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The history of the Christian  
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The history of the Christian  
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including the... account of the  
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Vol. I

1519









MEDITERRANEAN OR GREAT SEA

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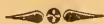
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# PREFACE

TO THE  
FIRST EDITION.



THE History of the Christian Church, when prosecuted in minute detail, and in all its ramifications, is an ample theme, and has occupied the pens of many learned men, both of our own and other countries. The elaborate treatises of Eusebius, Du Pin, Fleury, Mosheim, Priestley, Milner, and others of inferior consideration, have most of them been long before the public, and are all well known. To discuss the subject at large, or to enter into any competition with those works, as it is not to be expected in the compass of a single volume,\* so it must not be considered as having at all entered into the views of the present writer. The following pages, whatever may be their merits or defects, were not designed to instruct persons of general reading; for the author is fully aware that they contain little which is not familiar to that class of men. They were compiled with the view of communicating some interesting information to a few friends whose views of the gospel of Christ, and of the nature

\* The first edition was comprised in a single volume.

of his kingdom in this world, happen to coincide pretty much with his own, but who have been debarred the opportunity of exploring the voluminous productions in which that information lay scattered.

Those who have bestowed any considerable degree of attention upon the article of Ecclesiastical History, will readily admit, that no period of it stands so much in need of elucidation, as that which intervened from the beginning of the ninth century to the days of Luther. The original sources of our information are, almost exclusively, the Catholic writers—a race of men who, while they had an interest in disguising the truth, appear to have delighted themselves in calumniating all that dissented from their communion. And even since the time of the Reformation, while the light of divine truth has been shining around us with increasing splendour, and thus contributing to expose in all its deformity that “mystery of iniquity,” the Roman hierarchy, our Protestant historians have been but too implicitly led by those false guides. There is scarcely any History of the Christian Church extant in our language from which it would not be easy to exemplify the truth of this representation; but in no case could it more strikingly be done, than in that which respects the leading object of the present work. Not to multiply proof of this, where proofs are so abundant, an instance in point may be adduced from a contemporary

writer of our own country, who, a few years ago, published, in our own language, the “History of France,” in five vols. 4to. The following is the account there given of the Albigenses, a class of Christians who, as the reader will see from the subsequent part of this volume, were only a branch of the Waldenses, inhabiting a particular district in France.

“The Albigenses,” says this historian, “believed in two Gods; one a beneficent being, author of the New Testament, who had two wives, Collant and Collibant, and was father of several children, and among others, of Christ and the devil. The other God was a malevolent being, a liar, and a destroyer of men, author of the ancient law, who, not content with having persecuted the patriarchs during their lives, had consigned them all to damnation after death. They also acknowledge two Christs; one wicked, who was born at Bethlehem and crucified at Jerusalem, and who kept as his concubine Mary Magdalene, the woman so well known for having been caught in the act of adultery; the other Christ, all virtuous and invisible, who never inhabited the world, but spiritually in the body of Paul. They represented the Church of Rome as the scarlet whore mentioned in the Revelations. They regarded the sacraments as frivolous things; considered marriage as a state of prostitution; the Lord’s supper as a chimera; the resurrection of the flesh as a ridiculous fable; and the worship of images as



detestable idolatry. Had all their tenets been equally rational with the last, they would not have been obnoxious to *much* censure. They were divided into two classes; the perfects and the believers. They all openly professed great purity of manners, and secretly practised the most infamous voluptuousness, on the principle, that from the waist downwards, man is incapable of sin.”\*

Such is the disgusting caricature which this writer has exhibited to the world of the Albigenes. But that any man with his eyes open, and capable of exercising two grains of discrimination, should have first of all permitted himself to be so far imposed upon by the Catholic writers, as to give credit to such a tissue of absurd and ridiculous fooleries, and then gravely to detail them to his readers for the truth of history, is at once a striking instance of weakness in the author, and of the necessity of exercising continual vigilance on the part of the reader, if he would neither become the dupe of Papal slander, nor of Protestant credulity. The reader cannot fail to be

\* HISTORY OF FRANCE, Vol. I. p. 412. London, 1791. I am not insensible that there is a grossness in this quotation which renders it almost unfit to be transplanted into any other soil; and I am anxious to apologise to my readers for laying it before them; but the truth is, that it is not worse than may be found on the same subject in many other writers, while the recency of its publication, and the high ground which its author has lately taken among us, seemed to entitle him to the right of preference. As to the statement itself, it cannot but remind us of the words of Jesus, “*Blessed are ye when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name’s sake.*”

surprised, when he is told that the author of this wretched ribaldry is no other than John Gifford, Esq. the biographer of the late Right Honourable William Pitt, whose work, recently published in 3 vols. 4to. and 6 vols. 8vo. is held up as a kind of national undertaking! Of the merits of this last publication it would, no doubt, be presumptuous in the present writer to offer any opinion; but if the biographer of our great statesman have been as regardless of the truth of history in the latter instance as in the former, posterity will owe him but few obligations for his labours.

Mr. Hume had a much more correct view of the character of the Albigenses; and it is singular that Mr. Gifford should have overlooked it. The following is the passage to which I refer. "The Pope (Innocent III.) published a crusade against the Albigenses, a species of enthusiasts in the south of France, whom *he denominated heretics, because, like other enthusiasts, they neglected the rights of the church, and opposed the power and influence of the clergy.* The people from all parts of Europe, moved by their superstition and their passion for wars and adventures, flocked to his standard. Simon de Montfort, the general of the crusade, acquired to himself a sovereignty in these provinces. The Count of Toulouse, who protected, or perhaps only tolerated the Albigenses, was stripped of his dominions. And these sectaries themselves, though THE MOST INNOCENT AND INOFFENSIVE OF MANKIND, were extermi-

nated with all the circumstances of extreme violence and barbarity.” *History of England*, Vol. II. ch. xi. Nothing can be more just than this account of the Albigenses, provided we allow Mr. Hume his own definition of the term “enthusiasts”—a term which he uniformly employs to denote all those who believe the Bible to be the word of God, and who receive it as the rule of their faith and practice. I may further add, that the reader will find his account of the Albigenses to be perfectly consonant to all that is related of them in the following pages.

I shall here take the liberty to introduce, as expressive of my own sentiments, the language of an author, who, more than a century ago, was engaged in the same pursuit with myself, and to whose learned pen the following pages are much indebted. “I conceived that it was well becoming a Christian to undertake the defence of innocence, oppressed and overborne by the blackest calumnies the devil could ever invent. That we should be ungrateful towards those whose sufferings for Christ have been so beneficial to his church, should we not take care to justify their memory, when we see it so maliciously bespattered and torn. That to justify the Waldenses and Albigenses, is indeed to defend the Reformation and Reformers, they having so long before us, with an exemplary courage, laboured to preserve the Christian religion in its ancient purity, which the Church of Rome all this while has

endeavoured to abolish, by substituting an illegitimate and supposititious Christianity in its stead. So long as the ministers of the Church of Rome think fit to follow his conduct who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, innocence should not be deprived of the privilege of defending herself against their calumnies, while she willingly resigns to God the exercise of vengeance for the injustice and violence of those who have oppressed her.”\*

It may possibly occur to some of my readers that “the Portraiture of Popery,” would have been a title every way as appropriate to the ensuing pages as that which I have given it. And it certainly must be admitted, that the odious features of superstition and intolerance do but too prominently obtrude upon us, wherever the proceedings of that apostate church interpose themselves. The picture which invariably presents itself to the mind, is that of a power “speaking great words against the Most High, and wearing out the saints of the Most High,†” or, of a woman “drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus.”‡ It should, however, be remarked, that if the outlines of this hideous picture have been sketched in the following work, and in colours more sombre than may be pleasing to its friends, the circumstance is wholly accidental, since it is an object that

\* Dr. Allix's Remarks on the Churches of Piedmont, preface, p. 6.

