ample information from Scripture. When idolaters seemed to triumph over the worshippers of the only true God, he snatched the victory from the foe, by means of Daniel and three other pious captives of the royal family. The interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams ; the deliverance of those who refused to worship the golden image ; and the warning given by the handwriting on the wall, which Daniel alone could read ; with the immediate capture of Babylon by Cyrus, vindicated the honour of Jehovah. But Nebuchadnezzar's first dream affords such a view of the future history of the church and the world, that it deserves to be more fully unfolded. The reader should now turn to the second chapter of Daniel. The image probably represented a warrior, whose head was crowned with a helmet of gold, to signify the Babylonish monarchy, which was rich and splendid. The

breast and arms were defended with silver armour, to exhibit the Persian empire, which was inferior in wealth to the preceding, and which employed silver shields to guard the breast. Xenophon, a Greek historian, relates the story of Cyrus, the Persian, taking Babylon and succeeding to the dominion. The belly and thighs, which exhibited the appearance of brass, represented the Græco-Macedonian empire, and Homer speaks of the brazen-coated Greeks: these, under Alexander, conquered the Persian empire. The legs are said to have been of iron, probably from appearing to be defended with iron greaves. Thus was foretold the Roman empire, which, striding like a colossus, set one foot on Europe and another on Asia; while, like iron, it crushed all opposition, and succeeded to the empire which Alexander's captains had established in the east. The feet and toes appeared to be partly of iron and partly of clay, from being armed, perhaps, with iron, but treading in the miry clay. The ten toes signified the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire would be divided; exhibiting the strength of the iron with the weakness of the clay; an incongruous mixture, which continually threatened dissolution. But a little stone, cut out of a mountain without hands, smote the image on its feet and dashed it to pieces; while the stone grew into a mountain that

filled the earth. This represented the church, or kingdom of Christ, which, in the days of the Roman empire, was set up by God, and not by the hands of man, but which is destined to smite all opposing dominion with destruction, and to fill the world with the paramount influence of religion. Ezekiel, as well as Daniel, prophesied in Babylon.

Cyrus having rushed into Babylon while Daniel was interpreting the hand-writing on the wall of the palace of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, who was drinking to the praise of his gods out of the vessels of Jehovah's temple, the conqueror was induced to issue a proclamation for the return of the Jews to their own land;* for, as the tribe of Judah was the principal portion of what remained of the people, they were now called Jews. Those who embraced the opportunity to return, had Zerubbabel for their prince, and Josiah for their high-priest.

To this period we must refer the celebrated prophecy of Daniel, by which the time of Christ's coming was accurately determined. Dan. ix. 24. Here are to be marked, 1, the period of seven weeks, that is, of years, as the event shows, making forty-nine years, from the going forth of the command, to the fulfilment of it in the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

* More than 500 years before Christ.

2, Sixty-two weeks of years, or 434, from the rebuilding of the city to the cutting off of Messiah, not for his own sins, but for ours. Then, one week, or seven years, were allowed for the death of Christ and the preaching of the gospel to the Jews, before they were cast off, and the Gentiles received in their stead. Taking, then, the gross sum of seventy weeks of years, we have 490 years, from the proclamation to the death of Christ; and as he died in what would be called the 4037th year of the world, we are brought to within a little of the ordinary calculation. We have no room for minutiae, but the following extract from Maclaurin will be useful.

“There are four edicts, recorded in Scripture, to which these words (‘the going forth of the commandment,’ &c.) may seem applicable: viz. the edict in the first year of Cyrus, Ezra i. 1; in the second of Darius, Ezra vi. 1; Hag. i. 1; in the seventh of Artaxerxes, Ezra vii. 7; and in the twentieth, Neh. i. 2. There are some things in the prediction which, when duly adverted to, give good ground for passing by the two first edicts; and, as to the two last, it has been well observed—that Christ’s death happened seventy weeks of solar years after one of them, and as many weeks of lunar years after the other. The first two edicts speak only about the rebuilding of the temple, without one word about

rebuilding the city ; whereas the prediction speaks about an edict for rebuilding the city and the walls and streets of it, without one word about rebuilding the temple ; though, in foretelling the second destruction of the city, that of the temple is also mentioned. But the third edict, that of the seventh of Artaxerxes, though it does not contain the very expressions of Daniel's prediction, yet it contains things to which these expressions are applicable. Sir Isaac Newton justly observes, that the dispersed Jews became a people and a city when they returned into a body politic ; and that was in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus ; when Ezra by the king's commission, erected magistrates all over the land, to govern the people according to the laws of God and of the king : under Ezra they first became a polity or city, by a government of their own. But there is another character, which is, perhaps, yet more decisive. According to the prediction, the edict must be only seven weeks before completing the building of the city ; for one and the same event, viz. the appearance of the Messiah, is placed only sixty-nine after the edict, and sixty-two after the building, which demonstrates that the distance between the edict and the building could be no more than seven weeks. Now, the first two edicts were made long before ; for, in the twentieth of

Artaxerxes (above eighty years after the latest of those edicts), it was told Nehemiah that the wall was broken down, the gates burnt with fire, and the place of his father's sepulchre lay waste."

Assuming, then, the date of the termination of the captivity to have been, anno mundi, 3490, as shown above.* Cyrus reigned seven years after the restoration of the Jews; and Cambyses, his son, seven more. Then Darius Hystapes held the throne thirty-six years, and Xerxes fifteen; after which it is said that Artaxerxes Longimanus reigned seven years, before he passed the decree from which Daniel's seventy weeks of years were dated. Thus there are seventy-two years to be added to the four hundred and ninety, making five hundred and sixty-two, which, added to 3490, give 4052, as the date of the world at the conclusion of Daniel's seventy weeks. But, if we consider Christ to have been born anno mundi, 4004, and to have lived thirty-three years and a half on earth, as he died in the midst of the last week, we must allow three years and a half for the gathering of the elect Jews and the calling of the Gentiles. We shall then be brought to $4004 + 33\frac{1}{2} = 4037\frac{1}{2} + 3\frac{1}{2} = 4041$, which are eleven years short of the period of 4052. But seven of these

* Page 26.

years may be accounted for by considering the decree of Artaxerxes for rebuilding Jerusalem to have been passed, not after he had reigned seven years, but at the very commencement of his reign, as we might conclude from Ezra vii. 1—6.

The seventh verse, which has induced learned men to conclude that the decree was issued in the seventh year, does not sufficiently warrant that conclusion. “And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.”—Ezra i. 7.

I should then take this, and the following verse, to intimate a second journey of Ezra, or to teach that he and the ministers of the temple did not go to put the decree into execution till seven years after it was passed. The four years which are still unaccounted for would be made up by supposing that Artaxerxes, or his predecessors, dated their accession back, to exclude some of their predecessors, as Louis XVIII. did, to obliterate the reign of Buonaparte.

Nehemiah, a Jewish courtier of the King of Persia, finding that the rebuilding of Jerusalem went on slowly, obtained permission to go and superintend the work. The two books of Ezra and

Nehemiah are here exceedingly useful, as records of the re-establishment of the Jewish people in their own land. The book of Esther relates a grand national deliverance, afforded to those who chose to remain in Persia, when their brethren returned. At length, however, the greater part of the nation followed, and multiplied exceedingly in Judea. Thus, as the captivity was gradual—one party being carried off at one period, and others at subsequent times—so the restoration bears different dates. The ten tribes were never openly restored; but many of them, at last, joined with Judah and Benjamin; and as the tribe of Asher is mentioned in the New Testament, it seems that the whole twelve were supposed to be known as united, to form one nation again.*

SECT. 2.—*From the rebuilding of Jerusalem, to the coming of Christ.*

This was a most important era. The prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, were delivered, to exhort the Jews to set up their ancient worship, and to maintain it in purity, till Messiah should come. With these, and the books of Chronicles, the Old Testament closes. But uninspired histories now inform us what happened in the world.

The Jews, having been much favoured by the

* Luke ii. 36.

Persians, remained faithful to this silver empire, though under their own governors, who were the high-priests. But, when Alexander was on his march against Darius, he besieged Tyre, in the neighbourhood of Judea, and demanded, from the Jews, supplies for his army, which were refused, on the ground of fidelity to Persia. Alexander, in a rage, set out for Jerusalem, to punish the refusal; but the high-priest came out in his pontifical robes, to propitiate the conqueror, who fell down and worshipped, declaring to his generals that he had seen a representation of this priest, the night before, in a dream. From this time, he shewed favour to the Jews.

But, when the conqueror of Darius and the Persians died of a drunken debauch, at Babylon, four of his generals divided his empire among them. Leomedon, took Syria, in which Judea, or Palestine, was included. But Ptolemy, who had obtained Egypt, the southern neighbour of Judea, having made war on Leomedon, the Jews who clave to him were persecuted for their fidelity, and, refusing to defend their city on the Sabbath day, were vanquished. A hundred thousand of them were carried into captivity.

Antigonus deprived Ptolemy of his dominion over the Jews, but behaved towards them so cruelly that

many of them fled to the surrounding countries, which were filled with Jews, while Judea seemed likely to be depopulated. But, in the year 292 before Christ, Ptolemy, King of Egypt, gained the ascendancy, and favoured the Jews, who were afterwards afflicted by the incursions of the Samaritans. Antiochus Theos, King of Syria, next invaded Galilee; but Ptolemy Philopater, marching against him, defeated him. Going afterwards to Jerusalem, to offer sacrifice, Ptolemy penetrated into the temple, as far as the entrance to the holy of holies, where he was struck with terror and fell down. This, however, did not prevent his persecuting the Jews, who had attempted to hinder him from profaning the temple. At this period, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, called the Septuagint, or Seventy, was made, by order, it is said, of an Egyptian king, who founded the library at Alexandria.

About the year 204 before Christ, Antiochus the Great obtained dominion over the Jews, who swerved from their attachment to the Kings of Egypt. The Syrian monarch rewarded this defection by great favours to the people, and immense offerings to the temple. But a quarrel among themselves brought the Jews into new and greater troubles. Simon, governor of the temple, having, out of spite to Onias, the high-priest, informed the king that

there was an immense treasure in the temple, he dispatched Heliodorus to seize it. The Jews say that he was miraculously prevented from accomplishing his object. Simon, having accused the high-priest of giving the information, a civil war followed, in which many fell. Onias, at last, procured the banishment of Simon, but Antiochus Epiphanes having ascended the throne of Syria, Jason, the high-priest's brother, purchased of the king the high-priesthood; and procured the imprisonment of his predecessor.

Jason then devoted himself to turn the nation to the Grecian idolatry. He set up the games of the heathen, and abandoned himself to all the absurdities and abominations of Paganism. But his brother Menelaus supplanted him, by giving 300 talents more for the high-priesthood, which, however, he could not obtain, till he promised the king to abandon the Jewish religion entirely, when, with the army of the Syrians, the apostate drove Jason out of Jerusalem. These internal feuds, at last, brought Antiochus to Jerusalem, about the year 170 before Christ, when, in three days, the tyrant killed forty thousand Jews, and sold as many for slaves. But, two years after, having been mortified by the Romans, who now began to spread the terror of their arms into this part of the world, he resolved to vent his

spite still farther on the Jews. He sent an army under Apollonius, who, pretending peaceful designs, entered Jerusalem on the Sabbath, when the Jews were afraid to defend themselves. An indiscriminate massacre followed; the city was plundered and burned; the walls were broken down; and those who had escaped the sword were sent into slavery. The service of the temple, which had been polluted by blood and all manner of profaneness, was, from this time, abandoned; for the Syrians built a fortress over against it, to prevent any one from entering.

Antiochus being determined either to destroy the religion of the Jews, or to exterminate their race, issued a decree, that all nations within his dominions should forsake their own peculiar religion, and worship the gods of the king. Atheneas, a bigoted pagan, was sent to Jerusalem, to accomplish this vile object. The temple was dedicated to Jupiter Olympius, whose statue was set up on the altar of burnt-offerings, and another small altar was placed before it, for the incense which was burned to the idol. Similar practices were adopted all over the country, and it was instant death for any one to keep the Sabbath, or circumcise his children, or observe any of the laws of Moses.

At last, God sent deliverance by Mattathias, a pious priest. He had retired to Modin, his native

place, where Apelles, one of the king's officers, came, to compel the people to conform to the king's religion. To all the exhortations, promises, and threats, of the officer, Mattathias replied, that if all the world yielded, he and his sons would remain faithful to their God. Seeing one of his countrymen about to sacrifice to the idol, the priest fell upon and killed him, as was commanded in the law. The sons, following in their father's steps, attacked the officer and his men, and slew them. The victors then overthrew the idol and its altar, and, calling upon all who remained faithful to their God to follow, they withdrew into the desert of Judea, where they were soon joined by such numbers as enabled them to restore the worship of Jehovah through a great part of the country. In one year he wrought wonders almost incredible, but death arrested his career.

His son imitated and even surpassed his father, by such deeds as made Judas a second David. The name of Maccabeus was given to this greatest of uninspired heroes; which some suppose to mean the hammer, or mallet, of the Syrians, though others say it was derived from the initial letters of the Hebrew inscription on his banner, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?" With six thousand troops, he seized, in one year, the strongest

fortresses ; and, defeating the Syrians in five pitched battles, drove them entirely out of the country. He purified the temple and restored the worship of Jehovah, after it had ceased for three years and a half. As the Syrians still held the fort which they had built, to overlook the temple, Judas fortified the mountain on which it stood, and surrounded it with a high wall and strong towers.

Antiochus, on his return from an unsuccessful expedition into Persia, hearing this, which he so little expected, was thrown into such a rage that he vowed to exterminate the Jews. Having commanded his charioteer to drive furiously, he was at first seized with a dreadful disorder in his bowels, and then thrown out and bruised. At last, unable to bear the motion even of a litter, he was compelled to stop, on the borders of Persia and Babylonia, where he expired, in great torments.

The war was still carried on between the Syrians and Jews ; but Judas obtained an advantageous peace. The Syrians, having broken it, were defeated in five engagements, but, in the sixth, Judas was defeated and slain. His brother Jonathan, however, deprived the enemies of their triumph, and conducted the war with as much prudence and valour as his predecessor had displayed, till the treachery of Tryphon, a Syrian usurper, destroyed this second

patrotic hero. Simon, another brother, now interposed for his country's rescue. He repaired all the fortresses; took Joppa and Gaza; and even drove the Syrians out of their fortress at Jerusalem. But he was, by his son-in-law, treacherously murdered.

He was succeeded by his son, Hyrcan, who added to the conquest of the remainder of Judea, and all Galilee, that of Samaria, of which he destroyed the capital. He took, in addition to the mitre of high-priest, the royal crown, and the author of the fourth book of Maccabees says he was not only priest and king, but prophet also. The Jews were now raised to higher prosperity than they had enjoyed since the captivity. The latter days of Hyrcan were embittered by the opposition of the Pharisees, a sect of zealots, who began to be of great importance. He was succeeded by Aristobulus, his eldest son, who conquered Iturea, and was, in his turn, followed by Alexander Jannæus, who conquered every thing but the superstitious enmity of the Pharisees, whom he crushed with great violence.

Though he left behind him two sons, Hyrcan and Aristobulus, he bequeathed the government to his widow, Alexandra, whom he advised to court the Pharisees. These, being in power, cruelly persecuted the Sadducees, who adhered to the letter of Scripture, in opposition to the traditions of the

elders. At her death, Alexandra left the crown to her eldest son, Hyrcan, who was the high-priest. A contest between him and his younger brother destroyed the liberties of their country. Antipater, a native of Idumæa, or Edom, which the Maccabees had compelled to adopt the Jewish religion, carried off Hyrcan into Arabia, under pretence of securing him from violence. Aretas, King of Arabia, brought back the deposed prince, but Aristobulus, while besieged in Jerusalem, applied to the Roman generals, who were at that time in the neighbourhood, for assistance. Both brothers then sent presents to Pompey, who was commander-in-chief of all the Roman forces in the East.

Pompey, under pretence of friendship to one of the parties, entered Judea and besieged Jerusalem, which he took, in the year 63 before Christ. The conqueror profaned the temple by entering into it, where he was astonished to find no image of a god. The Romans were, from this time, masters of Judea, as we find them, at the commencement of the New Testament. Crassus, their general, who was notorious for his thirst of gold, plundered the temple of money and sacred vessels, to the value of ten thousand Attic talents, or two millions sterling. He soon after perished in Parthia, in such a manner as naturally led the Jews to say that it was

a judgment from God, for the insult offered to his temple.

In the war between Julius Cæsar and Pompey, the Jews favoured the victorious Cæsar, who rewarded them so liberally that they scarcely felt the Roman yoke. But, on his death, Mark Antony quelled the disorders that arose among them, by seizing Jerusalem, in the year 37 before our Saviour was born. Herod, the son of Antipater, the Idumæan, having obtained the crown for himself, while pretending to plead with the Romans for one of the descendants of the Maccabees, put an end to that dynasty, and reigned without a rival.

He proved a splendid tyrant. To such an extent he adorned Jerusalem, and rebuilt the temple, that he is said to have surpassed Solomon. Herod restored Samaria, which the Maccabees had demolished. The horrid murders he committed on his own subjects, and even on the nearest of his relatives, make it manifest that he would not have scrupled to destroy the babes of Bethlehem, in hope of cutting off Jesus, who was born towards the close of this reign.

The history of the Jews now ceases to be that of the church of God. That portion of the history which elapsed from the close of the Old Testament to the beginning of the New, is so important that it

should be carefully studied: and it is so often the object of the prophecies that these cannot be understood by persons who are ignorant of this history. The first book of Maccabees, which ought to be torn out of the volume of inspired Scripture, should yet be carefully read, as a true and valuable record of the most interesting events. Josephus should, on this part of his history, be studied for the sake of these facts of which he is the chief witness.

BOOK II.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

THE church under the New Testament, or from the birth of Christ to the present time, now claims our attention.

The importance of an historical knowledge of the Christian religion is demonstrated by the fact, that the Spirit of God inspired holy men to give us five books of narrative at the commencement of the New Testament.

CHAP. I.—THE PERIOD WHICH ELAPSED FROM THE BIRTH OF CHRIST TO THE REIGN OF CONSTANTINE.

SECT. 1.—*The Apostolic Age.*

Here, again, we may pass rapidly over that part

of the history which can be learned from the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. Our Saviour was born shortly before the death of Herod, who reigned 37 years. Augustus, who was then Emperor of Rome, made a general census of the empire, which compelled Mary, the virgin mother, to go to her paternal city, Bethlehem, where Christ was to be born. This auspicious event happened in the year of the world, 4004, according to the most approved calculation. To escape the murderous design of Herod, Joseph carried the newly-born Saviour into Egypt; but, returning after the tyrant's death, the holy family settled in Nazareth, a town of Galilee. Having spent thirty years in private life, Jesus came forth to his public ministry, and was baptised by his forerunner, John, who, according to the prophets, had risen in the spirit of Elijah, to prepare the way, by rousing the nation to behold its Saviour and its God. Three years and a half of preaching and miracles were terminated by the death of Christ for our sins.* "The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world," was sacrificed at the very hour the Jews were offering the paschal lamb, in the 19th year of Tiberius Cæsar. (Tacitus.) On

* See Lectures on the History of Christ, by the author of this work, and especially Lecture 98, which contains a summary of the whole.

the third day after, he rose from the dead, and, having conversed with his disciples forty days, he ascended to heaven, and sent down his Holy Spirit, to set up the Christian church, which consisted, on the first day, of three thousand persons, Jews by birth.

The principal ministers of the church were the twelve apostles ; but as Judas, who had been of that number, had become a traitor and destroyed himself, Mathias was elected by lot to fill the vacant place. James, the brother of John, was soon cut off by the sword of Herod, one of the descendants of Herod the Great ; but Saul, a young zealot, who had been an active instrument in the persecution which the Jews carried on against the Christian church, being converted by the miraculous appearance of Christ, was added to the number of the apostles, and we hear no more of Mathias. As the mission of Paul was designed for the conversion of the Gentiles, Peter was now informed that the distinction between the Jews and other nations was to cease ; and, being sent to Cornelius, a Roman officer at Cesarea, the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles, as Peter had formerly opened it to the Jews at Pentecost. For Christ committed to him who had made the first open confession of the Messiah, the keys of the kingdom, to gather in the first converts, both from the Jews and the Gentiles.

The Samaritans, who stood midway between these two, had been previously converted. For when, to take the care of secular things off from the hands of preachers and pastors, deacons were appointed, Stephen, one of them, was stoned to death by the Jews, who instantly commenced a persecution which scattered the preachers of the gospel among the surrounding nations. At Samaria, Simon, called Magus, or the magician, seeing the wonders wrought by the apostles, offered them money, to obtain from them the same powers ; but, his offer being rejected, he is said to have become a deadly enemy, and the leader of a hostile sect. When the gospel was proclaimed at Antioch, the capital of Syria, such numbers received it that believers were first called Christians in that city. An Ethiopian of high rank, having been converted by the ministry of Philip, carried the glad tidings to his own country.