† Dan. vii. 26.

‡ Rev. xvii. 6.

was entirely foreign to the intention of the writer, further than a faithful record of well-authenticated facts might necessarily lead him to it.

In sketching the History of the Christian Church previous to the times of the Waldenses, I have gone considerably more into detail than was my original intention; but in that particular I have been actuated solely by the desire of rendering the work more generally useful to that class of readers for whom it was principally designed. After all, it pretends to nothing more than a sketch of a vast subject, and no one can be more sensible than the writer himself is of its numerous deficiencies. Whether he may hereafter be induced to resume the subject, and fill up the outline more correctly, must depend partly upon the reception which the present attempt meets with from his cotemporaries, and partly upon other circumstances which are beyond the reach of human control. For the rest he would gladly offer his apology in the words of Father Paul, the Venetian. “He that shall observe that I speak more of some times, and more sparingly of others, let him remember, that all fields are not equally fruitful, nor all grains deserve to be kept; and that of those which the reaper would preserve, some ears escape the hand or the edge of the sickle; it being the condition of every harvest, that some part remains to be afterwards gleaned.” \*

\* History of the Council of Trent, translated by Brent. p. 2.



It may possibly strike some readers with surprise that no notice is taken, in the following pages, of a multiplicity of sects which arose, from time to time, in what is called the Christian world, and whose history occupies so very large a space in the volumes of most of our modern writers on this subject. But to speak the truth, my opinion of these *in general* is, that they have nothing to do with the history of the church or kingdom of Christ; and that to connect them with it, as Dr. Mosheim and others have done, is scarcely more unwise than the conduct of Mr. Hume would have been, had he incorporated the Tyburn Chronicle into his valuable History of England.

In tracing the kingdom of Christ in the world, I have paid no regard whatever to the long disputed subject of apostolical succession. I have, indeed, read much that has been written upon it by the Catholic writers on one side, and by Dr. Allix, Sir Samuel Morland, and several Protestants on the other; and I regret the labour that has been so fruitlessly expended by the latter, persuaded as I am that the *postulatum* is a mere fiction, and that the ground on which the Protestant writers have proceeded in contending for it, is altogether untenable. It is admitted, that the Most High has had his churches and people in every age, since the decease of the Apostles; but to attempt to trace a regular succession of ordained bishops in the vallies of

Piedmont, or any other country, is “labouring in the fire for very vanity,” and seems to me to proceed upon mistaken views of the nature of the kingdom of Christ, and of the sovereignty of God, in his operations in the earth, as they have respect unto it. Jesus himself, in reply to an inquiry put to him by the Pharisees, (Luke xvii. 20—24.) compares his kingdom to the lightning, darting its rays in the most sovereign and uncontrolled manner from one extremity of the heavens to the other. And this view of it corresponds with matter of fact. Wherever the blessed God has his elect, there, in his own proper time, he sends his gospel to save them. One while we see it diffusing its heavenly light on a particular region, and leaving another in darkness. Then it takes up its residence in the latter, and forsakes the former. Thus when Paul and his companions attempted to go into Bithynia, the Spirit permitted them not; but they were instructed by a vision to proceed to Macedonia, where the word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. When Paul first came to Corinth, he met with great opposition, but he was encouraged to persevere by Him who said, “I have much people in this city.” When the first churches began to swerve from the form of sound words, to corrupt the discipline of the house of God, and to commit fornication with the kings of the earth, by forming an alliance with the state, we cease to trace the kingdom of Christ among them, but

we shall find it successively among the churches of the Novatians, the followers of Ærius, the Paulicians, the Cathari, or Puritans in Germany, the Paterines, and the Waldenses, until the times of reformation.

If the present work contain any thing of sufficient interest to give it a temporary buoyancy upon the ocean of public opinion, and prevent its rapid transition into the gulph of oblivion—that insatiable vortex which has already swallowed up myriads of much more important publications, the author would persuade himself it must be those excellent letters of our great poet Milton, which, in the capacity of Latin Secretary to Cromwell, he wrote to the Protestant princes upon the Continent, pleading the cause of the poor, afflicted, and grossly injured Waldenses. It is a mortifying reflection, that these interesting letters should now be almost forgotten as the compositions of our great poet. Whence comes it to pass, that while Milton's *Defence of the People of England* is so generally known, no one ever speaks of his *Defence of the Waldenses*? It will be difficult to assign a more plausible reason for this, than the unpopularity of the subject. The Waldenses were “a poor and afflicted people,” the subjects of a kingdom that is not of this world, and they were treated by their adversaries as “the filth of the world and offscouring of all things.” But Milton understood their character, and duly appreciated it. He recognized in them

his Christian brethren; their distress not only reached his ears, but roused all the sensibilities of his soul; he participated in their sorrows, and his letters in their behalf do as much honour to the benevolence of his heart as his immortal poem of *Paradise Lost* does to the sublimity of his genius. It has been too much the fashion amongst a certain class of writers to inveigh against the malignity and moral character of Milton; but surely we have a right to ask his revilers, before they take such freedoms with his fair fame, at least not to be unjust to his virtues.

*Islington, July, 1812.*



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# PREFACE

TO THE  
SECOND EDITION.

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THE favourable reception which this work has experienced from the author's friends and the public, having encouraged him to present it a second time at the bar of their tribunal, it now makes its appearance in a somewhat less imperfect state than it originally did. A careful revision has suggested the necessity of correcting some inaccuracies which had escaped his notice, both in point of style and of historical fact; a few paragraphs, which upon more mature consideration appeared not so immediately connected with the subject, have been removed and their places supplied with more interesting occurrences; but the additional information now introduced is so copious that it would be no easy task to specify it in detail, even in a general way. Yet concise, and consequently imperfect, as was the narrative of the Waldenses contained in the former edition, the author has been gratified at finding that it excited an unusual degree of interest in the minds of Christians of every denomination; and the anxiety expressed by many to be as fully informed as possible concerning this remarkable people, whose memory the lapse of a century was rapidly sinking into oblivion, has stimulated him to spare no



pains or exertions to satisfy this laudable curiosity. Since its first publication the author has availed himself of every source of information within his reach ; and those who are at the pains to compare the two editions will at least give him credit for some portion of industry in research, whatever may be their opinion of his judgment and skill in the disposition of his materials. From the elaborate works of SLEIDAN and THUANUS, he has been enabled to enrich his narrative with several valuable extracts, illustrative of the history of the Waldenses in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The whole of the *eighth* section of ch. v. in which is sketched the history of Wickliff, Huss, and Jerome, of the Lollards, and Bohemian brethren, now first makes its appearance in this work. The same may be remarked concerning ch. vi. sect. 3. in which a view of the dreadful cruelties inflicted on the friends of reform, particularly in Spain and the Netherlands, about the middle of the sixteenth century, is now introduced, chiefly for the sake of keeping alive the reader's attention to the spirit and operation of the inquisition. And should it appear to any, that this section is a digression from the history of the Waldenses, the author flatters himself that he shall find some apology for its introduction, in *the aspect of the present times*—the revival of the lately expiring cause of Anti-christ—the restoration of the Society of the Jesuits—and the recent persecution of the Protestants in the south of France. For although the cause of civil and religious liberty never had a more decided friend, however much he may re-

dance and direction of all religious ordinances, was committed to a class of men bearing the titles of priests or *flamens*. It belonged to the province of these ministers to see that the ancient and customary honours were paid to the publicly acknowledged deities, and that a due regard was manifested in every other respect for the religion of the state. These were their ordinary duties; but superstition ascribed to them functions of a far more exalted nature. It considered them rather in the light of intimate and familiar friends of the gods, than in that of officiating ministers at their altar; and consequently attributed to them the highest degree of sanctity, influence, and power. With the minds of the people thus preposessed in their favour, it could not be very difficult for an artful and designing set of men, possessed of a competent share of knowledge, to maintain a system of spiritual dominion of the most absolute and tyrannical kind.

Besides the public worship of the Pagan deities, several nations, such, for instance, as the Persians, the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Indians, and some others, had recourse to a dark and concealed species of worship, under the name of MYSTERIES. None were admitted to see or participate of these mysteries, but such as had approved themselves worthy of that distinction by their fidelity and perseverance in the practice of a long course of initiatory forms. The votaries were enjoined, on peril of instant death, to observe the most profound secrecy respecting every thing that passed;\* a circumstance which alone sufficiently accounts for the difficulty that we find in obtaining any information respecting the nature of these recluse practices, and for the discordant and contradictory opinions concerning them, that are to be found in the writings of various authors both ancient and modern.

\* Clarkson's *Discourses on the Liturgies*, Sect. IV. Meursius de *Mysteriis Eleusiniis*, and Warburton's *Divine Legation*, Book II. Sect. 4.

According to the learned Warburton, each of the Heathen deities, besides the worship paid to him in public, had a secret worship, which was termed *the mysteries of the god*. These, however, were not performed in every place where he was publicly worshipped, but only where his chief residence was supposed to be. We learn from Herodotus, Diodorus, and Plutarch, that these mysteries were first invented in Egypt, from whence they spread into most countries of Europe and Asia. In Egypt they were celebrated to the honour of Isis and Osiris; in Asia to Mythras; in Samothrace to the mother of the gods; in Bœotia to Bacchus; in the isle of Cyprus to Venus; in Crete to Jupiter; in Athens to Ceres and Proserpine; and in other places to other deities of an incredible number. The most noted of these mysteries were the Orphic, those in honour of Bacchus, the Eleusinian, the Samothracian, the Cabiri, and the Mythraic. But the Eleusinian mysteries, which were statedly celebrated by the people of Athens, at Eleusis, a town of Attica, in honour of Ceres and her daughter Proserpine, in process of time supplanted all the rest; for according to the testimony of Zosimus, "*These most holy rites were then so extensive, as to take in the whole race of mankind.*" This sufficiently accounts for the fact, that ancient writers have spoken more of the Eleusinian mysteries than of any other. They all, nevertheless, proceeded from one fountain, consisted of similar rites, and are supposed to have had the same object in view.

We are informed by the same learned prelate, Warburton, that the general object of these mysteries was, by means of certain shews and representations, accompanied with hymns, to impress the senses and imaginations of the initiated with the belief of the doctrines of religion, according to the views of them which the inventors of the mysteries entertained. And in order that the mystic exhibitions might make the deeper impressions

on the initiated, they were always performed in the darkness of night. The mysteries were divided into two classes, the lesser and the greater: the former were intended for the common people—the latter for those in higher stations and of more cultivated understandings. But if the design of these mysteries really was, as some have conjectured, to impress the minds of the initiated with just notions of God, of Providence, and of a future state, it is demonstrable that they must have been grossly perverted from their original intent. Bishop Warburton, who stiffly contends for this high honour in their primary institution, is obliged to admit that the orgies of Bacchus, and the mysteries of the mother of the gods, and of Venus, and of Cupid, being celebrated in honour of deities who were supposed to inspire and to preside over the sensual appetites, it was natural for the initiated to believe that they honoured these divinities when they committed the vicious actions of which they were the patrons. He further acknowledges, that the mysteries of these deities being performed during nocturnal darkness, or in gloomy recesses, and under the seal of the greatest secrecy, the initiated indulged themselves, on these occasions, in all the abominations with which the object of their worship was supposed to be delighted. In fact, the enormities committed in celebrating the mysteries of these impure deities ultimately became so intolerable, that their rites were proscribed in various countries, as those of Bacchus were at Rome.\* And from this short account of the matter, we may learn how properly the apostle Paul denominated these boasted Heathen mysteries, “*the unfruitful works of darkness,*” Eph. v. 11.—works unproductive of any good either to those who performed them, or to society: and how very properly he prohibited Christians from joining in or “*having any fellowship with them;*” because the things

\* Livy's *Roman History*, book xxxix.



that were done in them, under the seal of secrecy, were such as it was even base to mention, ver. 12. Warburton assures us, that while all the other mysteries became exceedingly corrupt, through the folly or wickedness of those who presided at their celebration, and gave occasion to many abominable impurities, by means of which the manners of the Heathens were entirely vitiated, the Eleusinian mysteries long preserved their original purity. But at last they also, yielding to the fate of all human institutions, partook of the common depravity, and had a very pernicious influence on the morals of mankind. In proportion therefore as the gospel made its progress in the world, the Eleusinian mysteries themselves fell into disrepute; and, together with all the other Pagan solemnities, were at length suppressed.\*

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### *The Religion of the Greeks and Romans.*

AT the time of the birth of Christ, the religion of Rome, or to speak more properly, the established superstition of the empire, had been received, together with its government and laws, by a great part of the then known world. Much of this system of superstition had been borrowed from the Greeks; and hence the propriety of classing the religion of the two people under one head. There was, however, a difference between the two, and in some points rather material. The framers of the Grecian system seem to have admitted the existence of one supreme, intelligent, great first cause, the author of every thing, visible and invisible, and the supreme governor of the world; but they did not think it either necessary or proper to impart this idea

\* Rollin's *Ancient History*, Vol. V.



to the multitude, whose gross conceptions they thought might be amused by a variety of fabulous tales, and whose hopes and fears would be more excited by a plurality of deities than by the unity of an over-ruling power. The divinities first introduced in consequence of this opinion, were the sun, and the principal planets, to which were soon added the elements of fire, air, earth, and water. These fictitious deities were invested with the human form, and all the passions incident to human nature were attributed to them. The fabricated tales of their adventures, comprehended an indulgence of the most vicious propensities and the perpetration of enormous crimes. The Greeks adored Jupiter as at the head of the celestial association, the protector of mankind, and governor of the universe; while their philosophers, who appear in general to have been Atheists, by this personage typified the higher region of the air; and by his wife (Juno) the lower atmosphere diffused between the heavens and the sea. And whilst the common people paid homage to Cybele, as the mother of the gods, the more refined part of the nation intended nothing more than the earth by that object of worship. Fire was deified, and the great body of water had also its divine representative. Apollo was the sun, and the moon was his sister, Artemis, or Diana. Thus by the fertile imagination of the Greeks, their deities were gradually multiplied to a remarkable excess; indeed the poet, Hesiod, swells the amount to THIRTY THOUSAND! According to their mythology, all parts of nature teemed with divine agents, and a system which it must be owned was in some respects elegantly fanciful, was characterised, under other views, by features of the grossest absurdity.

Worship was originally offered to their deities in the open air, in groves, or upon eminences; but the Greeks, in the progress of their superstition, were led to believe that their deities would be better pleased with the

erection of buildings peculiarly devoted to their service ; and temples, at first simple and unadorned, afterwards magnificent and sumptuous, were the fruits of this opinion. Of the extent to which this point was ultimately carried, we have indeed a striking instance in the case of the temple of Diana, at Ephesus, the length of which, Pliny tells us, was 425 feet, and in breadth 220. It was supported by 107 pillars, each of them 60 feet high. This magnificent structure was erected at the expence of all Asia, and 250 years were spent in finishing it. At first these temples were without images ; but in process of time wooden figures of their gods were exhibited for public reverence. Stone or marble was soon deemed preferable for this use ; metals of various kinds were also adopted ; and the rudeness of early fabrication was succeeded by elegant workmanship.