But Saul, who, after the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of the isle of Cyprus, was called Paul, became the most efficient instrument of the conversion of the nations ; so that the Acts of the Apostles, which opens with a general history of the Christian church, gives, from the 14th chapter, nothing but the narrative of Paul's history, until his arrival at Rome the first time. Delivered from this imprisonment, he preached the gospel for

a few years longer ; but, at last, was sent to Rome again as a prisoner, and was put to death, by Nero, in that persecution which the tyrant raised against the Christians, in order to fling off from himself to them the charge of setting fire to the city of Rome. It is said that Peter experienced at the same time and place, the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction of the death by which that apostle should, when he was old, "glorify God." But this rests on ecclesiastical tradition ; for there is no Scriptural evidence that Peter ever was at Rome, except we suppose that, by the Babylon he mentions in his second epistle, he means Rome, and then we have additional proof that Babylon, in the Book of Revelations, was designed to point out the church of Rome.

No one of the apostles was bishop, or pastor, of any particular church, but the whole twelve had the superintendency of the church universal. John was the last of the apostles, and he, having been banished by the emperor Domitian to the island of Patmos, in the Mediterranean, received there the "Revelation," which closes the canon of Scripture, or the inspired rule of faith and practice. The four Gospels were the first books of the New Testament given to the church ; for the preaching of the apostles consisted of such a narrative of evangelical facts, and it is probable that the Gospels came out in the order

in which they now stand. The Acts of the Apostles are placed next, for the sake of presenting the whole history together, as is done in the Old Testament. Fourteen epistles of Paul follow in the Christian code ; but that to the Galatians was probably written first, to oppose the primary error which arose in the Christian church, that of mingling the observance of the Mosaic law with faith in Christ for justification. The epistle to the Romans is placed first in our copies of the New Testament, either on account of its high importance, or because the epistles were first collected into a body at Rome, where their own epistle would naturally be placed first. After the epistles to particular churches come those which were addressed to individuals, or to the church at large. The epistles of Peter, James, John, and Jude, follow those of Paul. These Scriptures were the constant study, and the only authoritative rule, of the first Christians.

While the apostles lived, the testimony of the gospel was confirmed by miraculous powers, especially that of speaking various tongues, which was then so necessary for the preaching of the gospel to all nations. The love which, at first, made Christians part with all their property, to relieve their poor brethren, began to cool, even before the last of the apostles died. Paul informs the Thessaloni-

ans that the mystery of iniquity, the commencement of a great apostacy, was already at work ; and the epistles to the seven churches of Asia show, that various evils so soon entered into the church that we can trust implicitly to no writings but those which form the volume of Scripture.

The apostles, who were Christ's ambassadors, sent into all the world, to set up his church, or kingdom, with authority, employed evangelists as helpers. A spiritual officer, called an overseer, or bishop—a presbyter, or elder—a pastor, or ruler, or president, was placed over each church. To take care of the poor, and of all pecuniary matters, deacons were appointed.

The public worship of the church consisted in prayer, and in the preaching of the word, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The singing of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, which is mentioned in Scripture, attracted the attention of the earliest of the heathen writers who notice the affairs of the Christians. Believers and their households were received into the church, by baptism, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Of the places used by the primitive Christians, for public worship, we know little ; but the open air was not so inconvenient to them as it would be

to us ; and their private houses were more suitable to this purpose than ours would be. The first day of the week was devoted to public worship, in commemoration of Christ's resurrection ; but, while the observance of the Jewish law was tolerated, the seventh day also was improved, as affording an opportunity for addressing the Jews. In the same way, the season of Passover, improperly translated Easter in our version of the Acts, was improved by the apostles for the preaching of the gospel at Jerusalem, where multitudes of Jews, from all parts of the world, then assembled. As this was the season of the year when the great events of Christ's death and resurrection happened, the celebration of Easter became early the universal practice of the Christian church, which was soon distracted by the disputes between the eastern and western Christians, concerning the proper time of keeping the feast.

The first *heresy*, that of the Judaising teachers, who wished to make the observance of the Mosaic law essential to justification, was followed by that which arose at Corinth, the denial of the future resurrection of the body. The epistles of John show that some heretics denied that Christ had come in the flesh. In the Revelation, the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes is mentioned, as abhorred of Christ ; but, as we know not what it was, it probably has a

symbolic meaning. The Gnostics, who pretended to recondite knowledge, are early mentioned; and Menander, who is called the second heretic, denied that the world was created by God.

What are dignified with the name of councils, which made a frightful noise in subsequent ages, were unknown in this; for the council of Jerusalem was merely a conference of the apostles, held previously to sending out a circular letter to the newly-converted Gentile churches, to assure them that they were not bound to keep the law of Moses.

The first *persecutors* of the church were Jews; but their power was broken, when Titus destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the whole nation, in the sixty-seventh year of the Christian era. When the Romans became persecutors, the flame spread more widely. Nero led the way, and was followed, not merely by tyrants such as Domitian, but by more benevolent princes, such as Trajan, who, though highly praised, is known, by the letters of Pliny, to have been engaged in the same disgraceful warfare against the innocent and unresisting. Amidst such fires, the apostolic age ended. For the beloved John, who returned from Patmos, after the death of Domitian, lived to about the close of the first century. He saw the coming of Christ, in judgment, to destroy Jerusalem; and, in the triumphs of his

mercy, by the establishment of his church in the principal cities of Asia and of Europe. To this our continent, Paul crossed over from Troas, at the cry of the man of Macedonia. In Africa, too, a very flourishing church was early formed, at Alexandria. The effect of the Christian doctrine had been seen in the holy lives of believers, and in the heroic sufferings and deaths of the martyrs. The Revelation of John closed the canon of Scripture, and the apostolic age.

SECT. 2.—*The Age of Apostolic Fathers.*

Such is the appellation given to those who immediately followed the apostles. The writings of the apostolic fathers have been collected into a volume by Cotelerius. Of these, the most celebrated was Ignatius, who was pastor of the church at Antioch, and is said to have been the child that Jesus took into his arms, to give to his disciples a lesson of humility. When conveyed to Rome, to be thrown to the wild beasts, in order to afford diversion for the Roman people, Ignatius wrote seven letters, full of Christian piety. But only the shorter of these can be depended upon, for the longer are evidently interpolated. Polycarp, a hearer of the apostle John, and pastor of the church at Smyrna, to whom Christ is supposed to have addressed one of the

seven epistles, was the author of a celebrated letter to the Philippians. Papias, pastor or bishop of the church at Hierapolis, was celebrated for his familiar acquaintance with every thing that concerned the apostles. Clement, pastor at Rome, wrote to the Corinthians a letter which, though valuable, shows the immense superiority of the apostolic Scriptures.

The most celebrated writings of this age are called apologies, which are defences of the Christian religion, addressed to the supreme authorities, to induce them to desist from persecuting the Christians. Quadratus, who succeeded to the care of the church which Paul founded at Athens, wrote one of these defences, and addressed it to the emperor Hadrian. Justin, who, having suffered death for Christ's sake, is called the martyr, to distinguish him from the historian of that name, was, at first, a heathen philosopher, but having embraced the Christian faith, he wrote two Apologies, and a Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew, to prove that Jesus is the true Messiah. Athenagoras, an Athenian, who lived under Marcus Aurelius, wrote an Apology, and a tract on the resurrection, which was a doctrine much opposed by the heathen. Theophilus, pastor at Antioch, was the author of three books concerning the Christian faith. Irenæus, a hearer of Polycarp, and bishop of the Christian church at Lyons, in France, wrote

a treatise on the heresies which had risen to corrupt the Christian faith; and, unless he has strangely multiplied them by hearsay, they were as numerous as they were ridiculous. Pantænus, who had been a Stoic philosopher, was at the head of the school of Alexandria, a kind of Christian college, where the simplicity of Christian truth was soon corrupted by the mixture of heathen philosophy. He, however, gave good proof of his own faith, by going to preach the gospel in India. His disciple and successor in the professor's chair, Clement, who is called Alexandrinus, to distinguish him from Romanus, formerly mentioned, wrote a persuasive to the Gentiles, as well as a work called the Schoolmaster, in both which he displays much heathen learning. In addition to these Greek writers, we have one who wrote in Latin, Tertullian, who gives us useful information concerning these days.

But the most famous writer of the latter part of the second century and the former part of the third, was Origen, called Adamantine, from his hard labours. He wrote an immense number of volumes, including commentaries on almost the whole of the Scriptures, which, however, he perverted by an allegorising imagination, such as has become fashionable in later days. He was the author of what may be called the first Polyglots, but were termed

Hexalpa, or the Scriptures in six tongues; and Tetrapla, in four. Origen's most useful work was his answer to Celsus, a heathen philosopher, who had published against Christians what he called, *The True Word*. Origen has, by quoting largely from it, afforded us an opportunity of seeing what sorts of attacks the philosophers of the world made on Christianity, when they had power, and learning, and public prejudice in their favour. Nothing can be more contemptible than the words of Celsus. He makes no attempt to deny the miracles of Christ, but merely affirms that they were wrote by magic, which Christ learned in Egypt. No confronting evidence is adduced against the facts asserted in Scripture; but the philosopher, with abundance of zeal, and copious stores of heathen learning, exhibits the ludicrous spectacle of a barking cur attempting to attack a lion. Next to the Scriptures themselves, nothing is more calculated to convince a candid mind of the truth of Christianity than this work of Origen against Celsus, written at a time when it is probable that some were alive who had seen the last of the apostles. But, from the strange and striking defects in Origen's work, we see that the inspired Scriptures are our only safe guide.

To the age of the apostolic fathers is ascribed the Syriac version of the New Testament, called the

Peshito, or simple ; a work of immense value, as the language is almost identical with that spoken by our Lord, and the translation is admirably executed. The Greek versions of the Old Testament by Aquila, Theodotian, and Symmachus, beside two anonymous ones, show the great attention paid, at this time, to the Scriptures. The Latin translation of the Old and New Testament, called the *Itala*, which is the basis of the *Vulgate*, was made for the use of the church at Rome. But the ignorance of Hebrew, prevalent at this time, produced many foolish comments on Scripture ; and the writings of the fathers betray much false philosophy, derived from their heathen education. The love of rule and of ceremonies was a fruitful source of mischief ; for this inflamed the dissension between Victor, bishop of Rome, and the Asiatic churches, concerning the proper time for keeping Easter.

The wide extent of the Christian church, of which all the fathers spake, gave rise to the boastful phrase of catholic, or universal, which distinguished Christians from the numerous heretical sects that arose. For the faith of Christ was now received, in the north of Africa, in France, Spain, Germany, and Britain. Lucius, king of our isle, is said to have embraced the gospel in the year 179 ; and Donald, king of Scotland, in the very commencement of the

following century. Pantænus, we are told, found, on his arrival in India, the gospel by Matthew. Tertullian says, "We are of yesterday, and have filled all places, the Getæ, the Sarmatians, and the Scythians, have submitted to Christ." Some of the Roman emperors favoured the Christians, whose religion Philip is said to have embraced.

The church at Rome was, at this period, distinguished by several eminent pastors, such as Euaristus, and Xistus, and Telesphorus, who was honoured with the crown of martyrdom. Pius and Anicetus were followed by Soter, celebrated for his beneficence. But these had no dominion over other churches; though the bishop now began to be distinguished from the presbyter, whom, however, we find consulted by the bishop. The deacon was insensibly changed into a spiritual officer; so that the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, early appeared. Even the title of high-priest was soon given to certain ministers, and the distinction of clergy and laity began to be marked, though the clergy were still chosen by the whole body of the church. Readers and catechists appear as distinct officers in the hierarchy, and the candidates for baptism were first made catechumens, and divided into different orders. With the widows, who were supported by the church, were associated maidens, who

served to increase the honour now put upon celibacy. For, in their zeal to flee from the corruption that reigned in the heathen world, the primitive Christians made a merit of abstaining even from lawful marriage. Prayer, for which certain hours were appointed, was offered with the face turned to the east; the Lord's prayer was supposed to be too sacred for any but the fully initiated; and, though no liturgy was used, doxologies were highly exalted. Baptism was excessively magnified; and, while that of infants was retained as of apostolic origin, sick persons were baptized in their beds. In the Lord's Supper, fermented bread was employed by some churches, and condemned by others, and the wine was mixed with water. To those who, being sick, were absent, the elements were sent. Strict discipline was exercised towards such as fell into sin, especially in the cases of fornication and idolatry. The places of worship were either the private dwellings of Christians, or houses procured for the purpose, which were therefore called *Kuriaka*, the Lord's houses, whence comes *kirk*, or church. In times of persecution, Christians met for worship in caverns; and the catacombs, or excavations under the city of Rome, are celebrated for having been thus consecrated.

The heresies of this age were manifold. A nu-

merous class of heretics were, from their pretence to superior knowledge, called Gnostics; who entertained ridiculous notions of the person of Christ, and the creation of the world. The Montanists, who practised a peculiarly rigid discipline, were rendered famous by Tertullian, who joined them. The Alogi, or deniers of the divine Word, seem to have considered Christ as a mere man, rejecting, of course, the writings of the apostle John. Theodotus is said to have been founder of this sect. Ambitious professors of Christianity, who were disappointed in their schemes for promotion, set themselves up for leaders of new sects. These gave rise to numerous meetings, afterwards magnified by the imposing name of councils. One was held in Asia against the Montanists, and another at Rome against the Gnostics. Smaller assemblies, of the pastors of particular districts, were called synods; of which, one was convened at Alexandria, in the year 230, on account of the opinions of Origen, which began to be controverted, and another in Asia, in 245 in opposition to the heresy of Noetus.

The Jews, though cast out of the church, demand the benevolent notice of those who believe that they will be gathered in again. Having rejected Jesus, who came in his Father's name, they received an impostor, Barcochebas, who came in his own name,

which signifies the son of a star. He was crushed by the emperor Hadrian, who killed fifty-eight thousand Jews, and prohibited the survivors from entering the city built on the ancient site of Jerusalem, now called Elia. The Jews had, in the earliest ages of Christianity, renowned schools at Tiberias and Babylon. Rabbi Judah, called the holy, wrote the Mishna, or second law, consisting of traditionary opinions concerning the signification of the Mosaic laws. The cabalistic books of Jewish mysteries are assigned to this period.

SECT. 3.—*The Age of Persecution.*

Persecutions were frequent, during the centuries that followed the death of the last of the apostles. Pliny's letter to Trajan, written in the year 111, shows that Christians were then suffering under persecution, though the character of the reigning prince was equitable and mild. Simeon, the son of Cleophas, is mentioned as a pastor of the church at Jerusalem, who obtained the crown of martyrdom. Under Marcus Aurelius, the persecutions raged severely, especially in the west. In Lyons and Vienne, cities of France, great numbers were sacrificed to the enmity of idolaters. The storm was more violent in the reign of Severus, under whom suffered Leonides, the father of Origen, in the year

202. As some fell into idolatry, severe conflicts arose concerning their restoration to the communion of the faithful.

Our attention must now be turned towards a period of great importance in the history of the church—that which terminated the depressions and persecutions of Christians.

Among the Latins, Cyprian, pastor of the church at Carthage, in Africa, was most celebrated. His letters are valuable, and his life and martyrdom are handed down to posterity by Pontius, his faithful deacon. Arnobius, an African rhetorician, wrote several books against the Gentiles. Lanctantius, his disciple, was called the Christian Cicero, though he was more a Cicero than a Christian, as his writings show. Among the Greeks, Gregory, a hearer of Origen, was surnamed *Thaumaturgus*, or miracle-worker, Eusebius, of Laodicea, was succeeded by Anatolius, whose Paschal Canons are given in Latin by Ruffinus. Hesychius, pastor of Alexandria, has furnished us with a valuable Greek lexicon.

The writers of this period introduced, or increased, the use of a pernicious phraseology. The terms, tradition, sacrifice, altar, confession, satisfaction, indulgence, and merit, misled the following ages. Christians began to define minutely, and therefore unscripturally, the doctrine of the Trinity, and to

regard the reception of the Lord's Supper as essential to salvation; while celibacy was exalted as meritorious, and in a minister almost a duty.

The first pastors of the church at Rome had been martyrs; but that diocese became, at length, an object of ambition to wicked and avaricious men. Towards the close of this period, three months elapsed, and a bloody tumult was excited, before a bishop could be settled in the Roman see. For this, Marcellus, the chosen person, was driven into exile, where he died. The dissensions of the clergy were fatal to the church. Novatus, at Carthage, and Novatian, at Rome, were in a state of hostility with their bishops, concerning the conduct that should be adopted towards those who had apostatised during the times of persecution. In Asia and Africa, it was thought that such persons should be re-baptised; but, at Rome, that opinion was so strenuously condemned, that Stephen, the bishop, refused to receive into communion the re-baptisers.

The Greek word *papa*, father, was now applied to bishops; and as this prevailed at Rome, the title of Pope has been peculiarly appropriated to the bishop of what is called the apostolic see. The bishop's chair, called in Greek *cathedra*, began to be styled a throne. The modern term *cathedral* is derived from the bishop's *cathedra*. *Acolytes*, or followers,

waited on the bishop, and subdeacons assisted the deacons. Exorcists were supposed to expel evil spirits; chanters, or singers, were made ecclesiastical officers, as were even the door-keepers, who, in times of persecution, were of importance, to keep out informers and pursuivants. Basket portions for the support of the clergy are now mentioned, and public acknowledgments of sin were exchanged for private confession to the minister. The kiss of peace was given to the baptised, who were adorned with a crown and white robes; for such efficacy began to be ascribed to this rite, that many deferred it, in hope of entering heaven, clothed with all its full effect. The Lord's Supper began to be celebrated in the morning and fasting, and none but members of the church were allowed even to see the service, which was called a mystery.

Heresics, as well as ceremonies, were now accumulated. Sabellius, an African, taught that Father, Son, and Spirit, were only three names of office for one person; who, in heaven, is called Father, on earth, the Son, and, when operating on creation, the Holy Spirit. Under the emperor Galerius, Paul of Samasata, the proud bishop of Antioch, adopted, in hope, it is thought, of courting the celebrated eastern queen Zenobia, the error of Artemon, who asserted that Christ was a mere man. A Per-

sian, whose real name seems to have been Culricus, though he was subsequently called Manes, introduced the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good, the other evil. His followers, the Manicheans, created great troubles, and occasioned the holding of several councils.

We must now witness the last struggle between Pagan Rome and the Christian church. Porphyry, an orator, and Hierocles, governor of Bythinia, goaded on the enemy. Decius, in the year 250, kindled the fiercest fires. He threatened to put to death the local governors, unless they either destroyed the Christians, or converted them to Paganism. For this purpose, racks, swords, hatchets, crosses, gibbets, red hot iron chains, wild beasts, and every other instrument of torture, or of death, which ingenuity could devise, or cruelty employ, were tried to the utmost. Many Christians received the crown of martyrdom, some fled, and others became apostates. After two years, Gallus followed in the same bloody path. Valerian, who next ascended the throne, was at first more mild towards the Christians; but, excited to cruelty by the Magi, he decreed that Christian Ministers should be seized and cited before the magistrates, and such Christians as were Roman knights, or senators, should be stripped of their dignity; and, if they persisted in their con-

fession, should be beheaded. In this fierce persecution, which spread through Africa, Asia, and Europe, the crown of martyrdom was conferred on Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, on Sixtus, who then filled the see of Rome, and on Lawrence, his deacon, who was roasted over a slow fire. But Diocletian was, in 302, the author of what is called the tenth and last persecution, which wasted the church, for ten years. He recorded his fancied victory over an unresisting people, on monuments erected in Spain, with this inscription, "The Christian name obliterated, and the worship of the gods restored."

But the wide extent and extreme severity of the persecution served to display the immense increase of the persecuted sect. The heroic constancy of the greater part of the sufferers raised their religion in the public estimation; and the manifest operation of fear, rather than conviction, on the minds of those who apostatised, made them witnesses to the truth which they abjured. Nor could the common sense of mankind fail to notice the character of the persecuting emperors, which was honourable to the religion they attempted to crush; while their miserable deaths were recorded by Christian writers, as manifest proofs of the indignation of Heaven. Who can wonder that, from the real triumphs of the faith, during this period, many fables should have been

fabricated in later days? Such was the story of St. Ursula, in Britain, with her eleven thousand virgins; the Theban legion destroyed for refusing to worship the gods; and St. George of Cappadocia, whose victory over the dragon has furnished a *picture*, if not a tale, for the nursery.

The pleasure created by arriving at the close of the persecuting age, is diminished by the reflection that the church had lost its virgin purity. The writings of this age prove, what can scarcely be too often repeated, that to none but the inspired volume of the New Testament, given at its commencement, can we implicitly trust. If the superiority of the Christian religion was demonstrated by its triumph over the false philosophy and real cruelty of Paganism, the depravity of man now began to prove that it could not only create false gods, but pervert a revelation from the true God into a system of superstition, impurity, and blood.