Sacrifices formed an essential part of the superstitious worship of the Greeks, as well as of the Romans. Grateful respect for the favours conferred on them by their imaginary deities,—the desire of averting their anger after the commission of any offence,—and an eagerness to secure their blessing on a projected enterprise, were the inducements to these oblations. Herbs were the earliest offerings, and it was usual to burn them that the smoke might ascend towards heaven. Barley, and cakes made of that grain, were afterwards substituted for ordinary herbs ; and ultimately some of the most useful animals were immolated at their altars,\* upon which also milk, oil, and wine were poured. Those who served at the altar were required to prepare themselves, by abstaining even from lawful pleasures for one or more preceding days ; and all who entered the temples, on these occasions, dipped their hands in consecrated water. When the people were assembled about the altar, the priest sprinkled them with holy water, and

\* See Acts xiv. 11—13.

offered up a short prayer for them: he next examined the victim, to ascertain its freedom from defects or blemishes; prayer was then resumed; frankincense was strewed upon the altar; hymns were sung; the animal was killed with ceremonious precision; pieces of its flesh were offered and burnt as first-fruits, and the principal devotees carried off the rest.

The religious system which Romulus planted on the banks of the Tiber, corresponded pretty much with that of Greece as above described. A multiplicity of divine beings, graciously superintending human affairs, formed the prevailing creed. All the deities had priests and ministers, sacrifices and oblations. The augurs, or soothsayers, in whose art or imposture the founder of Rome excelled, were considered as an important and necessary part of the establishment. Each tribe had one of these pretended prophets, who announced the will of the gods with regard to any future enterprise, from an observance of the flight or the noise of birds, from the feeding of poultry, the movement of beasts, and other appearances. The high priest and his associates not only regulated the public worship, but acted as judges in all cases which had any reference to religion, and exercised a censorial and authoritative jurisdiction over inferior ministers.

The sacrifices in which the different priests officiated did not agree in every particular; but the following usages and ceremonies were the most prevalent. When a sacrifice was intended, a solemn procession was made to the temple of some deity. In the first place a *præco*, or public cryer, called the attention of the people to the pious work: then appeared the flute-players and harpers, performing in their best manner. The victims followed, wearing white fillets, with their horns gilt. As soon as the priest reached the altar, he prayed to the gods, imploring pardon for his sins, and a blessing upon his country. Having commanded all impure and

vicious persons to withdraw, he threw grain, meal, and frankincense upon the heads of the animals, and poured wine between the horns of each; and, having first scored them on the back, he gave orders to his attendants to slay them. The entrails were closely inspected, and from their particular appearance, omens were deduced, or inferred, supposing the gods to intimate their will by such minutiae to sagacious and devout observers. Some portions of the flesh were then placed upon the altar, for the gratification of that deity to whose honour the temple had been reared—the remainder was divided among the attendant votaries.

What has been now said of the superstition of the ancient Romans, refers particularly to the manner of conducting their worship in the city of Rome, but similar arrangements prevailed in the provinces: and in our own country there were twenty eight *flamins*, or pagan priests, according to the number of the cities, and three *arch-flamins*; namely one at London, a second at York, and a third at Caerleon. But to enter into a more particular detail of these things would carry me beyond the limits of this prefatory discourse; suffice it therefore to say, that the whole originated in the vulgar superstitions of the most remote ages of Paganism, and it would be difficult to say, which part was Trojan, which Egyptian, or which Chaldean. The Romans in general knew the whole to be an imposition, and many of them ridiculed the pretence that the institution was divine; and perhaps the subject cannot be more fitly and aptly expressed than it has been by Mr. Gibbon, in the following words. “The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.”\*

\* Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. I. ch. ii.



*The Religions of the Indians, Egyptians, Persians,  
and Celts.*

IN reviewing the various systems of Polytheism which prevailed at that time, those which were cultivated by the Indians, the Persians, the Egyptians, and the Celts, are entitled to distinguished notice. Of these the Indians and Celts are chiefly remarkable for having selected for the object of their adoration a set of ancient heroes and leaders, whose memory, so far from being rendered illustrious by their virtues, had descended to posterity disgraced and loaded with vice and infamy. Both these classes of men believed that the souls of men survived the dissolution of their bodies: the former conceiving that all of them, without distinction, entered at death into other bodies on this earth; while the latter, on the contrary, considering immortality to be the reward which heaven bestows on valour alone, supposed that the bodies of the brave, after being purified by fire, again became the receptacles of their souls, and that the heroes thus renewed were received into the council and society of the gods. Authority of the most despotic kind was committed to their priests by the people of either country. Their official duties were not restricted to the administration of the concerns of religion, but extended to the enacting of laws, and the various other departments of civil government.

In describing the religion of the Egyptians, we must distinguish between the general religion of the country, and the practice of particular provinces or districts. The liberty which every city and province enjoyed of adopting what deities it preferred, and of worshipping them under any forms which the inhabitants might think proper to institute, necessarily gave rise to a great variety of private systems. In the choice of their public



or national gods, no sort of delicacy was manifested; the greater part of them being indiscriminately composed of mortals renowned in history for their virtues, and others distinguished alone by the enormity of their crimes: such were Osiris, Seraphis, Typhon, Isis, and others. With the worship of these, was joined that of the constellations, the sun, the moon, the dog-star, animals of almost every kind, certain sorts of plants, &c. &c. Whether the religion of the state, or that which was peculiar to any province or city be considered, it will be found equally remote in its principles from every thing liberal, dignified, or rational. Some parts were ridiculous in the extreme, and the whole in no small degree contaminated by a despicable baseness and obscenity. In fact, the religion of the Egyptians was so remarkably distinguished by absurd and disgraceful traits, that it was made the subject of derision even by those whose own tenets and practice were by no means conspicuous for wisdom. The Egyptian priests had a sacred code peculiarly their own, founded on principles very different from those which characterised the popular superstition, and which they studiously concealed from the prying eye of the public, by wrapping it up in hieroglyphical characters, the meaning and power of which were only known to themselves.

The Persians derived their religious system from Zoroaster. The leading principles of their religion was, that all things are derived from two common governing causes: the one the author of all good, the other of all evil: the former the source of light, of mind, and of spiritual intelligence; the latter that of darkness and matter, with all its grosser incidents. Between these two powerful agents they supposed a constant war to be carried on. Those, however, who taught upon this system, did not all explain it in the same way, or deduce the same conclusions from it: hence uniformity was destroyed, and various sects originated. The most intel-

ligent part of the Persians maintained that there was one Supreme God, to whom they gave the name of MYTHRA, and that under him were two inferior deities, the one called *Oromasdes*, the author of all good; the other *Ariman*, the cause of all evil. The common people, who equally believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, under the title of MYTHRA, appear to have confounded him with the sun, which was the object of their adoration; and it is probable, that with the two inferior deities they joined others of whom little or nothing is now known.

None of these various systems of religion appear to have contributed in any degree towards a reformation of manners, or exciting a respect for virtue of any kind. The gods and goddesses who were held up as objects of adoration to the multitude, instead of presenting examples of excellence for their imitation, stood forth to public view the avowed authors of the most flagrant and enormous crimes. The priests took no sort of interest in regulating the public morals, neither directing the people by their precepts, nor inviting them by exhortation and example to the pursuit of what is lovely and of good report: on the contrary, they indulged themselves in the most unwarrantable licentiousness, maintaining that the whole of religion was comprised in performing the rites and ceremonies instituted by their ancestors, and that every species of sensual gratification was freely allowed by their deities to those who regularly ministered to them in this way. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, was but little understood, and of course only very partially acknowledged. Hence at the period when Christ appeared, any notions of this kind found little or no acceptance among the Greeks and Romans, but were regarded in the light of old wives' fables, fit only for the amusement of women and children. No particular points of belief respecting the immortality of the soul being established by their public

standards of religion, every one was at liberty to avow what opinion he pleased on that subject.

It can excite no reasonable surprise, therefore, that under the influence of such circumstances, the state of society should have become in the highest degree vicious and depraved. . The lives of men of every class, from the highest to the lowest, were spent in the practice of the most abominable and flagitious vices. Even crimes, the horrible turpitude of which was such, that decency forbids the mention of them, were openly practised with the greatest impunity. Should the reader doubt of this, he may be referred to LUCIAN among the Greek authors, and to JUVENAL and PERSIUS among the Roman poets—or even to the testimony of the apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. In the writings of Lucian, for instance, he will find the most unnatural affections and detestable practices treated of at large, and with the utmost familiarity, as things of ordinary and daily occurrence. And when we turn our attention to those cruel and inhuman exhibitions which are well known to have yielded the highest gratification to both the Greeks and Romans, the two most polished nations of the world; the savage conflicts of the gladiators in the circus; when we cast an eye on the dissoluteness of manners by which the walks of private life were polluted; the horrible prostitution of boys, to which the laws opposed no restraint; the liberty of divorce which belonged to the wife as well as the husband; the shameful practice of exposing infants, and procuring abortions; the multiplicity of stews and brothels, many of which were consecrated to their deities;—when we reflect on these and various other excesses, to the most ample indulgence in which the laws opposed no restraint, who can forbear putting the question, that, if such were the people distinguished above all others by the excellency of their laws, and the superiority of their attainments in literature and arts, what must have been

the state of those nations who possessed none of these advantages, but were governed solely by the impulses and dictates of rude and uncultivated nature.

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*View of the different Systems of Gentile Philosophy.*

AT the time of Christ's appearance upon earth, there were two species of philosophy that generally prevailed throughout the civilized world, the one that of Greece; the other what is usually termed the Oriental. The philosophy of the Greeks was not confined to that nation, for its principles were embraced by all such of the Romans as aspired to any eminence of wisdom. The Oriental philosophy prevailed chiefly in Persia, Chaldea, Syria, Egypt, and other eastern countries. Both these species of philosophy were split into various sects, but with this distinction, that those which sprang from the Oriental system all proceeded on one common principle, and of course had many similar tenets, though they might differ as to some particular inferences and opinions: whilst those to which the philosophy of Greece gave rise, were divided in opinion respecting the elements or first principles of wisdom, and were consequently widely separated from each other in the whole course of their discipline. The apostle Paul is generally supposed to have adverted to each of these systems—to that of Greece in Coloss. ii. 8. and to the Oriental in 1 Tim. i. 4. ch. iv. 7. and vi. 20.—in all which places, he strongly warns Christians to beware of blending the doctrines of either with the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. Happy had it been for the Christian church, could they have taken the admonition which was thus given them by the apostle;



but vain and presumptuous man could not rest satisfied with “the truth as it is in Jesus”—the wisdom that leads to eternal life, as it came pure from above, but must exercise his ingenuity in fruitless attempts to reconcile it, first of all with the principles of the Oriental philosophy, and afterwards to many of the dogmas of the Grecian sects.

The Greek philosophers, whose doctrines were also much cultivated by the Romans, may be divided into two classes: the first comprehended those whose tenets struck at the root of all religion—a species of *Atheists*, who, while they professed to support and recommend the cause of virtue, in reality nourished the interests of vice, giving colour to almost every kind of criminality: the other was composed of such as acknowledged the existence of a Deity, whom it was the duty of men to worship and obey, and who inculcated an essential and eternal distinction between good and evil, virtue and vice, but who nevertheless subverted these just principles, by connecting with them various notions absurd or trifling in their nature. Under the first of these classes may be ranked the disciples of Epicurus, and those who passed under the name of Academics.

THE EPICUREANS maintained that the universe arose out of a fortuitous concurrence of atoms; that the gods, whose existence they hesitated absolutely to deny, were totally indifferent and unconcerned about all human affairs, or rather entirely unacquainted with them; that our souls are born and die; that all things depend on and are determined by accident; that in every thing voluptuous gratification was to be sought after as THE CHIEF GOOD; and even virtue itself was only to be pursued, inasmuch as it might minister at the shrine of pleasure. The votaries of a system like this, which indeed included nearly all the children of prosperity, the rich, the noble, and the powerful, naturally studied to



pass their lives in one continued round of luxurious enjoyment. The only restraint they imposed on themselves arose out of a desire to avoid, at all times, such an excessive or immoderate addictedness to pleasure as might generate disease, or tend in any other shape to abridge the capacity for future indulgence.

THE ACADEMICS, though they affected to be influenced by wiser principles than the former, yet entertained maxims of an equally lax and pernicious tendency with them. They were nearly allied to the Sceptics; in fact, the main distinction lay in this,—that whereas the Sceptics contended that nothing should be assented to, but every thing made the subject of dispute; the Academics, on the contrary, maintained that our judgments should acquiesce in all things which bear the appearance of truth, or which may be considered in the light of probabilities. But as they were always undetermined respecting what constituted the sort of probability to which a wise man should assent, their doctrines contributed, no less than that of the Sceptics, to render every thing vague and unsettled. To make it, as they did, a matter of doubt and uncertainty, whether the gods existed or not; whether the soul was perishable or immortal; whether virtue was preferable to vice, or vice to virtue; was certainly nothing less than to undermine the fundamental principles of religion and morality. The Academic system of philosophy fell into such disrepute as to be, at one time, quite neglected and nearly lost; but Cicero revived it at Rome, a little before the birth of Christ, and so much weight was attached to his example and authority, that it was soon embraced by all who aspired to the chief honours of the state.

THE PERIPATETICS belonged to the other class of philosophers, for they acknowledged the existence of a God, and the obligations of morality; yet their tenets were not much calculated to inspire a reverence for the one, or a love for the other. The doctrine which Aris-

totle, their great master, taught, gave to the Deity an influence not much beyond that of the moving principle in a piece of machinery. He indeed considered him to be of an highly refined and exalted nature, happy in the contemplation of himself, but entirely unconscious of what was passing here below; confined from all eternity to the celestial world, and instigating the operations of nature rather from necessity than from volition or choice. In a deity of this description, differing but little from the god of the Epicureans, there surely was nothing that could reasonably excite either love, respect, or fear. It is difficult to ascertain precisely what were the sentiments of this class of philosophers respecting the immortality of the soul; but it may fairly be asked, Could the interests of religion or morality be in any shape effectually promoted by teachers like these, who denied the superintendence of divine providence, and insinuated, in no very obscure terms, a disbelief of the soul's future existence?

THE STOICS assigned to the Deity somewhat more of majesty and influence, than the disciples of Aristotle. They did not limit his functions merely to the regulating of the clouds, and the numbering of the stars; but conceived him to animate every part of the universe with his presence, in the nature of a subtle, active, penetrating fire. They regarded his connection with matter, however, as the effect of necessity, and supposed his will to be subordinate to the immutable decrees of fate; hence it was impossible for him to be considered as the author either of rewards to the virtuous, or of punishment to the wicked. The Stoics denied the immortality of the soul, and thus deprived mankind of the strongest motive to a wise and virtuous course of life. In short, the moral discipline of the Stoics may be compared to a body of a fair and imposing external appearance, but which, on closer examination, is found destitute of those essential

parts which alone can give it either energy or excellence.