We shall see this in the next division of the history.

CHAP. II.—FROM THE REIGN OF CONSTANTINE TO THE REFORMATION.

SECT. 1.—*The civil establishment of Christianity.*

The father of Constantine, the first Christian emperor, reigned mildly in Britian, at that time a

province of the Roman empire ; where his wife Helen seems to have embraced the Christian faith. On the death of Constantius, Constantine was proclaimed successor to the throne, which he seized with great energy, at the commencement of the fourth century. Having marched, in the year 312, against Maxentius, who had ascended the throne at Rome, Constantine is generally said to have been converted by the miraculous appearance of a cross in the heavens, with the inscription, "By this conquer." But there are in the tale so many suspicious circumstances as to justify those who have Christian views of war in withholding their assent ; while the influence of a Christian mother, and the vast number of the followers of Christ, are quite sufficient to account for that kind of conversion of which Constantine gave proof. His first decree merely forbade the persecution of men on account of their faith, and taught the rational and equitable doctrine of religious liberty. Happy had it been for himself, and for the church, if he had never gone farther. Having built Constantinople on the site of the ancient Byzantium, he transferred thither the seat of government, which gave to it the name of New Rome. This at once divided, soon weakened, and ultimately ruined the empire ; so that it presented, at first, the two legs of iron in Nebuchadnezzar's

image ; and, at last, was broken into the ten kingdoms represented by the toes of iron and clay. As the Greek language was spoken at Constantinople, this see was made the head of the Greek church ; while Old Rome, where Latin was retained, became the despotic head of the Latin church.

Christians now, no longer impoverished by spoliation and terrified by persecution, were exalted to honour and enriched by royal endowments and state stipends. They soon exhibited a host of learned doctors, whose voluminous writings have rendered the fourth and following century illustrious. Among those who spoke Latin, was Hosius, bishop of Cordova in Spain, and celebrated as the president of the Council of Nice. Juvencus, a Spaniard, put the gospel history into heroic verse. Hilary, bishop of Poitou, wrote on the Trinity, against the Arians. Optatus, an African bishop, was called the hammer of the Donatists. As the author of a confession of faith, Martin, bishop of Tours, is celebrated. Philastrius wrote a treatise on heresy. But three of the Latin fathers are as pre-eminent as David's three worthies. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, was lord of the ascendant, about the year 370. Jerome was, by the rare distinction of knowing Hebrew, in addition to Latin and Greek, enabled to improve the old Latin version of the Scriptures into the present

Vulgate ; and Augustine, converted from the error of the Manichees, by hearing Ambrose, became bishop of Hippo in Africa, where he wrote many valuable works, which now form ten large folios. He was the great champion of what are called the doctrines of grace, against Pelagius, or Morgan, a Briton, who maintained what are now denominated Arminian doctrines.

Among the Greeks, Eusebious of Cesarea, surnamed Pamphilus, demands the first notice, unless this honour be adjudged to Athanasius, the champion for the Trinity, against the Arians ; though he was not the author of the Creed which bears his name. Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, shows, by his catechetical works, how far the early Christians carried those exercises. Basil, called the Great, gave evidence of the talent and learning of his age, and of its strong tendency to monkish superstition. Of the two famous Gregories, the first was called Nyssen, from the scene of his pastoral care ; and the other is known as bishop at Nazianzum, where he put the Psalms of David into elegant Greek verse, to defeat the malice of Julian, who forbade the Christians to read the Pagan poets, whose religion was by the disciples of the cross despised. Epiphanius is celebrated for his book against heresies ; but the famous Greek writer of this period was John,

called Chrysostom, or golden mouth. This eloquent bishop of Constantinople wrote Commentaries on the Scriptures, and Homilies or Sermons, which abound in beauties and faults. He was the oracle of subsequent writers, who frequently do little more than copy his most striking remarks. Ephrem, called the Syrian, wrote, in his native tongue, works which are highly valued.

The doctrine of the fourth century may be known by the decrees of the Council of Nice, which published to the world its faith in the Trinity, by means of the Nicene creed. But prayers for the dead now began to be offered; the relics of departed saints were more than venerated; their names were invoked in public worship, and their images were set up, though not yet adored.

The public buildings were now devoted to the worship of the Christians, who chose, not the heathen temples, which were dark, and almost all porch: but the Basilica, or courts of law, where the seats of the judges served for the bishop and the presbytery, while the spacious hall, where the suitors and the auditors had stood, afforded accommodation for the congregation, which was anciently divided, the men standing on one side and the females on the other.

Constantine, who had interfered in the government of the church to a ruinous extent, bequeathed

the empire to his three surviving sons, Constantine, Constans, and Constantius; of whom the latter was favourable to the Arians. Julian, the nephew, succeeded to the sons of the first Christian emperor, and is generally called the Apostate. That he ever embraced the faith is doubtful; that he openly disavowed it, on coming to the throne, is certain. But he affected that philosophic temper which prefers sapping the citadel of the faith to an open attempt at carrying it by storm. Thinking, perhaps, with many others, that Christ's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem included an assurance that it should never be rebuilt, Julian endeavoured to prove that prophecy false. He was frustrated in his attempt by miracle, as the Christian historians affirm, but more probably by the strong hand of death, which arrested him in the Persian war, when he is said to have exclaimed. "O Galilean, thou hast conquered!" The Christians, thus delivered from a crafty foe, who had aimed to make them weak and contemptible, by ignorance, were delighted to see Jovian, the successor to the throne, profess their faith. He was followed in the possession of empire, by the brothers Valens, an Arian, and Valentinian, a Trinitarian. Theodosius, called the Great, conferred vast favours on the Christians, into whose faith he had been baptised. He repressed the Ari-

ans, and other heretics, against whom he published decrees, while he destroyed the heathen temples, especially in Egypt, conquering, as Augustine said, more by praying than by fighting. But with that eulogium the blood he shed in Thessalonica ill accords; of which, indeed, he seemed sensible, when he submitted to the humiliation which the church demanded as a proof of repentance. At the end of the fourth century, he left his dominion to his sons Arcadius and Honorius.

The pride of the bishops of Rome, which had increased even in times of persecution, became, when Christians were in power, notorious and intolerable. Some of them were accused of Arianism, and Damasus, who rose, in the year 366, to the see, by bloodshed, displayed such luxury, that a pagan consul said, "Make me bishop of Rome, and I will become a Christian." In the same course followed the bishops of New Rome, or the patriarchs of Constantinople.

The great cities were soon filled with inhabitants who were Christians, at least in name; but, as the people of the villages, called Pagi, continued to worship the heathen gods, pagans became the name of those who were not Christians. Whole nations are said to have been converted to the faith of Christ; though the Goths, a race of northern barbarians, who rushed into Europe, embraced the Arian creed.

Numerous colleges were erected, and the monastic life was now thought so holy and meritorious, that in Egypt, five thousand monks, of whom Anthony was the leader, were, on one occasion, compelled to bear arms. Melania, a noble Roman lady, formed a nunnery of fifty virgins. But, amidst all this passion for seclusion and mortification, we hear the loudest complaints of the pride and luxury which wealth and power brought into the church. For now, Christian pastors assumed the lofty titles of metropolitans, archbishops, archdeacons, primates, and exarchs. Jerome already saw Babylon in Rome, which began to employ every artifice to induce all who had differences, to appeal to her tribunal. Ecclesiastical rules, or canons, were exalted above the Scriptures, and the sceptre of the emperor was employed to compel submission to the decrees of the church. It is, indeed, most painfully interesting to observe how steadily the Roman pontiffs pressed towards their mark—absolute despotism over the Christian church.

To allure the heathen, every kind of ornament was added to public worship. The Psalms of David were sung with great pomp; wax-lights and incense were burned on the altars; the ministers were adorned with splendid vestments, while crosses and images succeeded to the ancient idols. Pilgrimages

were now made to the tombs of the martyrs, as well as to other places deemed sacred, especially to Jerusalem, where our Lord suffered.

Many superstitious ceremonies were added to baptism, and to the Lord's Supper, which was called the mass or missa, either from the dismissal of all, but the members, before the service began, or from the dismissal of these when it closed. The bread and wine were elevated, not to be worshipped, but presented to God, and were put into the mouths of the dying as a passport to heaven.

With an appearance of great rigour, there was a general relaxation of real discipline; though tickets were given to persons removing from place to place, to attest that they were members of the Christian church. The places of worship, now erected by Christians, resembled the Jewish temple; having an outer court, which was afterwards converted into a burying-ground; a pronave, or vestibule, where the catechumens stood; the nave, or temple itself, where the faithful assembled, and the choir, called also the Bema, or Tribunal, and, by the Latins, the Presbytery, where the bishop's chair, or throne, held the middle place. There, the sacred supper was spread, in which it was observed that golden vessels were employed by wooden priests; for the days were gone when the church had wooden vessels and golden

pastors. The feast of Epiphany, or the manifestation of Christ, and the fast of Lent, were now introduced.

To the Donatists of the third century there were many successors, who maintained, if we may believe their adversaries, that the church should be composed of none but perfect Christians. It is probable, however, that the Donatists were, at first, faithful witnesses against corruption, though they at last split into parties and fell into error. The Arians, who were the chief disturbers of the church in the fourth century, derived their name from a presbyter of Alexandria, who, being envious of Alexander, elected bishop of that see in 317, maintained that Christ was not equal with the Father, but was created before the world. His followers divided into parties, some being denominated Semi-arians. Against this heresy, the first general council was held at Nice, in Bythina, where three hundred and eighteen pastors of Christian churches assembled, among whom Constantine presided as sovereign. The assembly decreed that Christ was Homousios, of the same nature with the Father; and condemned the Arians, who maintained that the Son was Homoiousios, or of like nature. Against Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, who, in 361, denied that the Holy Spirit was a divine person, and against Sabellius, who merged all the persons in

that of the Father, was held the next general council, at Constantinople, under Theodosius, in 381; where, among a hundred and fifty, there was no one from Rome. The Sabellians and Macedonians were condemned.

This was the age of heresies, and of councils, of superstition and of luxury, of external triumph and of spiritual death.

SECT. 2.—*The Corruption of the Christian Church.*

We may now pass more rapidly over the Christian history. Gregory, called the Great, bishop of Rome, was a powerful writer, who taught the perfection of the inspired Scriptures. Severus Sulpitius wrote in Latin, an ecclesiastical history, as did Socrates, Sozamen and Evagrius, in Greek. The celebrated female, Hypatia, taught philosophy at Alexandria, where she was massacred by party fury.

The supremacy of the bishop of Rome was first acknowledged by Phocas, the murderer of his master Maurice, who, when dying, exclaimed, “Thou art righteous, O Lord, and just are thy judgments.” The barbarians now began to break up the Roman empire; for, from the year 410 to 550, Rome was taken by Alaric, Genseric, Richomer, and twice by Totila. But Atala, king of the Huns, was the great scourge employed by God to chastise the sins of

those who were called Christians. The Lombards, who favoured Arianism, founded a kingdom in Italy, Clovis, a king of the Franks, or French, having submitted to Christian baptism, it was pretended that holy oil, to anoint him, as a Christian king, was brought from heaven in the bill of a dove. Augustine the monk was sent by Gregory, from Rome, in the year 597, to convert the Anglo-Saxons, though the Britons had embraced Christianity long before.

Monkery and superstition now became rampant. In Syria, enthusiasts set themselves up on pillars, the height of which was gradually increased, till it became dreadful. These pillared saints, who sought to approach heaven in this gross manner, devoted their lives to fasting and prayer, and were almost adored by the ignorant crowd. As Rome ceased to be the seat of the emperor, the bishop became more powerful, and the clergy claimed the right of judging ecclesiastical causes; so that almost every thing was made ecclesiastical, to increase the power of the priests. At this time were introduced what are called litanies, in which the people responded at every sentence, "Lord have mercy upon us." In the eastern churches, the Trisagion, or the cry of the seraphim, Holy, holy, holy, was devised and practised, as of great virtue. Gregory the Great made new regulations for the mass, in which it was pro-

hibited to sing Hallelujah, except on the fifty days between Passover and Pentecost. The magnificence of temples was much increased, and that which was built by Justinian at Constantinople, and dedicated to St. Sophia, was so splendid that the emperor exclaimed, "I have outdone thee, Solomon." The sacred places were now made asylums, where even murderers might flee and be safe; while religious processions were, in times of public calamity, supposed to be efficacious means of diverting the judgments of God.

The fifth century was troubled by the rise of the heresy which we have mentioned as introduced by Pelagius, a British monk, who, denying original sin, maintained the power of men to turn to God, and do those works for the foresight of which they were said to be pre-destinated to life. His coadjutors were Celestius and Julian, and his followers abounded, not only in Britain, but in Africa and Palestine. A modification of this doctrine was introduced by John Cassian, a monk, at Marseilles, which gave to the Semi-pelagians, the name of Marsellians. Augustine has been held in honour, as the able defender of the orthodox faith against Pelagianism. But, from this time, what is called the Calvinistic controversy has agitated the church.

Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, employing

his great powers to oppose the rising worship of the Virgin Mary, and maintaining that she ought not to be called the mother of God, was accused of denying the divinity of Christ, or of dividing him into two persons. Cyril of Alexandria, an envious rival, procured the condemnation of Nestorius, whose sufferings were but a requital of what he had done to others. By his advocates were published three books, which became famous under the title of the three chapters. The first was written by Theodore, bishop of Mopseusta, in Cilicia, in defence of the doctrine of two natures in the person of Christ; the second was by Theodoret, in condemnation of the anathemas of Cyril; and the last was a letter from Jacob of Edessa, addressed to a Persian, in whose country Nestorius had taken refuge. From the attempt to avoid the error of regarding the two natures in Christ as two persons, arose another, called Eutychianism, which was charged with asserting that, from the moment of the incarnation, the human nature was identified with the Deity. Eutychus, its author, was what was called Archimandrite, or head of the monks, at Constantinople; and his followers were denominated Monophysites, or believers in one nature. These gave rise to the Monothelites, or believers in one will in Christ. Against Nestorius, a council was called at Ephesus,

in 431. Here Cyril hastened to have Nestorius condemned, before the arrival of John, bishop of Constantinople, who failed not to shew what pride and wrath can dwell in Episcopal breasts. To condemn the Eutychians, the council of Macedon was summoned in 451, when it was decreed, that "in one and the same Christ there are two natures, without confusion and without separation." In 553, Justinian convoked, at Constantinople, a council, which condemned the errors of Origen and the Three Chapters. But, while the orthodox were convoking councils, to condemn errors, the barbarians defended Arianism by the sword.

As the darkness of night increased, the true church exhibited the fulfilment of the apocalyptic vision of a woman fleeing into the wilderness. A few men of note shone as lights in a dark place. Isidore of Spain, was a distinguished writer. Of our countrymen Bede, called Venerable, it was said, "a man born in a remote corner has astonished the world by his genius." His disciple, Alcuin, was tutor to Charlemagne. In the East, Antiochus wrote a compendium of religion, in 130 homilies; James of Edessa, commented on Scripture, in elegant Syriac; and John of Damascus was the first Greek who reduced theology to the scholastic method. Divines now began to be satisfied with repeating what former

doctors had asserted, or councils and popes had decreed.

The Papacy became triumphant, when Boniface was acknowledged universal bishop, and when Pepin, King of France, gave, as the popes say, the patrimony of Peter, or the country around Rome, to the holy see. Pope Agatho declared in 678, that the decisions of the apostolic see should be received as the divine voice of St. Peter, whose successors could not err. But Pope Constantine I. is said to have had the honour of introducing the custom of kissing the Pontiff's feet under colour of reverencing the cross on the pontifical slippers. England began to be drained of its money by sending Peter's pence to Rome. The Patriarch of Constantinople, who saw with envious eyes the elevation of his rival, continued to quarrel with him, for affirming that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son, as well as from the Father, and for sanctioning this doctrine by surreptitiously introducing the word *filioque* into the Constantinopolitan creed. But images were the grand theme of strife in the eighth century; for, while the Latin church maintained that they were pious objects of devotion, the Greek church, after many changes, settled down in the use of pictures only; so that, on this question, a perpetual schism has been created between these two great

divisions of Christendom. The Pope, who favours the worship of images, and presides over the Latin church, excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, who will have nothing but pictures in the Greek church.

The idolatry of Christians was punished by a new and mighty scourge. Mahomed, who was a poor camel driver, in Arabia, having married a rich widow, aspired after dominion, for the sake of which he is supposed to have pretended to a divine mission. Epileptic fits he represented as the effects of visits from the angel Gabriel, and by the help of a Jew and a Nestorian monk, he composed a rhapsodical volume, which he called the Koran, or reading, and passed off, among his ignorant followers, as the greatest of all miracles. Foiled in his first attempt at proselytism, and driven from Medina by the magistrates, he made his flight, called in Arabic, Hejira, the era from which his followers reckon time. By the sword, he soon spread his religion, called Islam, through Arabia, to which his followers added the conquest of Northern Africa, Western Asia, Greece, and part of Spain, and of the islands of the Mediterranean. He died in 632, aged 63, and was buried in Medina. He was a bitter enemy to the doctrine of the Trinity, which rendered him a fit instrument to chastise those who had made that pro-

found mystery a fire-brand to the church, and an occasion of violating all the obligations of Christian charity. The unity of God was almost the sole article of his creed, and his zeal against idols was rewarded by unparalleled success, not only against Pagans, but also against those who had introduced images into the Christian church, and turned Christianity into a new species of idolatry. He admitted the divine mission of Moses and Jesus, but maintained that Mahomed was a third great prophet, whose Koran was to supersede the Scriptures, which Jews and Christians had corrupted. By admitting polygamy, and promising a sensual paradise, he enlisted the corruptions of human nature on his side, and, taking advantage of the divisions among Christians, he paraded the unity of the new faith, which, however, was divided into two sects as soon as he expired. The Persians, who are Mahomedans of the sect of Ali, hate the Turks, who, from Tartary, rushing into Europe, embraced Islam, according to the sect of Omar, and, after twice beseiging, at last took Constantinople, and made it the head quarters of Mahomedism in Europe.

As all colours are alike in the dark, it is of little use to attempt a description of the various shades of ignorance and superstition which now form the history of the church. Our King Alfred was, indeed,

famed for knowledge and piety, and was even a poet superior to his times. Gothechalvus was the author of a book on predestination, which excited strong sensation. Photius, patriarch of Constantinople, wrote what was called a Library of Religion. Charles, the Great, of France, usually called Charlemagne, laboured to restore learning, and to reform the clergy, in which he was followed by his son Louis the Pious. While Mahomed was destroying Christianity in the East, the Danes and the Swedes were received into the Romish, and the Russians into the Greek church. There was, in 854, a Pope, called John VIII., whom many writers affirm to have been a woman, to whom they give the name of Joan. The pride of the popes increased, until they literally trode on the necks of emperors and kings; but when several, at one time, claimed the honour of legitimate successors of St. Peter, their divisions broke their power, which had been rendered odious and intolerable by a succession of monsters, who were a disgrace, not only to the Christian, but even to the human name.

In the year 822, Paschasias Radbert, first broached what is called the doctrine of the real presence, in a treatise on the Eucharist, in which he asserts, "that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper are, after consecration, turned into the very substance of the

body and blood of Christ." Though opposed by many, especially in England and France, this monstrous doctrine was seized by the Church of Rome, as affording a fine opportunity of exalting the priesthood, whom it invested with the power of creating the body and blood of the Saviour, and thus of exerting immense influence over the minds of men. When the first thousand years of the Christian era drew to a close, multitudes, believing that the world was coming to an end, suffered the public buildings to fall into decay. Time having confuted the error, many of the present buildings were erected in the eleventh century.

In the year 1077, flourished Theophylact, bishop of Bulgaria, who wrote Greek commentaries on the New Testament, which, though borrowed greatly from Chrysostom, would have done honour to a better age. Nicetas was the author of one of those works called *Catenæ*, or Chains, which consisted of sentences from the more ancient writers. The last of what are called the fathers was Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, who, though a monk of the Roman church, wrote with such piety and devotion as inspires the hope that there was more religion, even in that corrupt communion, than could have been expected. After this age, the principal ecclesiastical writers are called Schoolmen, and these again were followed

by Doctors of Theology. Lanfranc and Anselm, archbishops, of Canterbury, made our country famous by their learned works. Hugo de St. Victor, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, wrote four books of Sentences, which gave him the title of the Master of the Sentences, and laid the foundation of the corrupt Roman divinity.

The emperors of Germany began now to be elected heads of the Roman Empire, by the German princes; and the popes to be chosen to the chair of St. Peter by a new order of priests, called Cardinals; while the civil and ecclesiastical rulers were embroiled in disputes concerning the right of investiture, the emperors claiming the right of investing bishops with the civil prerogatives of their sees. In 1073, Pope Hildebrand, who took the title of Gregory VII., was a torment to kings and a pest to the world.

The Mahomedans having seized Palestine, and become masters of the places where our Lord lived and died, the pilgrims who visited the holy sepulchre, brought back to Europe doleful tales of the treatment they received from the Infidels. Peter, the Hermit, therefore, roused Christendom to what were called the holy wars, for the recovery of Palestine. Those who enlisted in this service, putting a cross on their armour, were called Crusaders, or cross-bearers, and these wars, in which millions of men

and money were sacrificed, were termed the Crusades. Godfrey of Boulogne, the leader of the host, took Jerusalem, but refused to be crowned with gold where our Lord was crowned with thorns. These expeditions, in which our King Richard, called Cœur de Lion, or lion's heart, acted a conspicuous part, were the occasion of forming the orders of knight-hood. The popes favoured the holy wars, because many who embarked in them, not expecting to return, bequeathed their property to the church; but in the end, this insanity, which terminated in the total defeat of the Christians, raised Europe from its extreme depression. The supplies which the armies required gave rise to the spirit of commerce, and the knowledge which the Crusaders brought back from the East, where learning and the arts were much cultivated, taught men at length to burst the chains of the priesthood.

Learning prepared the way for the Reformation. The schoolmen refined on divinity to an amazing extent of metaphysical abstraction. From the school of Albert, called the Great, issued Thomas Aquinas, into whose body, it was said, the soul of Augustine had entered. From this paragon of acumen, who was the oracle of his day, John Duns Scotus* took

* So called from being a Scotchman, born at Dunse.

the liberty to differ, and thus gave rise to violent disputes, which distracted the church. For Aquinas having asserted that genus, species, and difference, were mere names for abstract ideas, Scotus maintained that they were expressive of real existence, and thus the Christian world was divided into Nominalists and Realists, or Thomists and Scotists, whose disputes not only filled the colleges, but even made the streets to run down with blood. Scotus invented the doctrine of the immaculate birth, or conception of the Virgin Mary. At this time was made a valuable arrangement of the Scriptures into chapters, for the sake of references in a Concordance which was provided for the use of the church. Two orders of monks arose, about the year 1170, the Dominicans were founded by Dominick Guzman, a Spaniard, and the Franciscans by Francis Assisi, an Italian: these two divided the popish world by their fiery disputes, the one of them maintaining the immaculate conception of the Virgin, and the other denying it.

But God had been preparing that deliverance for his church to which we must now turn.

CHAP. III.—FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE
PRESENT TIME.

This is the period of the preparation for the final glories of Christ's kingdom.

SECT. I.—*Of the Waldenses.*

During the dark ages, some pious persons retired into the vallies of Piedmont, and even in the ninth century the gospel had been faithfully maintained by Claud, bishop of Turin. Some of the Catholic writers own that the heresy of the Waldenses is the oldest in the world. An indistinct rumour was at length heard, that in these recesses, there was a people who offered no mass, nor paid any tithes, nor worshipped any saints, but sought heaven through Christ alone. Though the princes at first refused to disturb these peaceful people, at length, through the influence of the priests, the fires of persecution were kindled at Turin and its neighbourhood—“Here was the patience and faith of the saints.” Catalan Girard, who was seated upon the pile of martyrdom at Reuel, said to one of the bystanders, “Favour me with those two flint-stones,” then throwing them on the ground exclaimed, “sooner shall I eat these stones, than you shall be able by persecution to destroy the religion for which I die!” Many of them, however, fled into Germany, France, and England. Here they were hunted like wild beasts. Evervinus, of the diocese of Cologne, warned the celebrated St. Bernard that heretics were come into his neighbourhood, “Some who have troubled us,” says he, “were seized by the people and burnt

to death, and, what is most astonishing, they came to the stake and endured the flames, not only with patience, but even with joy. They say that the church is only among themselves, because they alone follow Christ and imitate his apostles. They place no confidence in the intercession of saints, nor believe in any fire of purgatory after death. They assert that they have great numbers of their persuasion scattered almost every where; for this heresy has been concealed from the time of the martyrs." Bernard was roused to combat these supposed heretics; but in his sermons on the Canticles, which he was then publishing, he mingles his charges with such encomiums, as sufficiently attest the innocence of the accused.—"If," says he, "you ask them of their faith, nothing can be more Christian; if you observe their conversation, nothing can be more blameless. He fasts much, and eats not the bread of idleness, but works with his own hands. The whole body are rustic and illiterate." Egbert, the monk, says of these people, "They are commonly called Cathari Puritans, and are very pernicious to the Catholic faith, which, like moths, they corrupt and destroy. They maintain their opinions by the authority of Scripture, with the words of which they are armed, though they know not the sense. They are increased to great multitudes, through all countries. In

Flanders, they call them Pephles ; in France, Tisserands, from the numbers of them who are weavers.

In the year 1160, some of these faithful witnesses sought, in Britain, an asylum from the persecutions in Germany. But alas ! they found only a premature grave. Regarding them as contemptible heretics, the writers of these times record their history in a way so cursory and confused, that it is difficult to ascertain facts. It is, however, confessed, that the leader of these refugees, whose name was Gerrard, was neither ignorant nor illiterate, though we are told his followers were, because, forsooth, they made no other reply to the cavils of their enemies, than " We believe as we are taught by the word of God." A council was called by Henry, to meet at Oxford, in order to try these thirty heretics, who were not likely to meet with either mercy or justice from an assembly of haughty prelates. They were condemned ; branded on the forehead ; publicly whipped out of the town ; and, being turned into the fields in the depth of winter, when all were forbidden to relieve them, they perished. Even their enemies allow that they behaved with great calmness and moderation ; and when the inhuman sentence was executed upon them, they sang, " Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and persecute you." Warner justly observes that " their

conduct was worthy of the best and most righteous cause, and would incline one to think favourably of their doctrine." They were most probably our first martyrs to pure religion, and the duty of separating from a corrupt communion. Some historians call them Publicans, others, Vaudois, and Waldenses. They were, doubtless, a branch of those confessors whom Henry, at the request of the king of France, persecuted on the continent as well as in our isle.

Our limits forbid us to pursue the history of these fathers of the reformation ; but we may observe that the ancient Britons, together with the Scots and Irish, being deluged with the general corruption, and the established church every where having become an apostate harlot, it was now become both the duty and the inclination of real Christians to come out from Babylon ; so that we must, in future, look for the disciples of Christ among those who are branded as heretics. The popish writers affirm that the Waldenses were found in England and Scotland ; and Wickliff, together with John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, are mentioned as their followers. Indeed, the doctrines which the Waldenses are accused of teaching in England, during the twelfth century, so exactly correspond with those which Wickliff afterwards more successfully diffused, that there is no doubt of his having learned from this school.

It is refreshing to observe how God preserved for himself a faithful seed, never leaving himself without a witness ; to mark how he frustrated the machinations of the foe, by raising up new confessors, to supply the place of those that were slain ; and to behold how a new asylum was opened for the truth, when it had been driven out of every other place under heaven. For, while the Catholic writers delight to discover the earliest intimations of the corrupt doctrines, absurd ceremonies, and despotic rule of their church ; every true protestant must feel a purer joy in tracing up the witnesses for the reformation, through all ages, till we connect our religion with that of the primitive and truly apostolic church. For, though it is quite sufficient for us to find our religion in the lively oracles of God, it is consoling to discover it in the breasts of living men.

But as the original witnesses were driven from place to place on the continent, new sects of Puritans arose to prepare for the reformation. Peter de Bruys, in the south of France, after turning many to a purer faith, was burned at St. Giles, in Languedoc, for maintaining that God regards only the worship of the heart ; that crucifixes were instruments of superstition ; that the Lord's Supper is not a real sacrifice of the body of Christ ; and that prayers for the dead are of no avail. An Italian of

the name of Henry, supposed to be a Peterbruysian, or disciple of Peter Bruys, quitted the life of a monk and a hermit, and travelled, from Lausanne, through several cities of France, to Thoulouse, where he was opposed by Bernard, called the saint, from whose fury he fled; but, being seized, was tried at Rheims, before Pope Eugenius III., who consigned him to prison, where he ended his days. Arnold, of Brescia, was celebrated for maintaining that the temporal power of the church was an unprincipled and pernicious corruption. He excited the people of Rome itself, to assert their civil rights and liberties against the pope, who trembled and fled; but, returning with military force, this pretended successor of St. Peter triumphed, and Arnold was burned to ashes. The Arnoldists, however, continued for some time to disturb the repose of the popes. The Paterines were another sect of dissenters from the Church of Rome, which accused them of being Manicheans, though they seem to have been real protestants, who had existed in great numbers from the purer ages of the church.

But those who protested against the corruptions of the times were, at last, included under one name, that of Waldenses; derived, as Mosheim thinks, from Peter Waldo; but more probably from the Vaudois, or inhabitants of the vallies of Piedmont.

Being reduced to poverty, they were often called the poor men of Lyons. From those of the sect who lived at Albeg in France, they were sometimes denominated Albigenses. Against these, the horrible institution of the Inquisition was formed in 1212, and the execution of its bloody decrees was committed to the Dominican friars. The novel doctrine of transubstantiation having led to the adoration of the host, caused Peter Waldo to oppose the whole system of corruption. Having taught the people the sacred text, in their mother-tongue, he laid open the testimony of God concerning justification by faith in Christ. Anathematised by Pope Alexander IV., the reformer withdrew into France, and at last finished a course of twenty years' useful labours, in Bohemia, in 1179. When driven from place to place by persecution, these, like genuine successors of the apostles, "went every where preaching the word." The testimony of our great poet Milton, who wrote letters to several princes in behalf of the persecuted sect, will form an interesting close to the history of these forerunners of the Reformation. "For the first three hundred years, I find no such doctrine, or example, as that of tithes. Those most ancient reformed churches of the Waldenses, if they rather continued not pure since the apostles' days, denied that tithes were to be given, or that they were ever given in the primi-

tive church ; as appears by an ancient tractate inserted in the Bohemian history. The pastors of the poor Waldenses, the ancient stock of our Reformation, without the help of tithes, bred up themselves in trades, and especially in physic and surgery, as well as in the study of Scripture, which is the only true theology, that they might be no burden to the church ; and, after the example of Christ, might cure both body and soul, through industry adding that to their ministry which he joined to his by the gift of the Spirit. So Peter Giles relates in his History of the Waldenses of Piedmont. But our ministers scorn to use a trade, and count it the reproach of this age that tradesmen preach the gospel. It were to be wished they were all tradesmen ; they would not then, for want of another trade, make a trade of their preaching ; and yet they clamour that tradesmen preach, though they preach while themselves are the worst tradesmen of all.”—“Seeing the Christian church is not national, but consists of many particular congregations, not determined by any outward judge in matters of conscience ; those pretended church revenues, as they have ever been, so they are likely to continue, matters of endless dissension between the church and the magistrate, and the churches among themselves ; there will, therefore, be found no better remedy for these evils,

otherwise incurable, than, after the example of the most incorrupt counsel of the Waldenses, our first reformers, to remove them as a pest—an apple of discord in the church; for what else can the effect of riches be, and the snare of money in religion?—and to convert them to more profitable uses; considering that the church of Christ was founded in poverty, rather than in revenues, stood purest, and prospered best without them, received them unlawfully from those who both erroneously and unjustly, sometimes impiously, gave them, and so was justly ensnared and corrupted by them.”—“The Waldenses, our first reformers, both from the Scripture and primitive example, maintained those among them, who bore the office of ministers, by alms alone. Take their very words,—‘Our food and clothing is sufficiently administered and given to us by the good people whom we teach.’ As for church endowments and possessions, I meet with none considerable before Constantine, but the houses and gardens where they met, and their places of burial; and I persuade myself that, from thence the ancient Waldenses, whom I deservedly cite so often, held that, ‘to endow churches is an evil thing;’ and that the church then fell off and became the whore, sitting on that beast mentioned in the book of Revelation, when, under Pope Sylvester, she received those temporal donations.”*

* Milton, and Jones’s History of the Waldenses.

From this extract it is manifest that the first Protestants in our country recognised the Waldenses as their elder brethren. It is true that those who adopted the Protestant Reformation as a state religion under Henry VIII. and his children, shrunk with horror from the bold adoption of an unendowed church; but still there was a large party in Britain who saw through the imperfection and impurity of the political reformation, and were well aware that the true reform of the church was to be attained by following the counsels and the examples of those who quitted Babylon, before "the kings of the earth began to hate the whore, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." Our countrymen, therefore, requited the benefit which they had received by the instructions of the continental reformers, and sent back to Europe the spirit of opposition to the papacy. For in vain had the cruelties which we have recorded been practised upon the Waldensian missionaries. Their principles lived, though their persons perished; and it is probable that our insular situation produced an effect which justified the choice made of Britain as a suitable field for the propagation of a purer faith. Remote from the chief seat of the antichristian corruption, and from the familiars of the Inquisition, which was never received into our isle, the lovers of a scriptural religion found a welcome

and an asylum here, while Rome knew not the forces and the attacks which were preparing to overthrow her vile domination. Thus we may account for the ready reception which the principles of Wickliff met; and for the ease with which Henry VIII. made a quarrel with the Pope an instrument for gratifying his lusts. The communication that was opened between the reformers of England, and those of the Continent who preceded Luther, Zuingle, and Calvin, shows that there was a fellowship of spirit, at all times and in all countries, among those who sighed over the corruptions of the church, and yielded an obedient ear to the first sound of the voice from heaven, "Come out of Babylon, my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues."

To the continent of Europe, John Huss, returning from Oxford, carried the principles of Wickliff; and was soon joined, in the city of Prague, by Jerome, a learned man. The recent discovery of printing was, by these reformers, applied to its noblest use, in the diffusion of the sacred Scriptures, translated into the vernacular tongue. The fall of Constantinople, and the Greek empire, under the power of the Turks, "turned to the furtherance of the gospel," by dispersing the Greeks, who, bringing with them into other countries the manuscripts of the New Testament, and a knowledge of its lan-

guage, led to that love of ancient literature which distinguished the age of the Reformation, and greatly promoted that event.

SECT. 2.—*Of the Protestants.*

When Pope Leo X. reigned at Rome, he sent his emissaries through Europe, in 1513, to sell indulgences, which drew forth Martin Luther, a monk at Wittenburg in Germany, to oppose this impiety. Ulrich Zuingle, at the same time, roused the Swiss to cast off the Pope's authority at Zurich, in Swisserland. Luther found such a coadjutor in Melancthon, and such a protector in the Elector, that his defiance of the Pope proved as successful as it was bold. John Calvin, a Frenchman, pursued a similar course at Geneva, and by his Institutes of the Christian Religion, as well as by his Commentaries and his epistolary correspondence, animated not only France, but a great part of Europe, in their struggles to shake off the yoke of Rome. John Knox was the apostle of the Reformation in Scotland. In England Henry VIII. furthered the same object, though from impure motives; for he renounced the authority of the Pope, who was afraid to displease an emperor by divorcing his relative from our despotic king. A great part of Germany and Prussia adopted the religion of Luther, who leaned

towards moderate Augustinianism, and adopted consubstantiation, which is a modification of transubstantiation; while the French reformers, with those of Switzerland, Holland, and Scotland, adopted the opinions of Calvin and Zuingle, who went all the lengths of Augustine on the doctrines of grace, and insisted that the Lord's Supper was simply an instituted memorial of the Saviour's death. This latter subject unhappily divided those who were called by the common name of Protestants, in consequence of the German princes of their party protesting against a hostile decree of the Diet held at Spire, in the year 1529.

As almost all Christendom had agreed that some reformation of the church was required, when the Protestants were carrying off whole nations from the Church of Rome, those princes who still adhered to it became so clamorous for a council, to consider of this subject, that the popes, after much intrigue and delay, were, at length, compelled to yield. The council was convoked in 1545, at Trent, in Italy, and, under the control of the Pope, proceeded first to debate concerning *doctrine*, which was settled on popish principles; but the reformation of manners was so shamefully slurred over, that the assembly became, at last, contemptible, even in the eyes of the Catholics. This being the last of what are called

general councils, fixed, after twenty-five years of debate, the doctrine and discipline of the Latin church as they now stand.

The Church of Rome was so diminished by the Reformation, that, to repair the loss, a new order of emissaries was instituted. Ignatius Loyala, a Spanish soldier, founded the Society of the Jesuits, who devoted themselves to the service of the Pope. Francis Xavier, their first missionary to the Indies, gave them much celebrity by his zeal, and by that kind of success which such a man may be expected to have. They were not strictly ecclesiastics, but numbered among them men of talents in every order of society. They acquired such distinction as made them formidable to the kings of Europe, who, at length, compelled Clement XIV. Ganganelli, to abolish the order. It still, however, existed in secret, and, after the French Revolution, was openly restored, but contributed to the downfall of Charles X. of France, who is thought to have been affiliated to the order. By the arts of the Jesuits, the Church of Rome contrived to regain much of its lost ground.

The fury of the Papacy was dreadfully displayed in the Netherlands, where the kings of Spain shed rivers of blood, in a vain attempt to crush the liberties of the people and the Protestant faith. In France, the persecution commenced by Charles IX.

on the infamous feast of Bartholomew, is said to have destroyed thirty-nine princes, a hundred and forty-eight counts, two hundred and thirty-four barons, a hundred and forty-seven thousand gentlemen, and nearly a million of the common people. But, after Henry IV. had obtained the throne, by the sacrifice of the Protestant religion, he secured to the reformers ample toleration, by the edict of Nantz. This was, however, revoked by Louis XIV. who renewed the ancient persecutions, and almost extinguished the French Protestant church.

In our own country, the early death of Edward VI. blighted the hopes of the reformers; for he was succeeded by Mary, a bigoted papist, who lighted up the fires of Smithfield, in which Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, and other prelates, as well as a host of more obscure persons, sealed the truth with their blood. Elizabeth rescued the Protestants from this furnace of fire. But the Stuarts inflicted the most intolerable sufferings on their native country, Scotland, in order to compel it to submit to prelacy. In Ireland, the papists rose against the Protestants, and massacred two hundred thousand, in the reign of Charles I.

Persecutions were not, however, so injurious to the Reformation as heresies. In Germany, those that were called Anabaptists, who denied the right

of civil magistrates to rule over Christians, created much trouble to the reformers, and brought great odium on the protestant cause. The Socinians, in Poland, aggravated the prejudices of those who adhered to the Church of Rome; while the denial of the Trinity, and of the divinity of Christ, was extended, by the zeal of the two Socinuses and of Servetus, to other parts of Europe. The ancient controversy on Pelagianism was revived in Holland, where Armin, professor of divinity at Leyden, made it necessary to call the Synod of Dort, in which divines from almost all the protestant churches condemned the sentiments of Armin, as a mere revival of Pelagianism, and recommended to the protestant world the creed of Calvin, or of Augustine. This Synod was, among Protestants, like the Council of Trent in the Catholic Church, the last appeal to collective wisdom and ecclesiastical authority.

But while the Reformation was much checked by the rise and prevalence of various errors, it pleased God to revive his work, by what were called the Pietists, in Germany. Frank, professor of divinity at Halle, in Saxony, wrought wonders of benevolence, and made charity to the poor the means of restoring the spirit of religion, which had fearfully declined. But after this spring-time of religion,

instead of a fruitful summer, the church was visited by the chill and darkness of winter again.

While the Reformation retrograded in many parts of the world, in our own country, the purification of the church from the errors of Rome was so imperfect, that there always was a party who, from wishing to go farther, were called Puritans. Many of these, persecuted by Henry VIII. and his daughter Elizabeth, and afterwards by the first princes of the line of Stuart, Charles and James, emigrated to America, where they founded not only churches, but an empire, which at last became independent of the mother country. The most triumphant display of the power and glory of scriptural religion is given in those transatlantic churches.

The eagerness of Charles I. for arbitrary power, cost him his life. By the army which had vanquished him in the field, he was brought to the block, as Laud, archbishop of Canterbury, his counsellor, had been before. The popish protestantism, which they had laboured to establish, was overthrown, and the Presbyterians attempted to set up their discipline in its stead. But Cromwell, who had been made Protector of the British Commonwealth, was disposed to favour the Independents; who, from a small minority in the Assembly of Divines, convened at Winchester, to arrange the ec-

clesiastical affairs of the realm, at length multiplied to a great extent. On the restoration of Charles II. in 1662, the Church of England was restored, and an Act of Uniformity was passed, to compel every clergyman to declare his unfeigned consent to every thing in the Book of Common Prayer. Two thousand Ministers, refusing to do this, were driven from their livings, on St. Bartholomew's day, 1662. As they attempted still to exercise their ministry in separate assemblies, these Non-conformists were cruelly persecuted, till the Revolution.