THE PLATONISTS seem, of all the Grecian philosophers, to have made the highest advances in knowledge, and the nearest approach to true wisdom. Yet the system of PLATO had its defects. He considered the Deity as supreme governor of the universe, a being of the highest wisdom and power, and totally unconnected with any material substance. The souls of men he conceived to proceed from this pre-eminent source; and, as partaking of its nature, to be incapable of death. His system gave the strongest encouragement to virtue, and equally discountenanced vice, by holding out to mortals the prospect of a future state of rewards and punishments. Yet after all, his notions of the Deity were very contracted, since he never ascribes to him the attributes of infinity, immensity, ubiquity, omnipotence, omniscience, but supposes him to be confined within certain limits, and that the direction of human affairs was committed to a class of inferior spiritual agents, whom he termed demons. This notion of ministering dæmons, as well as those points of doctrine which relate to the origin and condition of the human soul, greatly disfigured the morality of Plato; inasmuch as they tend to generate superstition, and to confirm men in the practice of worshipping a number of inferior deities. His doctrine, moreover, that the soul, during its continuance in the body, was in a state of imprisonment, and that we ought to endeavour, by means of contemplation, to set it free, and restore it to an alliance with the divine nature, had a pernicious tendency, in prompting persons of weak minds to withdraw a proper degree of attention from the body and the concerns of this life, and to indulge in the dreams and fancies of a disordered imagination.

THE ECLECTICS, were a sect of philosophers that took their leading principles from the system of Plato. They considered almost every thing which he had

advanced respecting the Deity, the soul, the world, and the dæmons, as indisputable axioms: on which account they were regarded by many as altogether Platonists. Indeed this title, so far from being disclaimed, was rather affected by some of them, and particularly by those who joined themselves to Ammonius Sacca, another celebrated patron of the Eclectic philosophy. Yet with the doctrines held by Plato, they very freely intermixed the most approved maxims of the Pythagoreans, the Stoics, the Peripatetics, and the Oriental philosophers; taking due care, however, to admit none that were in opposition to the tenets of their favourite guide and instructor.

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### *Of the Oriental Philosophy.*

It is a subject of much regret among the learned, that the Greek writers, to whom we are chiefly indebted for our knowledge of the ancient history of philosophy, have taken so little pains to inform posterity concerning the opinions which, during the time that the Greek sects flourished, were taught in other countries, particularly in Egypt and Asia. It is owing to this, that the documents which have hitherto come to light relating to the Oriental philosophy are so few, and consequently our knowledge on the subject so imperfect. Some insight, however, into its nature and principles may be obtained from what has been handed down to us, respecting the tenets of several of the earlier sects that sprang up in the Christian church.

The Oriental philosophy, as a peculiar system of doctrines concerning the divine nature, is said to have originated in Chaldea, or Persia; from whence it passed through Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt; and mixing with other systems, formed many different sects. There



seems also to be sufficient ground for referring the formation of the leading doctrines of this philosophy into a regular system to Zoroaster, whose name the followers of this doctrine prefixed to some of their spurious books, and whose system is fundamentally the same with that which was subsequently adopted by the Asiatic and Egyptian philosophers.

The mixture of Platonic notions which is found in the Asiatic philosophy, as well as of Oriental doctrines among the later Platonists, may be easily accounted for, from the intercourse which subsisted between the Alexandrian and Asiatic philosophers, after the schools of Alexandria were established. From that time, many Asiatics who were addicted to the study of philosophy, doubtless visited Alexandria, and became acquainted with the then popular doctrines of Plato; and by blending these with their own, formed an heterogeneous mass of opinions, which in its turn mixed with the systems of the Alexandrian schools. This union of Oriental and Grecian philosophy was further promoted by the dispersion of the philosophers of Alexandria, in the reign of Ptolemy Physcon: many of whom, to escape from tyranny, fled into Asia, and opened schools in various places.

It is supposed to have been at the time when the Platonic philosophers of Alexandria visited the Eastern schools, that certain professors of the Oriental philosophy, prior to the existence of the Christian heresies, borrowed from the Greeks the name of Gnostics, to express their pretensions to a more perfect knowledge of the Divine Nature than others possessed. The Pagan origin of this appellation is supposed to be plainly intimated by the apostle Paul in two passages of his writings; in one of which he cautions Timothy against "the opposition of false science," (1 Tim. vi. 20.) and in the other warns the Colossians not to be imposed upon by a "vain and deceitful philosophy," framed according to human tradition, and the principles of the world, and not according



to the doctrine of Christ.—Coloss. ii. 8. But whatever may be thought concerning the name, there is little room left to doubt, that the tenets, at least, of the Gnostics existed in the Eastern schools long before the rise of the Gnostic sects in the Christian church under Basilides, Valentine, and others; consequently must have been imported or derived by the latter from the former. The Oriental doctrine of Emanation seems frequently alluded to in the New Testament, as hath been already observed, and in terms which cannot so properly be applied to any other dogmas of the Jewish sects.

The Oriental philosophers, though divided into a great variety of sects, seem to have been generally agreed in believing matter to be the cause of all evil, though they were much divided in opinion as to the particular mode or form under which it ought to be considered as such. They were unanimous in maintaining that there had existed from all eternity a divine nature, replete with goodness, intelligence, wisdom, and virtue, a light of the most pure and subtle kind diffused throughout all space, of whom it was impossible for the mind of man to form an adequate conception. Those who were conversant with the Greek language gave to this pre-eminent Being the name of *Βυθος*, (*BUTHOS*) in allusion to the vastness of his excellence, which they deemed it beyond the reach of human capacity to comprehend. The space which he inhabits they named *πλήρωμα*, (*Plerōma*) but occasionally the term *ἄϊων* (*Aion* or *Æon*) was applied to it. This divine nature, they imagined, having existed for ages in solitude and silence, at length, by the operation of his own omnipotent will, begat of himself two minds or intelligences of a most excellent and exalted kind, one of either sex. By these, others of a similar nature were produced; and the faculty of propagating their kind being successively communicated to all, a class of divine beings was in time generated, respecting whom no difference of opinion seems to have existed, except in regard to their

number; some conceiving it to be more and others less. The nearer any one of this celestial family stood in affinity to the one grand parent of all, the closer were they supposed to resemble him in nature and perfection; the farther they were removed, the less were they accounted to partake of his goodness, wisdom, or any other attribute. Although every one of them had a beginning, yet they were all supposed to be immortal, and not liable to any change; on which account they were termed *αἰῶνες*, that is, immortal beings placed beyond the reach of temporal vicissitudes or injuries.\*

Beyond that vast expanse refulgent with everlasting light, which was considered as the immediate habitation of the Deity, and of those natures which had been generated from him, these philosophers placed the seat of matter; where, according to them, it had lain from all eternity, a rude, undigested, opaque mass, agitated by turbulent irregular motions of its own provoking; and nurturing, as in a seed-bed, the rudiments of vice and every species of evil. In this state it was found by a genius, or celestial spirit of the higher order, who had been either driven from the abode of Deity for some offence, or commissioned by him for the purpose; and who reduced it into order, and gave it that arrangement and fashion which the universe now bears. Those who spake the Greek tongue were accustomed to refer to the Creator of the world by the name of DEMIURGUS. Matter received its inhabitants, both

\* The Greek term *Αἰών* (*Æon*) properly signifies, indefinite or eternal duration, as opposed to that which is finite or temporal. It was however metonymically used for such natures as are in themselves unchangeable and immortal. That it was commonly applied in this sense, even by the Greek philosophers, at the time of Christ's birth, is plain from Arrian, who uses it to describe a nature the reverse of ours, superior to frailty, and liable to no vicissitudes. There was therefore nothing strange or unusual in the application of this term, by the Gnostics, to beings of a celestial nature, liable to neither accident nor change. Indeed the term is used by the ancient fathers of the purer class, to denote the angels in general, good as well as bad.

man and other animals, from the same hand that had given to it disposition and symmetry.