After Charles had desolated the kingdom, by all manner of debauchery, he died in the communion of the Church of Rome, to which there is good reason to think he had secretly conformed before his restoration. His brother, James II. succeeded; for though he had openly embraced Popery, all the efforts of zealous Protestants to pass a bill of exclusion from the crown had failed. He soon, however, dethroned himself. Such was his eagerness to establish arbitrary government and the catholic religion, that he drove the nation to invite, for their deliverance, William III., who was then Stadtholder of Holland, and had married the daughter of James. The Revolution, thus effected in 1688, terminated the long and bitter persecutions of the Dissenters, by their legal recognition, under the Toleration Act, which

was passed in the commencement of William's reign. They then consisted of three denominations, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists. During the Commonwealth, a fourth body arose, different from either of the preceding forms of religion, calling themselves the Society of Friends, but known in the world by the name of Quakers. In the reign of George II. another body of seceders was formed, called Methodists; not differing, like their predecessors, from the whole constitution of the Establishment, but merely desirous of turning men from open sin, or the dead form of godliness, to experimental and vital religion. These divided into two bodies. The more numerous portion, which follows Mr. Wesley, is known by the name and the Arminian creed of that zealous man; and the others, who followed Mr. Whitefield, are called Calvinistic Methodists. These have proved active benefactors to our country, and have immensely increased the Dissenters of Great Britain and Ireland. Under George III. the American colonies asserted their independence of the mother country, and have exhibited what might be called a successful *experiment* of the separation of the church from the state, were it not that this was a mere return to the ancient order of things, which had been tried for the first three hundred years of the Christian history. In the year 1789 a

revolution commenced in France, and extended over a great part of Europe ; ending in the destruction of a dominant hierarchy in France and Holland, and, at one time, promising to destroy the power of the Pope in Rome.

While the Sovereign Ruler of affairs was thus shaking all nations, he roused his people, in this country, to send the gospel through the world. In the year 1796 was formed the Missionary Society, composed of Christians of various denominations, which imparted a new spirit of missions through the protestant church. This Society commenced its operations in the islands of the South Sea, where God has, at length, afforded them unparalleled success. A Missionary Society has subsequently been formed among the friends of evangelical religion in the Establishment, and new energy has been imparted to those which previously existed among the Methodists, Baptists, and Moravians. Kindred institutions have been formed, in great numbers, among which special notice is due to the British and Foreign Bible Society, which has obtained, by the co-operation of all classes of Christians, an annual income of nearly a hundred thousand pounds, and has distributed seven millions of copies of the Scriptures, in various languages. This spirit of propagation has extended itself to other countries, which

have formed Bible Societies and sent out missions ; but none are more distinguished in this career than the churches in America, which sprung from the emigration of the persecuted Dissenters of England.

Towards the close of the reign of George IV., the dissenters obtained the object for which they had long petitioned in vain, the repeal of two persecuting acts, of which the one excluded them from corporations, and the other imposed on all the necessity of taking the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the forms of the Church of England, as a test of conformity, previously to admission to any office under government. A decided majority of the House of Commons, in an unexpected moment, induced the government to place the dissenters on a level with all other subjects of the realm. Immediately afterwards, the Catholics, who had for many years been struggling, in Ireland, to be placed on a level with protestants, obtained this boon.

Thus we have traced the history of the church of God from the creation to the present day. Many have been the vicissitudes of that which is still a little flock, compared with what it should be, and is destined to become. Called into existence by virtue of the promise of life given to our first parents, on their fall from primeval innocence, the church has felt all the truth of the declaration made at the same

era ; "I will put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between its seed and her seed." The first pious son of Adam was a martyr to the enmity of the first-born sinner. Few were the righteous saved in the ark from the flood of vengeance which drowned a guilty world. When Abraham was called forth from the idolatry which began to desolate the earth, his family, which was to form a church, separate from the world, became the object of oppression and persecution from earth, but of favour and protection from heaven. Their own apostacy, however, into idolatry and other sins, made them an easy prey to the foe. But, from Chaldea, the cradle of idols, they were restored to their own land, and maintained there by a marked providence, which demanded the special study of Christians, till the long-promised Messiah came. "Him, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the voices of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath in their synagogues, the Jews rejected and slew." But God raised him that was delivered for our offences, to be "Head over all things to the church, which is his body." He poured out the promised Spirit, and gathered at Jerusalem, the first church, consisting of three thousand persons, in one day. This was the little leaven destined to leaven the whole earth. From Judea, the religion of Jesus extended to Samaria,

and, at length, to the Gentile world. Christian churches were planted in the principal cities of Asia, Africa, and Europe, before the last of the apostles died. In the next century, Christians boasted that, though they were but of yesterday, they filled all places, and that people who had never submitted to the Roman arms bowed before the cross. Persecution, which tried its utmost force to extinguish the Christian name, increased the church militant on earth, as well as that which is triumphant in heaven.

At length, the cross became triumphant over idols, and Constantine gave to the Roman empire the Christian name. But the age of persecution was followed by that of corruption, and Rome papal triumphed where Rome pagan had failed. Yet a holy seed was preserved, like the seven thousand who, in the midst of apostate Israel, had not bowed the knee to Baal. The idolatrous ceremonies, and corrupt doctrines, and intolerable domination of the papacy, were thrown off by a great part of Europe, at the Reformation. Subsequent revolutions among the nations have nearly annihilated the power of the pope, who was once worshipped as a god.

The rights of conscience begin to be clearly perceived, and duly appreciated, by many even in the church of Rome. Among protestants, the evil of connecting the church of Christ with the govern-

ments of the earth is almost universally acknowledged. The extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit on the churches of the United States of America, by which hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, are gathered into the fold of Christ, is evidently designed to teach the Christian world that, where the state withdraws this unhallowed interference, God will show himself mighty to support his church, and extend the triumphs of religion through the world.

The increased conviction, which prevails among all denominations of Christians, that it is their most sacred duty to seek the universal prevalence of their religion, has already sent forth some hundreds of labourers into the wide field, where they have not been suffered "to labour in vain, or spend their strength for nought." The preaching of the gospel has greatly increased among the established clergy, and the instruction of the rising race in Sabbath-schools, as well as the distribution of tracts, and the visits that are paid from house to house, to convey Christian instruction, are recovering our population from the ignorance of heathens, and the torpor of death. A Home Missionary Society seems, indeed, a libel on a country which has borne the name of Christian for almost two thousand years, and has devoted to the church revenues larger than the clergy

of the whole Christian world enjoys ; but, while the necessity is too obvious to be denied, it is manifestly a duty to " show piety at home," while we are sending the means of salvation to the ends of the earth.

From the whole history of the church we learn that religion is in this world like a fragrant and lovely, but tender plant, in an unfavourable climate and soil. We see that the powers of darkness will employ every means to destroy the church and people of God, but that rude violence is harmless compared with the flattering smiles of the world. For if any thing could extinguish the religion of Jesus, it is not persecution unto death, but the insidious offer of support from power and from wealth. Yet, even from these most dangerous foes, we have seen God rescue his church, first preserving it as an exile in the desert, while the apostate harlot which assumed its name reigned as a queen in the city of seven hills, and, at last, giving deliverance from Babylon, when all the earth seemed drunk with her golden cup of fornication.

We are now come to a crisis ; for the whole civilized world is looking for some greater changes than mankind has ever seen. There is, indeed, much need of a second and more perfect reformation. The protestant church, not being faithful to its high vocation, snatched at peace for itself, on the express

condition that those countries which had not yet been reformed should remain under the power of the pope. This abominable truce was punished by the relapse of Hungary and of other countries to the catholic faith; for, in religion, if we seek not more, we shall lose what we have. Geneva, and the adjoining countries, have fallen into a philosophical faith, but little removed from infidelity. The French protestants have largely shared in this defection. In Germany, the Lutheran church has been, to an alarming degree, the prey of Neology, which explains away all the miracles, and neutralises all the doctrines, of Christianity, so as to render it little else than deism.

The Church of England, from the period of the Restoration, sunk into dreary night. When Romaine and his coadjutors rose, they were lights in a dark place, three or four heralds of the cross amidst many thousands of parish priests who preached another gospel. The Church of Scotland made a fearful approach to the same apostacy. In Ireland, popery has been advancing by rapid strides, till the protestants form but a fraction of the population. The dissenters, in each of the three kingdoms, have kept the lamp of evangelical truth burning, but they also have been lamentably deteriorated by the entrance of Arminianism, which has led to the alarming spread of Arianism first, and then of Socinianism. The rise

of the Methodists has improved all the preceding communions, both established and dissenting. The Greek Church, of which we have lost sight, since its entire separation from the Church of Rome, has risen into importance along with the Russian empire, having been much improved by the efforts of Peter the Great for the promotion of knowledge and civilization. But here also darkness and superstition still retain an empire so powerful that some great reformation is needed to restore the light, and purity, and power, of the religion of Christ. What hope we may entertain of a consummation so devoutly to be wished we may consider.

BOOK III.

THE PROSPECTS OF THE CHURCH.

“KNOWN unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world. But such knowledge is too wonderful for us,” and when, with idle curiosity, we attempt to pry into futurity, he repels us with the just rebuke, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in his own power.” If, however, we seek to be

guided and cheered in the path of duty, or to learn how to give to God the glory due to his name, he unfolds before us the roll of prophecy, which contains all that we need to know. The book of Revelation was given to inform the primitive church of "things that must shortly come to pass," that thus the whole volume of Scripture might contain the fortunes of the world, from the creation to the great day of doom. "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this book." For, as "the Lord God will do nothing, but he will reveal it to his servants the prophets," when great changes are coming upon the church and the world, we expose ourselves to severe reproofs, and serious injuries, if we are not prepared to meet them, by having "understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do." Our Saviour is evidently, at this time, repeating his ancient question, "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

Let us look, then, first into the volume of providence, and see what changes God is actually producing; and then into the roll of prophecy, to see what he farther designs to do. The present and the future will throw light on each other.

CHAP. I.—CHANGES OF FAVOURABLE OMEN NOW
TAKING PLACE.

The book of providence presents many important changes, at this eventful moment.

When I speak of providence, I do not mean to exclude what is called the kingdom of grace, or the empire of religion; for providence, taken in its full import, signifies the whole government of God, especially as it superintends the movements of intelligent creatures; and eminently regards the church, which is the object of a special providence. Here, then, we are to behold God breaking up old systems hostile to Christianity—giving increased activity to principles favourable to religion—separating the church from the world—removing numerous evils offensive to God and injurious to man—calling forth the spirit of prayer—granting a more abundant effusion of his grace.

SECT. 1.—*The breaking up of old systems hostile to religion is one characteristic of the times.*

In Nebuchadnezzar's vision of empire, we saw the kingdom of Christ, as a little stone, cut out of a mountain without hands, smiting the toes of the image of earthly rule, and breaking them to pieces. This taught the church that, in the days when Christ's

kingdom should be approaching to its universal triumphs, it should be the means of breaking up every thing that should stand in its way to prevent its filling the whole earth. The iron legs, which represented the Roman empire, were divided into ten toes, when the barbarous nations, at the decline and fall of that empire, established so many separate kingdoms in Europe.

This division was eminently conducive to the best interests of mankind. For though one universal, absolute monarchy would have many advantages, if we could always ensure to that empire a perfectly wise and benevolent prince; yet as power is so sure to corrupt and infatuate fallen man, it is far better for the world that governments should be divided, so as to make one ruler a check upon another, and to render them all dependent on the affections and support of the people.

The history of Europe presents many instances in which the division of kingdoms has promoted the liberty of the subject, and rescued the church from a tyrant's grasp. The extreme subdivision of the German empire, enabled the electors and other princes to thwart the attempt of the Emperor Charles V. to crush the reformation.

To prepare for the final triumphs of the kingdom of Christ, a new empire was formed in America.

For, when the houses of Tudor and of Stuart persecuted the English Puritans, they fled, with their knowledge, and their religion, and their industry, to the wilderness of North America, where, at first, they seemed merely to aggrandize the kingdom of Britain; but the division, not the consolidation, of empire, was the final result. The little stone broke, without hands, the great Spanish monarchy, when the states of Holland, adopting the protestant religion, not only offended the bigotry, but defied the power of Philip II. whose successor was compelled to terminate a war of forty years, by leaving his revolted subjects to their independence and the reformed faith. The revolution in Great Britain, in 1688, broke up the arbitrary power which the Stuarts had, for a century, been labouring to establish, and divided the dominion of our country into three estates of king, lords, and commons. Thus the kingdom of Christ operated in a way which even the sceptical Hume could not but perceive; for he owns that the religious principles of the dissenters, especially the Independents, kept alive the spark of liberty, which had otherwise been extinct. The same principles, struggling against arbitrary taxation, in our American colonies, led to their separate existence as an independent empire. Then the iron and clay, which never can mix, were separated; for the union of the

church and the state was dissolved; and never did a new government so easily consolidate, or so rapidly rise to gigantic strength, as the republic of the United States. For here every man is equally a citizen, and all being left to support their own religion, without being burdened to maintain a dominant hierarchy, Christianity is now displaying its pristine might.

Lafayette, and other French officers, returning from America, brought with them her principles, which, at length, produced the French revolution, that shook Europe to its centre. Infidels, seizing the reins of government, and venting their enmity to revealed religion, rendered the revolution odious by their crimes. A military despot, therefore, threatened to turn all to the aggrandisement of himself and his family; but, allaying himself to the despotic power of Austria, which is destined to destruction, he fell, and things seemed to revert to their old order, at the restoration of the Bourbons. These, returning with their old notions of arbitrary power, and selling themselves to the Jesuits, were soon expelled, and the Church of Rome was again separated from the state. For one of the first acts of the present government was to revoke that article of the charter which made the catholic the religion of the state.

Of the Belgic revolution we say nothing, as it not

only commenced suspiciously, but is not yet brought to any certain close. The revolution in Poland promises both to break off an important portion from the Russian empire, which is hostile to religion and freedom, and to give a salutary warning to despots, that it is vain to attempt to crush the rights and liberties of mankind.

The new republics in South America have furnished similar lessons, and have weakened the arm of Spain, which has always been stretched out to crush freedom and religion. Indeed, the whole continent of America exhibits a state of preparation for the kingdom of Christ; for where civil liberty is established, freedom of conscience must be granted, and religion requires nothing but an open stage and no favour.

In our own country, the breaking up of old monopolies is inevitable. A free press, exposing their absurdity, and injustice, and pernicious tendency, ensures their destruction; for the public voice, loudly and unequivocally uttered, must be obeyed. A few great families can no longer hold the House of Commons in bondage, or render the forms of a representative government a nugatory farce; but the unconstitutional, and therefore illegal, interference of the peers with the rights of the people being destroyed, the good of the whole, instead of the

emolument of the few, will be the end of government.

Old systems of ignorance and bondage cannot subsist, side by side, with the new, and just, and liberal institutions of mankind. Light and liberty act like the returning sun in spring, to melt the masses of snow, and break up the fetters of ice, by which the earth had been buried and the rivers bound. The tide of knowledge and of benevolence must now flow freely, to bless the world.

But this leads to notice,

SECT. 2—*The increased activity of principles favourable to religion.*

Of these I might enumerate many, but I confine myself to a few principal ones.

1. *Sound Knowledge.*

For the art of printing we never can be sufficiently thankful to God. At what period that discovery was made it is not easy to ascertain. The Chinese are said to have had the printing-press, in Asia, a thousand years before it was known in Europe. But it was not merely our want of intercourse with that country which prevented our reception of the inestimable blessing; for there are evidences of the germ of the discovery in Europe, some hundreds of years before any use was made of it; so that we

must ascribe to the providence of God the introduction of the art, at that period when the reformation made it most needful to diffuse knowledge, and most practicable to open a fair field for its use. There lies before me a Bible written previously to the invention of printing, and though it is a specimen of most beautiful penmanship, many persons would find it difficult to read. It probably cost a sum equal to three hundred pounds of our money, and occupied a man during a large portion of his life. We can now have a more legible Bible, for a few shillings, which a skilful mechanic can earn in a day. If all taxes on knowledge were removed, we might have a good Bible for two shillings.

For another branch of knowledge has rendered the art of printing still more effective, that is the application of steam to machinery. This has so diminished the labour and expedited the operation of the press, that we can now produce millions, where we formerly could not have furnished thousands, of books. We have thus the means of putting a Bible into the hands of every inhabitant of the globe. The number of volumes printed, and the knowledge diffused, is perhaps as great as if every man were employed in writing from morning to night.

Education has followed in the train of improvement, to furnish readers as fast as printing supplies

books. The systems of Lancaster and Bell are a sort of education by machinery, which has rendered that first of blessings general, by making it cheap. Infant-schools seem destined to perfect the blessing, by snatching children from ignorance, and error, and imbecility; bringing them early into an intellectual reigon, and laying the foundation for instruction of a higher order. Sunday-schools have rescued the children of the poor from the most ruinous of sins, Sabbath-breaking, and have turned to good account the only day in which they are at leisure.

Mechanics' Institutes are a species of college for the adults of the working classes. This was a great desideratum; for it is the very thing to take men from public-houses, and give their minds an intellectual turn. The libraries attached to these institutes open a new world to the labouring man, and the lectures delivered there enable him to make good use of the books. Those who have not had opportunities of observing the operation of these novel institutions, would be more than astonished to see the high order of books which their libraries contain, and to discover the use that is made of them, by men whose station in life would have been thought to oppose an insurmountable barrier to such attainments.

But the application of steam to machinery in general, has so diminished the demand for mere animal

labour that it has become necessary for man to render himself a more intellectual being. As the period approaches when the curse shall be taken off from the earth, man must learn to employ himself in those things which are peculiar to him as rational, in which no machinery can rival and supersede him. The diffusion of knowledge and improvement through all parts of the globe has been rendered so easy by the use of steam in conveyances, both by land and water, that distance will be annihilated, and ignorance and barbarism must be soon banished from the earth. Chemistry has but begun to exhibit her magic powers, and though the gases have produced immense effects, they doubtless are destined to do what would in former ages have been deemed impossible.

Before these improvements, darkness and despotism must flee. That knowledge is power, is no longer a mere beautiful theory, to adorn the works of Bacon, but is the practical conviction of mankind; and the very love of power which formerly made men resort to brute violence now makes them seek intellectual eminence. Nothing can be more favourable to the kingdom of Christ, which is the empire of light.

2. Benevolent zeal is another active principle which is preparing the way for the universal triumph of religion.

Piety, which formerly drove men into the desert

of the hermit, and the cloister of the monk, now draws them out to the busy haunts of men. The saint no longer supposes that he has triumphed, when he has fled, and preserved his own religion from contagion, but conceives that he is scarcely saved himself, unless he has saved others. If this has been attended with some diminution of the solid substance of religion, which has become like the precious metal submitted to the gold-beater's hammer, thinner in proportion as it has spread wider ; let us seek an increased depth of devotion, and the increase of piety will never be the cause of a decrease of zeal. As religion acquires greater purity, it must have more force ; as it becomes more vigorous, it will be more active ; and in proportion to its activity will be its usefulness. If the bare existence of religion in the soul does but suffice for our own salvation ; the eminence of grace, not only accomplishes the first object more triumphantly, but leads to the salvation of many. "Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine," said Paul to a young minister, "continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee." Benevolent zeal, incessant activity, and public spirit, are the characteristics of the religion of our day ; for we have arrived at the period when every thing is in motion, and the "saints must take the kingdom."

By the efforts now making to impart the inestimable blessing of a religious education to the rising race, we take time by the forelock. By this means we prepare hearers for the gospel—hearers who can understand the language of religion, and the references made to the Scriptures—hearers who have acquired the habit of spending the Lord's day in religious engagements, and who have learned to consider as friends those who seek the salvation of our souls. When these institutions are rendered more exclusively religious, they will be of immense service to the church of God. The zeal which they require, though great, is furnished; because the working agents are those who are warmed with the fires of youth.

Missions have now rekindled the zeal which characterised the primitive church. Had this never been extinguished, by the passion for domination over brethren, and the love of idle ceremonies, the church of Christ would, long ere this time, have covered the whole earth. The Christian church commenced as a grand missionary society, under the impulse of the high decree, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." How came the gospel to our island, but by the operation of the missionary spirit? The tidings of the existence of Britain, and the deplorable condition of

the heathen inhabitants, reached the ears of Christians, and operated upon them, like the vision of the man of Macedonia, saying to Paul, "Come over and help us." The result has been felt, not only in Britain, but to the ends of the earth. And why may we not conclude that there are countries yet to be evangelized, which will act as powerfully and beneficially on other nations, as we have acted on those whom we have evangelized? Some of the islands of the South Seas have already communicated the gospel to others, and all who shall, in future, be converted to the faith of Christ will receive their new religion warm with the missionary spirit. For the primitive idea is now beginning to prevail, that the possession of religion implies the obligation to impart that blessing to others. The triumph of this principle is the victory of religion. This has been so abundantly demonstrated by the success of missions, that it is impossible for Christians to sit down at their ease again, till the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord. For we have found that, whenever we set about this work in the fear of God, and in good earnest, nothing can stand before the gospel of Christ; "it is the power of God to salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile." The hundreds, perhaps we might say thousands, of labourers among the heathen, where fifty years ago there was not one,

attest the benevolent zeal of Christians, but are a mere specimen of what we may yet expect.

Bible Societies are a further proof of the same spirit that has risen in the church. The parent society, in London, has been the means of distributing seven millions of copies of that volume which was designed to make men wise to salvation. By leading to the establishment of other societies, in numerous nations, the original institution has multiplied itself and diffused its own spirit. The American Bible Society has displayed the happy peculiarity of that country, where every thing is on a gigantic scale, and where society is a giant, even in its cradle. Instead of contenting itself with the delusive maxim of doing what we can, the Transatlantic Society has determined to do what it ought; and has, therefore, decreed that, in two years, every family in the United States shall be furnished with a Bible.

The encouragement given by these institutions to all new translations of the Scriptures into the languages of the heathen, has been an immense augmentation to their value and usefulness, and has thus rendered them powerful auxiliaries to missions. The living teacher may be cast into prison, "but the word of the Lord is not bound;" the missionary may fall under exhausting labours, in a pestiferous

climate, "for all flesh is grass, but the word of our God endureth for ever."

A new means of usefulness is adopted by what is called the Christian Instruction Society. Visits are made from house to house, to converse with the inhabitants, and leave with them tracts, which are exchanged for others, on the next weekly visit. This, again, renders the efforts of that most useful institution, the Religious Tract Society, far more efficient than they could otherwise have been. The Home Missionary Society adds to all these labours that which is the most important, because it is the divinely instituted means of conversion, the preaching of the gospel in the villages and neglected towns of our country. But what end would there be of enumerating all the means which are now put in operation, to turn this fallen world to God?

Temperance societies have been, in America, valuable auxiliaries to the kingdom of Christ, and therefore we hail, with exultation, their formation in this country. It has long been well known that there can be nothing more hostile to religion than the habit of intoxication; but Christians have never, till now, made any vigorous effort to destroy the gigantic evil. By voluntary associations to produce total abstinence from ardent spirits, the happiest triumphs have already been achieved, and God has

manifested his approbation, by making these societies the forerunners of the most distinguished revivals of religion. The British and Foreign Temperance Society, which has just been formed, promises to be an instrument in the hands of God for the most extensive, mighty, and happy, revolution among mankind.

3. *The spirit of co-operation marks the present times.*

Isolated individuals formerly tried what they could do alone ; but now Christians ask how they can assist each other, and what they can do together. We have no authentic records of the operations by which the primitive Christians achieved the earliest triumphs, but we have little reason to suppose that they had any thing equivalent to our modern missionary societies. Perhaps they had no occasion for them, being in possession of better means of attaining the same end. It is certain, on the one hand, that they enjoyed more rapid and more easy triumphs, and on the other, that the Scripture says no more concerning their facilities than that they “ went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles, because the Christian brethren, in every place, helped them forward after a godly sort.” The loss of the primitive fellowship of the saints, and of the voluntary affection-

ate community of goods, has rendered it necessary for us to form societies, which are comparatively more mercenary, though we are willing to call them liberal. But the formation of associations for doing good, in all various ways, is a characteristic feature of modern times, and gives to Christians an immense advantage. Individuals who could singly do little, or nothing, can do any thing, or every thing, by means of their union. This co-operation in funds, in counsels, and in labours, presents to the church an almost omnipotent means of revolutionising the world. From this source, what may we not expect?

SECT. 3. *The separation of the church from the world.*

The chilling frost amalgamates stones, sticks, and mud, with water, into one heterogeneous mass, and the darkness of the night may hide the confusion from the discerning eye. But winter arrests the march of human affairs, by holding all nature in bonds. Whenever the light of the sun exposes these discordant mixtures, and its heat dissolves the frozen chain, things that are different separate, and each takes its proper place. When Constantine, the first Christian emperor, thought to shew his love for Christianity by taking it into an unhallowed union with the state, history had not taught men how fatal

are the nature and tendency of this connexion. Both emperors and ministers sinned through ignorance of the full import of Christ's warning, "My kingdom is not of this world." The church, therefore, was mixed up with the state, and the one was made to resemble the other, not by improving the state, in conformity with the church, but by deteriorating the church, in compliment to the state. Christianity, the most spiritual thing on earth, was moulded after the fashion of a carnal, heathen empire; worldly men were allured into the ministry, where they were supported, not by the affections, but in defiance of the aversions, of the people; and when men had converted the church into the world, they boasted that they had converted the world to the church. This has, ever since, been the grand hindrance to the progress of true religion. The rulers of the affairs, I had almost said, "the darkness, of this world," have assumed the right to rule the souls, as well as the bodies, of men; and as they that have riches and power have rarely entered the kingdom of heaven, the church, as it was then called, has been managed by the worst hands that could have seized the control of religion.

But this error is now detected, and is beginning to be exposed to universal censure and abhorrence. The United States of America set the first example

of dissolving the unnatural union, and abjuring the unholy leaguc. On the establishment of her government, as an independent power, she determined that there should be, in the union, no state-religion. This was probably less the result of clear insight into the true principle which should universally prevail, than of a wise adaptation to the circumstances of a country where sects abounded, and where they nearly balanced each other. The separation between the church and state was, therefore, not so perfect, at first, as it has since become, and as it is likely finally to be. What has been the consequence of this grand experiment? Those who are not yet disabused of the old error, have predicted terrible consequences to religion, as if the church must fall when it ceases to lean upon the state. But what, again we ask, has been the event? In no part of the earth does religion enjoy such triumphs. God has, by pouring out his Spirit there, in a most remarkable manner, shown that, when the powers of this world abstain from their officious and presumptuous attempts to help the Almighty, he will show himself "able to save to the uttermost." He is now saying to all who have ears to hear, "I will unfold to you the meaning of my word, 'not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.' Since human force, and authority, and wealth, are with-

drawn, I will prove to you that my grace can do what they cannot."

This example is evidently destined to work wonders in the earth. It is now proved to demonstration, that it is not necessary for civil governments to profane religion, by converting it into an engine of state, in order to keep the people in obedience; for never did a new government so readily consolidate itself; and, while all other governments have been either overturned, or shaken to the centre, so as to tremble for their existence, this one, which had dissevered the church from the state, has not only remained safe and quiet, but has risen to a degree of strength and influence which has astonished the world. While this lesson cannot be lost upon politicians, the Christian, who is awake to the instructions which God is affording by his providence, must see the high superiority which the church there enjoys, in consequence of being freed from the trammels of the state. Even episcopalians, whose system leads them to cling to a state alliance, have been converted by events, and a bishop in America has shown himself the most keen-sighted to discern all approaches towards political interference with religion, and the most determined in his resistance of the incipient evil. He has warned his clergy of the danger, and has offended many, in this country, where he once received a

flattering entertainment, by exposing the evils which the episcopal church here endures, in comparison with the unfettered liberty which it enjoys in the United States.

The example of America has been followed partially, both in France, and in the kingdom of the Netherlands; and most completely by those who have enjoyed the best opportunity, in the newly converted islands of the Pacific ocean. It will finally be imitated by all nations. The ministers of religion will then no longer be made mere tools of state. Bad men will cease to be allured into the ministry, by the prospect of ease, or honour, or power, or wealth. Good ministers will not be exposed to the tyranny of the evil, but will receive that encouragement and support to which they are entitled, but which they have hitherto been denied. For Christians will then be better able to support true religion, when they are not compelled to pamper the false. When the governments of the earth cease to interfere with the church, or dictate to conscience, the grand obstruction to the propagation of the gospel will be removed. This separation of the church from the state will be peculiarly fatal to popery, which rose by laying hold of the civil arm, and which must fall when left to herself.

SECT. 4.—*The removal of other evils injurious to religion.*

The laws of men have hitherto been dreadfully opposed to the law of God. But when Jehovah settled the people of Israel, as his church, in Palestine, he taught us how deeply the religion of a people is interested in its civil condition, by giving them a new national code. Who would not have expected that all who profess to form Christian nations would have consulted the divine law, when framing their own statutes? Instead, however, of any accordance, the laws of all that have been called Christian nations, have been diametrically opposed to the great principles inculcated by the Divine Legislator. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," saith the voice of God; but the laws of men have exhibited a guilty and ruinous selfishness.

Our own laws have been written in blood. It makes one shudder to think that there are hundreds of crimes punished with death, some of them so trivial, compared with the dreadful penalty, that they seem intended to bring human life into complete contempt. The folly and the guilt of such a code are beginning, not only to be seen, but felt, and some steps have been taken towards humanizing our barbarous laws. Murder will, at last, be the only crime

punished with death, in obedience to Him who said, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

The oppressive and sanguinary nature of our game laws, which have long filled our prisons, and occasioned, it has been said, two-thirds of all the crimes of the poor, has, at length, roused the notice of the government, and induced one of the king's ministers to open the way for the deliverance of our country from a stain so odious. In like manner, the multiplication of official oaths has hitherto given more occasion than even vulgar profaneness to apply to Britain the inspired censure, "Because of swearing, the land mourneth." But of ninety-four custom-house oaths, it has been ascertained, by a cabinet minister, that ninety-two are utterly useless. The name of God will not long be thus abused, by vain appeals; for the solemn affirmation which Quakers have, much to their honour, shown to be quite as effectual, begins to be viewed, by our government, as a fit substitute for this fearfully profane appeal to God.

The law of primogeniture is another instance of diametrical opposition between the British and the Divine code. With us, the eldest son is the heir at law of the whole landed estate, and the most extensive estates are entailed in that line. But the

law of God gave to an eldest son no more than a double portion ; so that if a father possessed seven hundred pounds, and had six children, the eldest would receive two hundred pounds, and each of the other children one. This divine regulation, though it gave the family the advantage of having a superior protector and benefactor, in the eldest brother, diffused a comparative equality and substantial comfort among the whole ; while our laws make the eldest son a prince, and the other children paupers, who are to be quartered upon the public. Other nations have opened their eyes to the folly, iniquity, and pernicious consequences of this law ; and our own must, ere long, imitate them in abolishing this vestige of a barbarous feudal age.

The selfish oppression of the poor, which is a crying sin in the sight of God, who has severely denounced it in his word, is beginning to become odious to man. The attempt to palliate the evil, by forced rates for the relief of the poor, is now discovered to be a failure. Their pressure is found to be intolerable to the other classes of society, while the poor can never be effectually relieved but by their own industry, encouraged and protected by a paternal government. The insurrection of the labourers, and the burning of property, have taught us, that we must, by instruction, and by equitable

laws, give moral advantages to the poor, or we never can rescue them, or ourselves, from the evils of their physical degradation. We must, sooner or later, learn that godliness has the promise of the life that now is; that righteousness exalteth a nation; and that the only effectual relief which can be afforded to those who are honourably poor, is not compulsory taxation, but the Christian charity which must ever live and flourish in the church of God. Already societies, or communities, are forming to rescue the poor from the oppression of man, and to place them on a ground that is approved by God. Few things will contribute so powerfully to set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth as the just treatment of the industrious poor.

Slavery is another evil which God is removing from the face of the globe. This scourge of our race, which makes the master no less a villain than his serf, once prevailed over the whole world; for other ages were not so mad as to make a black skin a crime, but indiscriminately enslaved men of any nation or colour. Christianity has banished it from Europe, and Mahomet has taught his followers to liberate all those who embraced Islamism; but soon the crime will not be tolerated by any nation under heaven. In this sense, too, Christ will set the sons of bondage free, and anti-slavery societies will sit

down in triumph, having done the glorious work.

But war is that great abomination which yet degrades man, and deluges the earth with blood. Christ will never display the full glories of his reign, till men have beaten "their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, resolving to learn war no more." Peace Societies are beginning to teach other Christians that abhorrence of war which the Society of Friends has so long and so nobly displayed; and this last scourge of our earth will be banished, by him who will not in vain bear the lofty title of "Prince of Peace."

The delightful intimations which we behold of the abolition of the forementioned evils, with many others, authorise us to conclude, that he is coming who will reign gloriously.

SECT. 5.—*An increased spirit of Prayer.*

The putting forth of the omnipotence of prayer is another indication of the approaching triumphs of religion.

The employment of all the various means which have been mentioned, with any other that may be devised, is only rigging the vessel and weighing the anchor, and hoisting the sails, which will be of no use, till that Spirit, who, like the wind, breatheth where it listeth, blow and crown all our efforts with

his blessing. But if the mariner has no means of raising the wind, here lies the superior advantage of the church of God, that it can, by prayer, move him that moves all things. We have only to ask and receive, for "every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

When the church shall be in full possession of all the means and facilities which are opening to us, she will put forth all the might of prayer, under the conviction, "that all things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." The hundred and twenty that continued instant in prayer, at Jerusalem, brought down the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand were gathered into the church in one day. When the full efficacy of prayer shall be tried again, the wonders of primitive times shall be renewed.

But I do not confine this spirit of prayer to the mere act of direct address to God. When we do every thing in the spirit of devotional dependence and expectation, as if we were ever on our knees, we shall exhibit the full import of the charge, "Pray without ceasing." Especially must ministers preach as they would pray, being so absorbed in the Divine presence as to be unaffected by the face of man, and uttering every word, as the mere organs of Deity, to

those who must soon appear before him to give an account of what they have heard.

Where is the man whose heart does not throb with the hope that some portion of this spirit is rising among us? A deeper impression of the necessity of extraordinary devotion is beginning to take possession both of ministers and private Christians. A loftier and more apostolic spirit now stirs in the breasts of preachers, and longing looks, indicative of believing expectations, are cast around upon the church and the world. Surely this is an answer to the prayer, "Show me a token for good."

SECT. 6.—*The effusion of the Holy Spirit.*

A more abundant effusion of the influences of the Holy Spirit affords a most decisive intimation that Christ is coming to set up his kingdom in great glory.

The operations of the Holy Spirit have, of late, attracted more attention than has been paid to them in preceding times. The doctrine is, indeed, essential to the very essence and existence of the church; for there can no more be a body of real Christians, without faith in the influence of the Holy Ghost, to produce religion, than without reliance on Christ, as the foundation of our hopes. But dull, and faint, and insufficient is this belief in many. In our country, a profession of reliance on the Spirit's

influence has been mocked at, as the peculiarity of Quakers. The public tone is now changed. The theory is acknowledged as an integral part of Christian doctrine, where the experience is not enjoyed. The nature and necessity of the Spirit's influences, and the glory of his person, are more abundantly unfolded, in the pulpit and in the press, than was common half a century ago. This is bringing us back to happier times. For how immensely important must the descent of the Spirit have appeared to the apostles, when Christ told them that it was expedient for them that he should depart, in order that the Spirit might come; and when they were kept waiting at Jerusalem, in a state of inaction, till they were endued with this power from on high!

We now see this mighty life-giving Spirit imparted in more abundant measures than the church has known for hundreds of years. On the islands of the South Seas, he must have shed an extraordinary influence, to produce such a change as the world has never before witnessed. In other parts of the earth, we behold the exertion of the same grace. America seems to be chosen as the honoured field for the display of the first triumphs of the spirit of grace over mere nominal religion. Thousands, in one town, brought under the power of the world to come; and hundreds gathered into the church at

one day, on a profession of recent experience of a regenerating power, prove to us, that Jesus Christ and his Spirit are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

These things have roused the attention of the church at large, and have made Christians stand in breathless expectation of a general and mighty effusion of the Spirit, to turn the nations to righteousness. This excitement of attention, this kindling of desire, this rising of hope, lead to more importunate prayer; and "the same Lord over all is rich to all that call upon him."

With such scenes before us, should we not hear the voice of our Lord, saying, "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

CHAP. II.—PROSPECTS AFFORDED BY PROPHECY.

SECT. 1.—*A general view of future events foretold in the New Testament.*

After viewing the past history of the church and the signs of the present times, it becomes us, in deference to the spirit of prophecy, as well as for our own advantage, to inquire what God has said concerning the future. Here we should tread cautiously; for though prophecy was intended to give us some information concerning future events, it is manifest that the light was designed to be accompanied with

considerable obscurity, until the prediction should be fully interpreted by its own fulfilment. Forgetful of this, many are now betraying a dangerous and pernicious rashness, in their comments on unfulfilled prophecy. If this teach us caution, their folly will make us wise.

The particular fortunes of the New Testament church are to be learned from the New Testament. For Christ is not more the Priest and the King of the church, than he is, by emphasis, its Prophet. It is the high prerogative of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, to unseal the volume of the divine purposes, and to make known to the church the times which are to pass over her. A full conviction of this important principle will make us look for the predictions of futurity in the Christian Scriptures, or to derive thence the key to such prophecies of events, still to come, as are to be found in the Old Testament. The law and the prophets were until John ; for the commission of the ancient seers was to foretel the coming of the just one, who was himself, as the Prophet of the church, to unfold the remaining part of the designs of him " who worketh all things after the counsels of his own will." A great proportion of those prophecies of the Old Testament which many are now applying to future events, were fulfilled before Christ came, especially

in the days of the Maccabees, of whose history we are shamefully ignorant. For, as the times drew nigh for the appearance of him to whom all the prophets bore witness, their predictions were multiplied and became more minute; that the church might more eagerly expect, and at last more clearly recognise him. Many of these predictions were so manifestly fulfilled, that the earliest heathen opponents of Christianity affirm the prophecies must have been written after the event, and yet we are now told to look for a future accomplishment.

If, then, the New Testament, given by Christ, is to be our guide, not merely in doctrine and duty, but in expectation also; we should here begin with things that are more plain, before we attempt to penetrate into that which is professedly obscure. The book of Revelation, which contains the deep things of God, stands last in the sacred volume, at once to indicate the order in which it was given, and that in which it should be studied. If we humbly obey what is more obvious, we may be found worthy to understand the more mysterious. "Be faithful in a few things, and you shall be made ruler over many."

In the four Evangelists, we learn from the lips of our divine prophet, what was then a great secret, that the gospel is to be preached to all nations. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in

the whole world, before the end come." So far was this fulfilled in the days of the apostles, when Peter, by preaching to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, broke down the middle wall which shut out the heathen from the church, that Paul says, the "gospel was preached to every creature under heaven;" for wherever the first messengers of mercy found a rational creature, they preached Christ to him. But far is this prophecy from having obtained its perfect fulfilment. There are immense regions which have never yet heard the gospel. To our shame be it spoken. Our consolation is, that we are now roused to know and feel our duty, and to make some efforts for its discharge. If these advance with accelerated motion and strength, the whole world may, in another century, hear the gospel.

Another glimpse of future events was given us by our Lord himself, before he removed his prophetic chair to the skies. He informed us that the Jews were to be cast off, for a long period. He said to them, "the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation that shall bring forth the fruits thereof." "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," Luke xx. 24.

That this fearful rejection of God's ancient people was to commence with the destruction of their city

and temple, our Lord informed his disciples, when he sat conversing with them on Mount Olive, and when he was led out of the gates of Jerusalem to be crucified. Josephus, a Jew, has recorded the fulfilment of this prophecy.

But from the New Testament, we learn that the Jews have not so stumbled at the rock of salvation, that they should be for ever fallen. Paul warned the Romans, not to indulge in cold selfish glorying over the Jews ; but to view them with compassionate solicitude, as those who are to be gathered in again. "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." It is not easy to determine, whether this means partial blindness ; for the Jews have, though blind to Christ's glory, always retained the knowledge of one God, of the inspiration of the Old Testament, and of a promised Messiah ; or whether it means, that only a part of the nation should be given up to blindness ; for there have been, in every age, converts to Christ from among the seed of Abraham.

The deliverer shall come to them at last, and Israel shall be saved. Some have strangely looked out for the ten tribes to be discovered and brought into the

church, as a separate people from those who are now known to be the nation of the Jews. But what saith the Scriptures? From the New Testament, we should conclude that the people among whom our Lord appeared were the whole seed of Abraham. Not a hint to the contrary is any where given. But many things confirmatory of this view are scattered through the Scriptures. Christ was expressly promised as a light that should appear in the land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, which lay around the lake of Genesareth. And surely it was the people, and not the soil, that the prophet intended. Zebulon and Naphtali were a part of the ten tribes. And so was Asher, of which there is express mention in the Gospel by Luke, where we read, Luke ii. 36: "There was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher." Paul says, Acts xxvi. 7, "Our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come to the resurrection of the dead." James addresses the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad, as if they were well known.

If, then, we take the New Testament for our guide, what else shall we think, but that the ten tribes found their way back to their own land, not in a body, indeed, but by individuals and by families; while Judah and his companions came, not as by flight, or stealth, but with the Lord going before

them and making a high way in the desert? And what other views can we entertain, if we are guided by historic probability? For the Assyrian empire, which carried off the ten tribes, soon gave way to the Babylonian monarch, who became lord of the ascendant. And when Cyrus seized the sceptre of the East, the favour he showed to the Jews opened the way for their return to Judea from all parts of the earth. This observation is still more applicable to the reign of Alexander. When, again, the Maccabees spread the renown of their arms and set up the temple and the throne of Israel, with glories which seemed to rival those of Solomon, every real Jew must have been attracted towards the holy land. We, therefore, find, that after it had been almost depopulated, it was again crowded with inhabitants, who became, about the time of our Saviour's advent, too numerous to be contained within the ancient limits. The stick of Judah and the stick of Ephraim, exhibited to Ezekiel, became one in God's hand; and, when our Saviour appeared, the whole seed of Abraham was considered as included in that people to whom he came; for he was "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel:" not that I would lay any stress on the name Israel, which was given to the kingdom of the ten tribes.