Its native darkness was also illuminated by this creative spirit with a ray of celestial light, either secretly stolen, or imparted through the bounty of the Deity. He likewise communicated to the bodies he had formed, and which would otherwise have remained destitute of reason and uninstructed, except in what relates to mere animal life, particles of the divine essence, or souls of a kindred nature to the Deity. When all things were thus completed, DEMIURGUS, revolting against the great First Cause of all things, the all-wise and omnipotent God, assumed to himself the exclusive government of this new state, which he apportioned out into provinces or districts; bestowing the administration and command over them on a number of *genii*, or spirits of inferior degree, who had been his associates and assistants.

Man therefore, whilst he continued in this world, was supposed to be compounded of two principles, acting in direct opposition to each other;—an earthly, corrupt, or vitiated body—and a soul partaking of the nature of the Deity, being derived from the region of purity and light. The soul, or etherial part, being through its connection with the body, confined as it were within a prison of matter, was constantly exposed to the danger of becoming involved in ignorance, and acquiring every sort of evil propensity, from the impulse and contagion of the vitiated mass by which it was enveloped. But the Deity, touched with compassion for the hapless state of those captive minds, was ever anxious that the means of escaping from this darkness and bondage, into liberty and light, should be extended to them; and had, accordingly, at various times, sent amongst them teachers, endowed with wisdom and filled with celestial light, who might communicate to them the principles of true religion, and thus instruct them in the way by which deliverance was to be obtained from

their wretched and forlorn state. DEMIURGUS, however, and his associates, unwilling to resign any part of that dominion, of whose sweets they were now become so sensible, or to relinquish the divine honours which they had usurped, set at work every engine to obstruct the Deity; and not only tormented and slew the messengers of heaven, but endeavoured, by means of superstition and sensual attractions, to root out and extinguish every spark of celestial truth. The minds that listened to the calls of the Deity, and who having renounced obedience to the usurped authorities of this world, continued steadfast in the worship of the great First Parent, resisting the evil propensities of the corporeal frame, and every incitement to illicit gratification, were supposed, on the dissolution of their bodies, to be directly borne away, pure, ærial, and disengaged from every thing gross or material, to the immediate residence of God himself; whilst those who, notwithstanding the admonitions they received, had persisted in paying divine honours to him who was merely the fabricator of the world, and his associates, worshipping them as gods, and suffering themselves to be enslaved by the lusts and vicious impulses to which they were exposed from their alliance with matter, were denied the hope of exaltation after death, and could only expect to migrate into new bodies, suited to their base, sluggish, and degraded condition. When the grand work of setting free all these minds or souls should be accomplished, God, it was supposed, would dissolve the fabric of this lower world; and having once more confined matter, with all its contagious influence, within its original limits, would throughout all future ages live in consummate glory, and reign surrounded by kindred spirits, as he did before the foundation of the world.

The moral discipline deduced from this system of philosophy, by those who embraced it, was by no means of an uniform cast, but differed widely in its complexion,



according to their various tempers and inclinations. Such, for instance, as were naturally of a morose disposition, maintained that the great object of human concern should be to invigorate the energies of the mind, and to quicken and refine its perceptions, by abstracting it as much as possible from every thing gross or sensual. The body, on the contrary, as the source of every depraved appetite, was, according to them, to be reduced and brought into subjection by hunger, thirst, and every other species of mortification, and neither to be supported by flesh or wine, nor indulged in any of those gratifications to which it is naturally prone; in fact, a constant self-denial was to be rigorously observed in every thing which might contribute either to the convenience or pleasantness of life; so that the material frame being thus by every means weakened and brought low, the celestial spirit might the more readily escape from its contagious influence and regain its native liberty. Hence it was that the Manichæans, the Marcionites, the Encraitites, and others, passed their lives in one continued course of austerity and mortification. On the other hand, those who were constitutionally inclined to voluptuousness and vicious indulgence, found the means of accommodating the same principles to a mode of life that admitted of the free and uncontrouled gratification of all their inclinations. The essence of piety and religion, they said, consisted in a knowledge of the Supreme Being, and maintaining a mental intercourse and association with him. Whoever had become an adept in these attainments, and, from the habitual exercise of contemplation, had acquired the power of keeping the mind abstracted from every thing corporeal, was no longer to be considered as affected by, or answerable for, the impulses and actions of the body, and consequently could be under no necessity to controul its inclinations or resist its propensities. Hence the dissolute lives of the Carpocratians and others, who assumed the liberty



of doing whatever pleased them; and maintained that the practice of virtue was not enjoined by the Deity, but imposed on mankind by that power whom they regarded as the prince of this world, the maker of the universe.

From this concise review of the state of the Gentile world at the time of Christ's appearance on earth, the inferences to be deduced, are, it is presumed, sufficiently obvious. Mankind had been furnished with abundant experience of what reason and philosophy, in their highest state of cultivation, could do, in the way of directing the human mind to the attainment of virtue and happiness; and what was the result? The very wisest among them were bewildered in fruitless speculations about the nature of the CHIEF GOOD, and equally so about the way of attaining it. Some of them, indeed, admitted that it consisted in *virtue*; but then if we enquire wherein they supposed virtue to consist, we shall find their notions as discordant and undefined as their ideas of happiness itself were vague and desultory. ARISTOTLE made the existence of virtue to depend upon the possession of an abundance of the good things of this world; and even laid it down as a principle, that "without the gifts of fortune, virtue is not sufficient for happiness, but that a wise man must be miserable in poverty and sickness." DIOGENES, from whose pride and stoical austerity one might have expected sentiments of a different nature, maintained that a *poor* old man was the most miserable thing in life. Even PLATO, the great preceptor of Aristotle, taught his followers that happiness comprehended the possession of wisdom, health, good fortune, honour, and riches; and maintained that the man who enjoyed *all these* must be perfectly happy. ZENO and his followers held it as a principle, that all crimes were equal. THALES, the founder of the Ionian sect, being asked how he thought a man might bear affliction with the greatest ease, answered, "By seeing his enemies in a

worse condition." EPICURUS had no notion of justice but as it was profitable, and the consequence was that the morals of his followers were proverbially scandalous; for though their master taught that happiness consisted in virtue, he made virtue itself to consist in following nature, and thus he eventually led his disciples into such gross immorality, that, according to their manner of life, virtue and voluptuousness seemed to be convertible terms with them: and ever since, an Epicure is a title appropriate to every character in which excess and sensual indulgence are found to meet.

Such was the hopeless and forlorn condition into which the human race had sunk, and such the wretched aspect of the Heathen or Gentile world, at the time of the Messiah's appearance upon earth. The Greeks and Romans had civilized the world; philosophy had done its utmost; literature, and arts, and the sciences in every department, had been cultivated to the highest perfection; but what, under all these advantages, was the real condition of our species in reference to man's highest end and aim, the knowledge of the true God and the duties which he owes him—the actual state of religion and morals? We have it strikingly described by the great apostle of the Gentiles. "They walked in the vanity of their mind; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart: and being past feeling, they had given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness:—they were without hope, and without God in the world".—Eph. ii. 12. and ch. iv. 17, 18. \*

\* See BRUCKER's *History of Philosophy*, translated by Dr. Enfield;—and MOSHEIM's *Commentaries on the affairs of the Christians before the time of Constantine the Great*, translated by R. S. Vidal, Vol. I. INTROD. ch. i.