Some of the modern Jews and of the ancient

fathers of the church assert that the ten tribes returned to their own land. If the Samaritans were not pure Jews, there were doubtless among them many of the ten tribes, which gave occasion to that claim of brotherhood, which was so fiercely disputed. The story which was told of the Greek version of the Old Testament being made by seventy-two translators, two being taken from each tribe, shows that the whole twelve were then supposed to be known. In the book of Chronicles, long after the deportation of the ten tribes, we read of many gathered by Josiah's orders from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and all the remnant of Israel, after the idolatrous altars had been broken down in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 5—9. Jeremiah prophesied that the children of Israel should come from Babylon, they and the children of Judah together, and seek the Lord their God, Jer. l. 4.

It has been supposed that the Jews will speedily be restored, and be made the instrument of converting the rest of the world. But this is contrary to the Scriptures, which declare "that blindness has happened to Israel, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." All other nations, therefore, must be first converted. Some, to avoid this conclusion, say, that the fulness of the Gentiles means the full time

for their conversion. But the connexion in which the phrase stands proves this interpretation to be erroneous. For Paul speaks, in the same passage, of the *fulness* of the Jews, which he places in opposition to their diminishing and their fall, so as to show that their fulness means their full ingathering. Thus the fulness of the Gentiles is shown to signify their full conversion. This will be the means of convincing and converting the Jews, who will then learn that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, by his turning all nations from idols to the worship of Jehovah. Thus the restoration of Israel will be shown to be an act of pure grace; because, when Christ had no need of them, he shewed mercy to them for their fathers' sakes.

It has, again, been inquired, whether they will be restored to their own land. Many affirm that they will, and there set up their temple and their ancient worship. Nothing can be more contrary to Scripture than this last notion. The Jews were cast out from Canaan, for their unbelief, and will never be restored to Immanuel's land, till they bow before his cross. To suppose that they will be restored in a state of unbelief, is to imagine that Providence will say to the world, "the Jews were not cast out for rejecting Jesus of Nazareth: this was not their grand national sin." What Christian can expect that the conduct

of God will say this to the world? But when they believe in Christ, they will find their holy land in the Church of Christ, wherever that may be, and will say to his people, "ye are our people." Thus they will show their harmony of sentiment and spirit with the elect of Israel, who embraced Christ in the primitive times; who rejoiced that Messiah "had broken down the middle wall of partition, and had made of the two bodies, Jews and Gentiles, one new man, so making peace." In the church of Christ there was neither Jew nor Gentile, and while the believer from other nations rejoiced in becoming a son of Abraham, the converted Jew, though far from Canaan, said, "I dwell among my own people." To suppose that the converted Jews will set up their temple and Levitical worship again, is to fly in the face of that God who inspired the Epistle to the Hebrews; which was given to the church for this express purpose, to show that the whole law of ceremonies was designed to prefigure Christ, and was superseded by his incarnation and death. Then God shook, not the earth only, or the political state, but also heaven, or the ecclesiastical state, which, growing old, was ready to vanish away. Christ having made a change in the priesthood, there is a change also in the law, and he is himself our tabernacle, our temple, our priest, our sacrifice, our all.

As, however, there will be nothing to hinder the Jews from settling in Palestine, after their conversion, it is probable that many of them, who have lived in adjoining countries, or who have passed a wandering life, will prefer settling where so many powerful and delightful associations present themselves to the enlightened and pious mind. They will no longer be prevented from inhabiting Jerusalem, by its being trodden down of the Gentiles; and those who must settle somewhere, may naturally say, "Why not there?" But others, who are not descended from Abraham, will dwell there also; for one Christian will not repel another; though it is probable that so large a proportion of the inhabitants of Palestine will be converted Jews, as to show to the world the fact of the restoration of Israel to the pale of the church, and the consequent permission to dwell in the holy land as freely as in any other part of the world. The temple exhibited to Ezekiel, with its precincts, are so extensive as to show that no literal building was intended. But, with regard to this part of Scripture, we are yet in the dark.

Another important prediction the New Testament manifestly contains; that of a great apostacy from the purity of the Christian religion. This was taught by the apostle Paul, when the Thessalonians, mistaking the import of a former letter, supposed he had

asserted that the second coming of Christ was at hand—"That day," they were assured, "should not come, except there come a falling away first." This apostacy was to be the work of "the man of sin, who should sit in the temple of God, and there exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." This same wicked power makes a conspicuous figure in the Revelation, and is believed, by Protestants, to be the Church of Rome, or rather a worldly corruption of Christianity, wherever it is found—of which Rome has been notoriously the heart, the vital seat. It shall be destroyed by the spirit of the Redeemer's mouth, and by the brightness of his coming, which some apply to Christ's personal appearance on earth. But the apostacy has been already weakened by the preaching of the gospel, and the display of Christ's spiritual presence in the effusion of his Spirit. Why then should not the same means, which at first broke this gigantic power, when it was in all its strength, at last crush its feeble remains, and grind them to powder? The power of popery now is merely that of an expiring giant, almost at its last gasp. It is no honour to Christ, to suppose that he shall come merely to kill the dying.

Before entering on the difficult task of unfolding the Revelation, we may observe, that, from the plainer parts of the New Testament, we have no reason to

believe, what is now so confidently asserted, that Christ will soon come in person to destroy his enemies and set up his kingdom. He is, then, we are told, to raise the martyrs, or even all the pious dead, and reign with them, on the earth, a thousand years ; after which, the wicked will be raised, and the world destroyed. Now, from the lips of Christ, our Prophet, we should never learn any such doctrine. All that he has said about his second coming, and the resurrection of the dead, would lead us to conclude that he will raise both the righteous and the wicked, at the same period ; the just, indeed, having the precedence, but the wicked following immediately after ; as the dead in Christ shall rise first, before the living saints shall be changed. Christ, in the Gospel by Matthew, exhibits the righteous and the wicked, all arraigned before him, at once, to be divided by the Judge, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. This would never lead us to suppose that there would be a thousand years between the rising of the one and of the other. In perfect harmony with this representation are the words of Christ, "The hour is coming, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." Every docile un-

prejudiced disciple would, on hearing these words of the church's Prophet, entertain expectations far different from those which are now obtruded on the church.

The apostles trod in the footsteps of their Master. Paul says, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive in the body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad." What else can we learn hence, but that good and evil will all stand at the same tribunal, together, to receive their final doom? So far are the apostles from teaching, that, when Christ shall come, he will raise the just, while the wicked slumber in their graves, for a thousand years, that Paul says, "The Lord shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God." Jude repeats the prophecy of Enoch, "Behold, the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his holy ones," Jude 15.

Peter declares that "the heavens and the earth shall pass away, with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat;" the earth being destroyed by fire, as it once was by water.

Much of the modern expectation of Christ's speedy appearance and personal reign is derived from the prophets of the Old Testament. But I have already shown that the commission of the pro-

phets was to tell of the first advent of Christ, with his sufferings unto death, and to give a general hint of the glory that should follow. The minuter fortunes of his kingdom are to be learned from the Lamb, who alone was worthy to unseal the book of futurity. Instead of deriving from the prophets an acquaintance with things which we could not know from the New Testament, we are to learn, from this book, how to understand the Old. Many of those prophecies that are now appealed to, in proof of Christ's approaching personal reign, and of the Jews' return to Palestine, are already fulfilled, as they who know their history and understand the prophecies, can clearly show. Proceed we now to open the book of Revelation.

SECT. 2.—*Outline of the Revelation.*

From the introduction we learn, that this mysterious roll was given by Christ, the Prophet of the church, to show to his servants things which must shortly come to pass ; that is to say, the *events* which would shortly happen to the church and the world. We are, therefore, not to expect a description of the eternal state, but a narrative of the occurrences of time ; and, as a period of a thousand years is mentioned, it is manifest that the *whole* was not shortly to happen, though the series was to commence immediately after the revelation was given.

Seven churches are chosen to be the image of the whole church, which is represented as a golden candlestick, to give light to a dark world. Seven stars are the symbols of the ministers of the gospel, who are all charged to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. For the whole history of the church, from this time, to the end of the world, is divided into seven periods.—The *internal* state of the church, during each period, is described in each *epistle*; the *external* state in each *seal*; the fortunes of the *earthly* empire, in the midst of which the church is placed, are announced by the *trumpets*, which sound the downfall of all earthly dominion; and the *vials*, which come at the end of the trumpets, exhibit the judgments that are to destroy the kingdom of the beast, or the great Babylon, the Popish Apostacy.

The epistles come first, to show that the religious state of the church brings on the external circumstances which are described in the seals; and these again are followed by the judgments on the kingdoms of the world, announced by the trumpets. The period to which the epistles refer is therefore somewhat earlier than that which belongs to the seals.

In the first epistle, which is addressed to the church of Ephesus, an excellent state of religion is described; but, towards the close, reproof is given, for having forsaken the first love, which began to

decline towards the end of this period. The first seal shows a prosperous external state of the church, Christ going forth on a white horse, to conquer the world. This period of the prosperity and triumph of religion lasted for one hundred and fifty years, during which time, the first trumpet sounded the downfall of the Roman empire (Revelation viii. 7), a third part of which is seen destroyed by such judgments as brought Israel out of Egypt.

The second epistle, addressed to Smyrna, informs the church of what she is about to suffer; and the red horse, in the second seal, goes forth to take away peace, and to kill; for almost a hundred years of bloody persecution followed. The second trumpet (Rev. viii. 8) exhibits the *Pagan* Roman empire as reduced to the condition of an extinguished volcano, a burning mountain cast into the sea. This period extends from Decius to Constantine.

The third epistle, which was addressed to Pergamos, describes the church as having stood firm in times of persecution; but now, dwelling where Satan's seat is, and seduced to have communion with an idolatrous world, for which she is called to repentance. The third seal, therefore, exhibits a black horse, and a yoke in the rider's hand, and provisions dealt out for money; showing the dark and mercenary, and contentious spirit of the times, after Con-

stantine had mingled the church with the world. The third trumpet (Rev. viii. 10) exhibits falling stars, embittering the waters, and poisoning men. This shows the divisions and miseries brought on the empire by the fallen star Arius, whose cause the Goths maintained, with great bitterness, from the middle of the fourth, until the ninth century. Others make Mahomed the fallen star.

The fourth epistle is sent to Thyatira, to warn the faithful remnant against the adulterous union between the church and the world ; a right perception of which, then formed a principal feature of true religion ; and the fourth seal shows a pale horse, called Death, followed by Hades, exhibiting the death-like state to which the church was reduced before the Reformation. The fourth trumpet (Rev. viii. 12) shews another third part of the empire destroyed, the ruling powers being hurled from their spheres, the majesty of the ancient state sinking before the Goths and Alans : these were the dark ages.

The fifth epistle, sent to Sardis, shows that, in the darkest times, there were a few found faithful, struggling for a better state, though too faintly, from Charlemagne to the Reformation. Then, the corresponding seal exhibits the martyrs under the altar, calling for vengeance ; but told that there are other martyrs first to be slain by the papal persecutions.

Now, before the last three trumpets sound, an angel cries Woe! three times; so that the following are called the woe trumpets, which sound destruction to the powers which support great mystic Babylon. The fifth trumpet, therefore, introduces the Saracens as locusts, from the east, to overthrow the empire. The vials begin to deal out wrath to the apostate power, and the Waldenses become the means of making men hate the great whore. This period extends to the end of the fifteenth century.

The sixth epistle describes, under the image of the church of Philadelphia, the Protestant communions, which, like Philadelphia, stood as a firm pillar, when all around had fallen. For, though the Protestants have had but little strength, they have not denied Christ's name, and he has set before them an open door, which no man has been suffered to shut. The opposing party, the Church of Rome, boasts of being the only true Israelites, but Christ says, "I will make those who call themselves the catholic church know that I have loved thee." The sixth seal exhibits universal revolutions, to shake all churches, and re-model every thing, after the scriptural pattern; for nothing can stand before Christ, when he shall rise, to restore all things. But, while judgments fall on the mere external church, a hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed, as objects of

favour, to be screened from the storm, which is to burst exclusively on the adherents to the beast. This describes the period of revolutions in which we have been living, and which will probably extend farther; for it is now more difficult to fix dates; because we are living amidst the scenes. The sixth trumpet is sounded, to loose four angels, bound at the Euphrates, and call forth myriads of horsemen. This probably exhibits the spirit of liberty rising in the eastern parts of the ancient Roman empire, among the Greeks, the Polcs, and even the Turks, and which will end in the destruction of all empires hostile to Christ's kingdom. The vials of wrath still continue to be poured out on the papal power.

The seventh epistle is that which is addressed to Laodicea, and may be said to describe the internal state of the church in our days. For here it must be again observed, that, though we should view the epistles, the seals, and the trumpets, as synchronous, or simultaneous, and not as consecutive, yet the internal state comes first; and fifty years or more of what is described in the epistles, may precede those events foretold in the seals. Fifty years ago, the characteristic of the church was Laodicean lukewarmness, from which this epistle was designed to rouse us. It has, in some measure, answered this end, and those who are truly separated from Antichrist are made sensible

that the grand duty of the present day is a zealous, public spirit. Rebukes and chastisements shall further this, in those whom Christ loves, and prepare them to sit down with him on his throne, when "the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the Most High." The seventh seal, therefore, exhibits silence, or quietness and rest from the state of revolution described under the sixth seal: and the seventh trumpet shall proclaim "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xi. 15. The last vial of wrath is then poured out on Babylon, to destroy all opposition to pure religion. Rev. xvi. 17—21. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven,

every stone about the weight of a talent : and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail ; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." /

During the time of declension, when the great apostacy shall prevail, two witnesses (Rev. xi.) are said to prophesy in sackcloth, that is to say, in affliction and depression, 1260 days, or years, as we have seen that Daniel employed days for years, when predicting the restoration of Jerusalem. This is a difficult part of the Revelation ; for it is hard to know who the witnesses are, except the number two should signify the smallest number of witnesses that can be admitted in a great cause ; so that we are thus taught, that the Waldeneses and their successors should be as few as could consist with maintaining a witness for God and truth. They are to be slain, and to revive quickly, to enjoy a signal and final triumph. Perhaps this is yet to come, in some central part of Christendom—Italy, or Austria. But as the 1260 years must be dated from the time that the word of God began to be despised, and Christian truth to be an offence, for which the witnesses must but on sackcloth, the gloomy period must be now drawing to a close. From the year 600, a probable period, 1260 years would bring us to 1860.

While the witnesses are thus prophesying, the church is represented as a woman (Rev. xii. 1)

bringing forth a son that shall rule the world. But she must flee into the wilderness, and live in obscurity 1260 years. For the civil governments of Christendom will, during that time, exhibit the appearance of a bloody dragon (Rev. xii 3) with seven heads, or as many different forms of government—and ten horns, or as many distinct kingdoms—into which Europe has been divided. This dragon was to rage against true religion, oppressing, persecuting, and slaying, the saints, till drunk with their blood.

Another beast is exhibited (Rev. xiii. 11) with two horns, representing, probably, the ecclesiastical, as the former, the civil, government; for the clergy have been, in popish countries, divided into two classes, secular and regular, or parish priests and monks. The whole are represented by the beast with the horns of a lamb and the voice of a dragon, pretending to be gentle as the ministers of the Lamb of God, but echoing the bloody decrees of the dragon, and contributing to give up the saints to the cruel power of the first beast, or the persecuting governments. A special mystery is said to attend this second beast, and its name is connected with a number, 666, which has never yet been satisfactorily explained. Perhaps the events which shall furnish the solution are yet to come. Rev. xiii. 18, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count

the number of the beast ; for it is the number of a man ; and his number is six hundred threescore and six."

But the Revelation closes with a view of Christ's spiritual kingdom, a heaven upon earth ; for this last vision is not, as some suppose, a view of heaven itself. The book was given to make known to us "things that were to come to pass," on earth ; not to describe heaven, which we are incapable of understanding in the present life. When, therefore, interpreters tell us that Christ will come and reign literally on earth, with his risen saints, and profess to derive this from the Revelation, which speaks of the souls of those that were slain for the testimony of Jesus, living and reigning with him on the earth, for a thousand years, they totally mistake the whole genius of the book. The heavens must receive Christ, till he come to judge the righteous and the wicked, putting an end to the present scene, and setting the seal of eternity on all things. He never showed himself to the wicked, after his resurrection, nor will he again, till they see him in the clouds of heaven. If he were to come, a thousand years before the end of the world, what effect would it have upon men, if they did not see him ? He would still be an object of faith only, just as he is now. As to his converting the world by his second coming, he ex-

pressly declared, that he went away to send his Spirit to do this ; and, whenever we discharge our duty in preaching the gospel, the Holy Ghost is sent down from heaven, and the world is converted. It is a fearful approach to the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, to say that what he came for he will not accomplish ; but that Christ did wrong in going away to send the Spirit, and that Jesus must reverse his act, by coming again to do what the Spirit has failed to effect. If we are told that, according to this hypothesis, we are not looking for the second coming of Christ, we reply that we are looking for it, as the apostles themselves were, to whom Christ said, “ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself.” At death, he comes to receive our souls to dwell with him ; and, as to our bodies, the next thing they experience, after the last expiring sigh, is Christ’s quickening power, recalling them from the grave, to appear before his judgment-seat. Christians, in all ages, have been known, as those who look for this coming of our Lord. This is a certainty, depending on no nice calculation of events and dates. Let us say with Vitringa, “ I love the coming of my Lord, for I hope to find mercy of him at that day : but I leave him to fix the time.”

As to the resurrection of the martyrs, it is as

contrary to the symbolical language of the Revelation to take this literally, as it would be to maintain that there is an animal called a lamb, on the throne of heaven, or four beasts full of eyes, worshipping before the throne. The martyrs rise, and live, and reign, when men endued with their spirit appear and sway the world; just as Elijah came again to earth, in the person of John the Baptist, though judaising interpreters are still looking for a literal Elias to come. Nor is it at all probable that a thousand years, in this book, are to be taken literally, when periods of time are all expressed mystically. A very long period is all that is intended.

It is supposed that, after the triumphs of religion, during that period, wickedness will regain the ascendant. But this is contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, which declares that, while other kingdoms decline and pass away, the kingdom of Christ will never yield to any hostile power, but will last for ever. The Revelation, therefore, closes, like Nebuchadnezzar's dream, with a vision of triumph, Christ's kingdom covering the whole earth. An objection to this view may arise in the minds of some, from observing that, in the chapter which precedes the account of the New Jerusalem, the dead are said to rise, and the whole world to be judged. But all the visions of this book are symbolical. It

was not given to teach us *doctrines*, which are taught more clearly elsewhere. We are not sent to this book to learn the atonement of Christ, justification by faith, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of the dead, or the last judgment. As, therefore, the resurrection of the martyrs is figurative, so is that general resurrection and judgment, exhibited, Rev. xx. 12. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." It may be difficult, before the time, to explain it; but, by analogy, we may conclude that it will consist in that clear manifestation of the characters and fates of all former generations, which will be universally possessed in the last days. That the Revelation closes with a view of the happy state of the church on earth, cannot be doubted, by any one who understands the whole genius of the book. How long this state will continue, or when the last judgment will come, we know not. This is a secret in the Divine breast; but that those who see clearly the spiritual glories of Christ's kingdom, exhibited in the last two chapters of the Revelation, should have taken literally the resurrection and judgment predicted in the twentieth chapter, is

surprising. For such as think the last chapters describe the final blessedness of the just in heaven, it was natural to think that the resurrection and the judgment would precede.

It will probably be said, if the last judgment is to take place after the scenes exhibited in the conclusion of the whole volume of Revelation, how are we to tell when it will come? We reply, that, so far from being an argument against the interpretation given, this uncertainty is an evidence that we have not been eating of the tree of forbidden knowledge. That it was not the design of God to let us know when the day of judgment would come, most will admit.

Yet there is a general impression that the day of judgment will find the earth in a wicked state, with few righteous upon it; while the interpretation given above supposes the last state of the world to be paradisaical, having nothing to look for, but the second coming of Christ to raise the dead, and judge the whole race of man. It will be found, on examination, that the greater part of those texts, which are supposed to assert that the world will be in a wicked state, at our Lord's second coming, have nothing to do with the subject, but speak of Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem.

That Christ will find few, or none, but unbelievers,

when he comes at the last day, is not the doctrine of Scripture. On the contrary, the most distinct and abundant reference is made to believers and the manner in which they will be affected by that event. 1 Tim. vi. 14, 15, "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ ; which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, "Behold I shew you a mystery : We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

If reference is made to wicked persons who will be found on the earth at Christ's second coming, it should be remembered that the glorious city, New Jerusalem, does but describe the church ; and what portion of the inhabitants of the earth may still remain destitute of her blessings, we know not. Few suppose that every rational creature on earth will then be truly and eminently pious. But, after all, it may be doubted whether the Scriptures say any more of the terrors of Christ's second coming and the last judgment, than would be fulfilled by the horrors of the wicked coming forth from their graves to what Christ calls the resurrection to damnation.

Then, they that pierced him, in all kindreds of the earth, shall wail because of him. We have no good evidence that there will be any other than a highly prosperous state of things, in the church, when Christ shall come to set the seal of eternity upon human affairs. The earth shall bid him welcome, when he comes, and this shall be the distinguishing peculiarity of his spiritual kingdom, that its glories shall never fade, that it shall never yield again to the victorious influence of the evil one, but be changed only from glory to glory, by the heaven below being terminated in the heaven above. This is so much the doctrine of the whole volume of Scripture, and of the Revelation itself, that it is surprising to observe how generally one of its bold images has led Christians into a contrary opinion.

But whatever may be our expectations, let us see that they do not divert us from the plain path of duty. Let it be our study to separate ourselves from the Antichristian spirit and practices which are doomed to be visited with the vials of divine wrath. A scriptural religion, a heavenly mind, and an ardent consecration to the interests of God's kingdom upon earth, are the only security against the judgments which are now pouring out on the kingdom of the beast.

The great sin into which the church has fallen is

Laodicean lukewarmness. Its opposite grace and duty, therefore, is zeal. Were Christians roused to any thing like that ardour, and those sacrifices, for the purity and extension of religion, which some nations are now displaying for civil liberty, the whole world would soon become the kingdom of our God and his Christ.

But the church can never put out her strength, until she is disentangled from the world, which now hangs about her, as the serpent on Laocoon, fettering her limbs with its folds, while it poisons her blood with its forked tongue and pestiferous breath. To turn off our attention from this vital point, many are now crying, "Lo, here and lo, there! Christ is coming personally, to set up his kingdom, and nothing can be done till he come." Believe them not; the kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, nor the bodily presence of Christ on the earth; but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.

The preaching of the gospel to every creature, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is God's appointed means of setting up the kingdom of heaven. This succeeded, till the church became corrupt, by the spirit of Antichrist, and by intermixture with the world. Let the church, escaping from the embraces of the harlot, purify itself, and what can

withstand our efforts? Mankind, in its lowest state of degradation, has been, by the use of the proper means, elevated to the glorious dignity of the sons of God. If a thousand missionaries have won such triumphs for the cross, what a change in the state of the world would be made by a hundred thousand! And what hinders the church from sending forth a hundred thousand? Is there any thing but the criminal lukewarmness, sloth, and covetousness of those who call themselves Christians? The puny efforts hitherto made, have proved that we have the means in our hands, and that God will not fail to give the needful blessing. For if we had entered on the work with more of the apostolic spirit, and had put forth the omnipotence of prayer, who can tell how much more we should have done?

How manifest, then, is it, that the modern dreams of Christ's personal appearance, to set up his kingdom, are a mere artifice of Satan, to delude us with *ignes fatui*, to set us wandering after the meteors of the marshes, in order to take us off from our plain duty! Those who are entangled in worldly communions may well say that the kingdom of Christ can never be universally triumphant while the present order of things exists. But let them obey the voice that cries, "Come out of Babylon, my people," and then see whether the shout will not be raised,

“Babylon is fallen, and the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

Before a scriptural and energetic course of efforts, all opposition falls ; and shall Christ come merely to do that which his Spirit was sent to do, and which he is doing most faithfully and triumphantly, wherever his servants are obedient to his commands ? Christians, let no man deceive you with vain words. Be wise by other men’s follies. Read history, that you may not become a history. You are the children of Time’s old age, and have in vain been privileged to live late, if you do not learn, from those who have gone before you, to live well.

The error into which the church fell, when she accepted the insidious boon of a state connexion, may be excused, on the plea of ignorance arising from inexperience. But we, who have seen the baneful consequences, shall be inexcusable if we do not take warning and wake up, as a Samson from the lap of Delilah.

We owe it to our country, to deliver her from the sin of interfering with Christ’s rule in religion. For this, the nations are now shaken, and shall be convulsed till they put away the sin. For I will overturn, overturn, overturn, says the Lord, till he come whose right it is, and I will give it to him. That government which is most free from the sin of

intruding into Christ's empire, is the most stable dominion on the face of the earth.

For the sake of the welfare of the church, which ought to be dearer to us than any other consideration, we are bound to seek her purity, in which lies her strength. This is seen in the American churches, where more energetic and efficient efforts are making for the conversion of the world, than all the rest of Christendom can show. The hundreds and the thousands who are there brought to the knowledge of Christ, in a few days, are the fruits of a wise and holy zeal, crowned with such an influence from on high, as displays the special approbation of Him with whom dwells the power, and to whom belongs the glory.

Having seen from past history, where lies our weakness, let us learn, from other lands, where lies our strength. Let Christians cease to tax and compel an ungodly world to support the church; and let us begin, at length, to consecrate ourselves and our whole substance to God. The uncertainty of earthly riches has been proved by many afflicting lessons, and will, probably, be still farther demonstrated by many more. Lay up, then, your treasures in heaven, by consecrating your substance to the kingdom of Christ. The sacrifices we have hitherto made to this object are so mean and puny, that they

are an insult rather than an honour to the cause, and our propensity to look upon them with fond admiration proclaims aloud the narrowness of our spirits, proving how much we think of money, and how little of souls.

But even our beggarly offerings we have not followed with such prayers as indicate any adequate solicitude for success. We seem as if we could not reach to the faintest notion of what our Lord meant, when he said, "Hitherto have you asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." In our own country, at least, we see no symptoms of the might and majesty of those intercessions which the church must pour forth, ere she rise to "the high calling" of being the light of the world, the salt of the earth.

The prospects opened to the church by the roll of prophecy, now unfolded, should rouse us to the full discharge of our duty, for which every facility begins to be afforded. Whatever obstructions yet remain will vanish before the full use of our present means; for we have already found that, if we are faithful in a few things, we shall be made ruler over many. To the devoted Christian of the present generation, Christ may say no more than that "I will give him the morning star;" but to our children, he may proclaim, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun

of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings ; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked ; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts," Mal. iv. 2, 3. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly ; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen," Rev. xxii. 20, 21.

CONCLUSION.

We have now stood in the midst of the works of God, and seen his plan unfolded, from the rude chaotic commencement to the glorious consummation of all things ; having eyed creation in the lovely freshness of youth, to the venerable richness of mature age. We beheld time begin its march—this globe rise out of nonexistence, all fair, holy, and happy, answering to its Author's "great idea." But the bowers of paradise withered as we gazed, and we have been compelled to drop a tear over the fall of our race. Our nature, corrupted at its source, has exhibited, though under promise of recovering grace, a murderer in the person of the first who was born of woman ; and, in the next, though we have been consoled by a picture of piety, we have been warned of the treatment that religion meets with here, where the wicked are stronger than the just, and the benevolent are martyrs to the malignant. We have seen the whole world corrupt,

and if, in the midst of such apostacy, one walked with God, this honourable exception is caught up to heaven, body and soul; as if to say, "of such the world was not worthy." We shuddered to behold avenging justice claim the whole race of man, as a sacrifice to the insulted rights of moral government; though mercy interposed, to spare one family, as the vital germ, from which should spring future subjects for the display of sovereign grace. Over a buried world we have sighed, seeing earth turned into ocean, and all that was left of the living inhabitants of the globe floating on the waters that washed its polluted surface. We looked, and saw man a second time begin his career of increase and vicissitude, pressing forwards towards his final destination. The inheritance of earth we have seen divided between the three sons of our second father. Their destinies we have heard announced, and we this day witness their fulfilment. The many tongues that are spoken by the many men who crowd the globe, we have beheld growing out of the parent speech, and have seen Babel's tower, that was designed to be the rallying-point of all, become the starting-post from whence they darted off in all various directions.

As depravity repeated its efforts, and gained new triumphs in the introduction of idolatry, the master-sin and the deadly bane of our species, we were cheered by the introduction of a new method of grace, in the separation of the church from the world, by the selection of one man, who was called out from all others, to be a father to the just. We saw him renounce his country and his kindred, to become a solitary pilgrim, rather than hold

communion with dumb blocks that insult the name and degrade the idea of Deity, and have beheld him wandering in a land that was promised to his seed, while he himself "looked for a better country, that is, a heavenly." In him we have seen the triumphs and the rewards of faith which received the renewed promise of a Saviour, in whose disciples Abraham looked for a seed numerous as the stars of heaven, though he lived to extreme old age without a child. The promise that was so slowly fulfilled we have seen at length triumphantly accomplished, in a nation springing from one that seemed "as good as dead." These descendants of the faithful, though heirs of Canaan, we have beheld toiling as slaves in Egypt, the land of bondage. By a train of providences that make romance appear as tame matters of fact, and history seem romance, the chosen people were snatched from slavery, by judgments that should make slave-holders tremble. Supported in a desert, where many an army has perished—fed from heaven with bread and flesh, and supplied with waters from a rock, the chosen people received their new religion, from the voice of God, breaking the mysterious silence which he has usually held, and affording to all ages and nations an incontrovertible proof of his existence and moral rule. At this time and place, we saw the first leaves of the inspired volume written by Moses, the amanuensis of God.

We have followed the chosen people across the cleaving flood, into their land of promise, flowing with milk and honey, where those who lately were slaves in the brick-fields, smote mighty kings, drove out warlike nations, and

cleared the soil of the abomination of idols under which it groaned, to set up a religion that was at once a witness for God and a promise of Christ. While we gazed on this new and hopeful experiment, we discovered, to our mortification, that even the people who were separated from all others, to be a church for the living God, may find corruptions springing up from seeds that still lurked within themselves.

From a simple republic, we saw Israel put on the form of a splendid monarchy; and in David beheld the image of a suffering, as in Solomon, that of a conquering, Messiah. A temple of cedar and gold, the wonder of the world, was taken possession of by Jehovah in a cloud of glory, exhibiting to us in a type, the living God manifest in the flesh, coming to dwell among us. But, from this point, the scene was changed. Israel's prosperity had reached its meridian, and if kings exalted them to heaven, kings cast them down to hell. Wealth generated pride; pride wrought oppression; oppression, division; division, weakness; and weakness, ruin.

From the time that they who should have been one and indivisible, became two kingdoms, we have heard the voice of prophets, warning and threatening; though promises of the Saviour's coming, often intermingled, threw flashes of light across the thickening gloom. Thus we still have the sublime visions of Isaiah, and the tender lamentations of Jeremiah, to instruct, and warn, and cheer these latter days. But, as "he that being often reproved, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy," the unheeded prophets at last

sighed to see their own predictions fulfilled. A people that had abused liberty was carried captive, and they who had polluted the holy land with idols, were flung off from it into the very land of idols. While their prophet tuned his harp to mournful strains over the ruins of their temple and their city, the repenting captives hung theirs on the willows, by the banks of the Euphrates, which flowed through golden Babylon, saying, "How can we sing the Lord's songs in a strange land?"

All was lost but hope, and that still lived; for Canaan was Emmanuel's land. When the golden image of idol gods proudly challenged all nations, languages, and tongues, to bow down and adore, the captive worshippers of Jehovah plucked the victory from their grasp, and mightily vindicated the honour of the true God: for fire could not burn, nor lions devour, the men who refused to worship any other than him who made the heavens and earth. The secrets of futurity were, by a captured prophet, laid naked to the astonished oppressor, whose madness at length taught him wisdom, and made him learn no more to blaspheme.

Thus Israel, too, was cured of its provoking fondness for heathen gods; and, as the time for their captivity was limited to seventy years, when these were fulfilled, while their prophet was reading Belshazzar's doom, written on his own palace wall, by the finger of God, Jehovah "called a ravenous bird from the east," and Cyrus darted upon Babylon, as the hawk upon its prey. Now Israel, in all things miraculous, was again shown to be a people absolutely unique. The nation whose country and capital

were emptied of their inhabitants, according to the expressive language of the prophet, "as a man wipeth a dish, and turneth it upside down," were restored by a providence that is without parallel. The nation comes back to its ancient site, the estates own their rightful heirs, the cities are rebuilt, Zion's mount again echoes with Zion's songs, and the foundations of the temple are relaid; though the sighs of the ancients disturbed the shouts of the young, who had never seen its former glories. But "with them were the prophets of God helping them;" and, though often interrupted by false friends and open foes, the work went on, till the promises of Zechariah and Haggai were fulfilled, when Zerubbabel "brought on the top-stone with shouts, crying, Grace, grace unto it!" New prophecies of the Messiah, imparted to Danjel, the beloved seer, fixed the exact year for the appearance of him who was Israel's hope and consolation.

But, when the friendly empire of Persia was tottering to its fall, we have seen Alexander, the world's rising conqueror, rush upon Jerusalem, to crush her with a stroke. "It shall not be," saith Jehovah: as birds flying, hover over their young, so will I hover over Jerusalem to defend her." "The king's heart was in the hand of the Lord, and he turned it as the water-course whithersoever he pleased." The fierce monarch was appeased, and became, instead of the destroyer, the protector of the holy city.

But prosperity again produced corruption, and abused mercies turned to wrath. The Jews, though cured of idolatry, brought on themselves, by other sins, the persecutions of Alexander's successors in the empire of the east.

We have seen the most horrible cruelties exercised, to compel the worshippers of the true God to exchange him for the wooden and stone deities of Greece, which were even set up in the temple, where the worship of Jehovah ceased for three years and a half. But the Maccabean heroes roused our admiration, while we beheld them braving the fury of Antiochus, and by prodigies of valour, restoring the liberties of their country, and the worship of their God. Victories equal to those of David, and prosperity that almost rivalled that of the days of Solomon, were again succeeded by strifes and divisions, which brought Israel under the yoke of the Romans, and the sceptre of Herod, at once the most splendid and the most cruel of kings.

But, when the sceptre was departing from Judah, we saw the Saviour come, at the exact time, in the very town, and of the very family, predicted. Announced by his promised forerunner, he fulfilled the prophecies by the wonders of his life, and the sacrifice of his ignominious death, rising on the third, the promised day, to prove that this sacrifice was accepted. We beheld, with exultation, the Spirit descending, to set up the new, the heavenly kingdom, which was to supersede the carnal system "established till the time of reformation." We were called to weep, with an apostle, over those "of whom Christ came," but who "both killed the Lord Jesus and forbade the apostles to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, thus filling up their sins, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost, and they were cast off "as an abominable branch."

We saw, however, the Christian church rise from the ruins of the Jewish, as a phoenix from the flames. "Out of weakness, it became strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens;" for the little band soon spread over the earth; and, though persecuted unto death, their blood fertilized the field in which they scattered the seed of the word. We have heard of the Apologies of the Fathers, and other early writings of the Christians, which still exist as historic proofs of the facts of our religion, and argumentative demonstrations of its moral worth.

Incapable of being crushed by violence, from three centuries of horrid oppressions our religion was seen rising to dominion, leading Rome's emperor captive; so that the gods of the capitol were cast to the moles and the bats, while the banner of the cross put to flight the victorious eagles, which had claimed the whole world as their prey. But here again, for the third time, we saw corruption spring from prosperity, and gold bribe to apostacy those whom fire and steel could not subdue. We blushed to see her that had been a chaste virgin for Christ, become the harlot mistress of earthly dominion; and, while the empire was nominally taken into the church, the church was transformed into a semi-heathen; though men were amused and deluded by baptizing the world with a Christian name. The most horrible perversion has rendered odious the very sound of Rome, the title of priest, and almost the name of bishop, if not of Christian. This new crime we have seen chastised by new judgments, executed by Mahomet, who rose when the church

fell, and seized the territories which she was no longer worthy to sway. The efforts of Christendom we beheld wasted in crusades, to recover the territory consecrated by the Saviour's footsteps, while nominal Christians never once reflected how much more need they had of a far more holy war, to recover the long-lost Christian spirit.

Over the dark ages we hastened with trembling steps; for from the seventh to the fourteenth century there was little to cheer or detain us, but the faint glimpses of the Waldensian witnesses, who shone as the beautiful drop of phosphoric light in the glow-worm. But "the day-spring from on high at length visited us." We saw Wickliffe, Huss, and Jerome precede Luther, Zuingle, Calvin, Knox, and Cranmer, till the Protestant churches in the north, became a counterpoise to the popery of the south of Europe. If we mourned to observe the Reformation arrested in its march, we exulted to discover a struggle for greater purity, and watched the germs of a more scriptural state, fixing themselves in the soil of Britain, and even borne by the blast of persecution to the continent of America. We have marked the rise of the Methodists, kindling a more active zeal within the bosom of the dominant church, as well as among the different classes of the Dissenters; and while the convulsions of the French Revolution horrified the world, we saw men of piety and peace send forth missions, to subdue all nations to the obedience of faith.

Thus have we followed the stream of time along its whole course, from the mysterious moment, when it burst from the ocean of eternity; and have seen the flood, now flowing quietly through flowery meadows, and now rushing impetuously over horrid rocks; for a while pursuing an even course, and then suddenly turning into a direction as strange as it was new. We are conducted, at last, to the point where all things portend changes, vast and awful, but yet welcome.

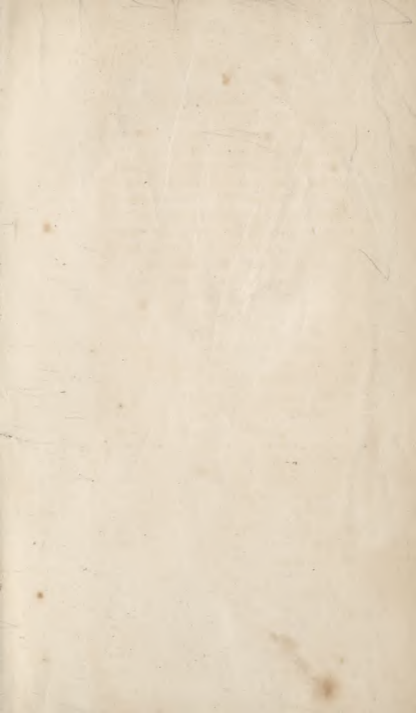
Here we have stood, and cast our eyes upon the signs of the times.—Old monopolies, which had cheated and wronged the world, are crumbling away, as if crushed by their own weight; new principles are fermenting, with a force which threatens all resistance with an explosion, loud as thunder, mighty as an earthquake.—Knowledge is taking to itself the wings of the morning, to visit every land, and wake up the world from the slumbers of a thousand ages.—Civil freedom is becoming the idol of human adoration, and priestly dominion over conscience is hated, as the very demon of the pit.—Religion begins to be identified with propagandism; so that men think themselves Christians in proportion as they strive to make others so.—The triumphs of revealed religion, over the most horrid forms of human depravity, and the worst excesses of idolatry, have taught us that nothing can withstand an honest effort to christianize the world. The improvements of science have put men in possession of forces more than human, and laid open the extremities of the globe to the enterprises of the benevolent.

From the story of olden times, and the signs of the present, we have ventured to turn and dart an inquiring glance into ages yet to come. We have unfolded the involved roll of prophecy, and have read the fates of futurity. We have heard the decree that the gospel shall be preached among all nations, and have learned that, as the prediction of the great apostacy has been fulfilled, so shall be the promise of its speedy destruction. The Jews we have beheld waiting, till the Gentiles be gathered in, when Israel also, despairing of another Messiah than that Jesus who has subdued the world to himself, shall bow before his cross.

We have gazed, while the Lamb in the midst of the throne unsealed the mystic book of Revelation. We saw the whole history of the Christian church divided into seven periods; its internal state being described in an

epistle, its external disclosed as the Lamb broke each seal, and the fates of the worldly kingdoms in which it is placed, announced by sound of trumpet, whose blast becomes more terrible as we draw towards the close, when seven vials of wrath are poured out upon the papal apostacy. We have seen that we are drawing towards the concluding periods; for the harlot which has been drunk with the blood of the saints begins to be hated by the kings of the earth; and the 1260 years, during which the witnesses for truth were to prophecy in sackcloth, are running to their close. The epistle to the church at Laodicea now warns us to put off the sin of lukewarmness, that the last seal may disclose a state of calmness and peace, when the seventh trumpet shall sound the last judgment to which sin is doomed.

We saw the vengeance on the great whore followed by the descent of the new Jerusalem from heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband; and the pure river of water of life, the influence of the Spirit of grace, flowing through all the earth, whose inhabitants eat of the tree of life, in the enjoyment of purity and peace, with which the visions of futurity close. If we ask what lies beyond; if we inquire how long this happy state shall last, before it shall terminate in eternity, the answer is, "it is not for you to know." Let our eye repose, then, on the vision of spiritual glory, and let our hearts pant after this heaven on earth, while we seek to be made meet for the heaven of heavens, on which is written with the finger of God, Eternity.





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