## PART II.

*On the State of the Jewish nation at the period of the birth of Christ.*

THE privileges which the Jews at this time enjoyed above all other nations, were many and distinguished; but in enumerating them, the apostle Paul lays the principal stress upon their being favoured with a divine revelation, to guide them in matters of the highest importance to their present and everlasting happiness:—they had the oracles of God in their hands; the writings of Moses and the Prophets, those holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.\* Yet with these incalculable advantages, the condition of the people in general was not much superior to that of the Gentiles.

The civil government of Judea, at the time of Christ's birth, was vested in the hands of a Roman stipendiary, named Herod the Great;—a title to which he could have no pretensions, except from the magnitude of his vices. Nature, it is true, had not withheld from him the talents requisite for a lofty and brilliant course of life; but such was his jealous disposition, such the ferocity of his temper, his devotedness to luxury, pomp, and magnificence so madly extravagant, and so much beyond his means; in short, so extensive and enormous was the catalogue of his vices, that he became an object of utter detestation to the afflicted people over whom he swayed the kingly sceptre. Instead of cherishing and protecting his subjects, he appears to have made them sensible of his

\* Rom. iii. 2. and 2 Pet. i. 21.

authority merely by oppression and violence; so that they complained to the Emperor Augustus, at Rome, of his cruelties, declaring they had suffered as much as if a wild beast had reigned over them; and Eusebius affirms, that the cruelty of this nefarious despot far surpassed whatever had been represented in Tragedy! Herod was not ignorant of the hatred which he had drawn upon himself, but to soften its asperity he became a professed devotee to the Jewish religion, and at a vast expence restored their Temple, which through age had fallen into decay; but the effect of all this was destroyed by his still conforming to the manners and habits of those who worshipped a plurality of gods; and so many things were countenanced in direct opposition to the Jewish religion, that the hypocrisy of the tyrant's professions were too manifest to admit of a doubt.

On the death of Herod, the government of Judea was divided by the Emperor Augustus amongst his three surviving sons. Archelaus, the elder of the three, was appointed governor of Judea, Idumœa, and Samaria, under the title of Ethnarch. Antipas presided over Galilee and Perœa; whilst Batanea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, with some of the neighbouring territory, were assigned to Philip. The two latter, from their having a *fourth* part of the province of Judea allotted to each, were styled Tetrarchs. Archelaus, who inherited all the vices of his father, with but few of his better qualities, completely exhausted the patience of the Jews; and by a series of the most injurious and oppressive acts, drove them, in the tenth year of his reign, to lay their complaints before the Emperor Augustus, who, after investigating the merits of the case, deposed the Ethnarch, and banished him to Vienne in Gaul.

On the expulsion of Archelaus, the greater part of Palestine, or Judea, was reduced by the Roman government into the form of a province, and placed under the superintendance of a governor, who was subject to the



controul of the president of Syria. It is probable that this arrangement at first met with the ready concurrence of the Jews, who, on the death of Herod, had petitioned Augustus that the distinct regal government might no longer be continued to them, but that their country might be received under his own immediate protection, and treated as a part of the Roman Empire. The change, however, instead of producing an alleviation of misery to this unhappy people, brought with it an intolerable increase of their calamities. For, independent of the avarice and injustice of the governors, to which there were no bounds, it proved an intolerable grievance to them, who considered their nation to be God's peculiar people, that they should be obliged to pay tribute to a Heathen, and an enemy of the true God, like Cæsar, and live in subjection to those who worshipped false deities. Add to which, that the extortion of the Publicans, who after the Roman manner were entrusted with the collection of the revenue, and for whose continual and flagrant abuses of authority it was seldom possible to obtain any sort of redress, became a subject of infinite dissatisfaction and complaint. And, to crown the whole, the constant presence of their governors, surrounded as they were by a multitude of foreign attendants of all descriptions, and protected by a Roman military guard, quartered with their Eagles and various other ensigns of superstition, in the center of Jerusalem, their holy city, kept the sensibility of the Jews continually on the rack, and excited in their minds a degree of indignation bordering on fury. They naturally considered their religion to be disgraced and insulted by these innovations—their holy places defiled—and in fact themselves, with all that they held sacred, polluted and brought into contempt. To these causes, are to be attributed the frequent tumults, factions, seditions, and murders, by which it is well known that these unfortunate people accelerated their own destruction.



If any vestige of liberty or happiness could have been possessed by a people thus circumstanced, it was effectually cut off by those who held the second place in the civil government under the Romans, and the sons of Herod, and who also had the supreme direction in every thing pertaining to religion, namely, the chief priests and the seventy elders, of whom the Sanhedrim or national council was composed. Josephus tells us, that the High Priests were the most abandoned of mortals, and that they generally obtained their dignified stations either through the influence of money, or court sycophancy; and that they shrank from no species of criminality that might contribute to support them in the possession of an authority thus iniquitously purchased. Under a full conviction of the precarious tenure on which they held their situation, it became a leading object of their concern, to accumulate, either by fraud or force, such a quantity of wealth, as might enable them to gain the rulers of the state over to their interest, and drive away all competitors, or else yield them, when deprived of their dignity, the means of living at their ease in retirement.

The Sanhedrim, or national council, being composed of men who differed in opinion respecting some of the most important points of religion, nothing like a general harmony was to be found amongst its members: on the contrary, having adopted the principles of various sects, they allowed themselves to be carried away by all the prejudice and animosity of party; and were too often more intent on the indulgence of private pique, than studious of advancing the cause of religion, or promoting the public welfare. A similar depravity prevailed among the ordinary priests, and the inferior ministers of religion. The common people, instigated by the shocking examples thus held out to them, by those whom they were taught to consider as their guides, precipitated themselves into every species of vicious excess; and giving themselves up to sedition

and rapine, appeared alike to defy the vengeance both of God and man.

There were, at that time, two prevailing systems of religion in Palestine, the Jewish and the Samaritan; and what contributed not a little to the calamities of the Hebrew nation, the followers of each of these regarded those of the other persuasion with the most virulent and implacable hatred, mutually venting their rancorous animosity in the direst curses and imprecations. The nature of the Jewish religion may be collected from the books of the Old Testament; but at the time of Christ's appearance, it had lost much of its original beauty and excellence, and was corrupted by errors of the most flagrant kind, that had crept in from various sources. The public worship of God was indeed still continued in the temple of Jerusalem, with all the rites of the Mosaic institution; and their festivals never failed to draw together an immense concourse of people at the stated seasons: nor did the Romans ever interfere to prevent those observances. In domestic life also, the ordinances of the Law were in general punctually attended to; but it is manifest, from the evidence adduced by various learned men, that even in the service of the Temple itself, numerous ceremonies and observances, drawn from the religious worship of heathen nations, had been introduced and blended with those of divine institution; and that, in addition to superstitions like these of a public nature, many erroneous principles, probably brought from Babylon and Chaldea, by the ancestors of the people at their return from captivity, or adopted by the inconsiderate multitude, in conformity to the example of their neighbours the Greeks, the Syrians, and the Egyptians, were cherished and acted on in private.

The opinions and sentiments of the Jews respecting the Deity, the divine nature, the angels, dæmons, the

souls of men, their duties, and similar subjects, appear to have been far less extravagant, and formed on more rational grounds, than those of any other nation or people. Indeed, it was scarcely possible that they should wholly lose sight of that truth, in the knowledge of which their fathers had been instructed through the medium of revelation; especially as this instruction was rendered habitual to them, even at a tender age, by hearing, reading, and studying the writings of Moses and the prophets. In all their cities, towns, and villages, and indeed throughout the Empire, wherever any considerable number of Jews resided, a sacred edifice, which they called a synagogue, was erected, in which it was customary for the people regularly to assemble, for the purposes of prayer and praise, and hearing the law publicly read and expounded. In most of the larger towns, there were also schools established, in which young persons were initiated in the first principles of religion, as well as instructed in the liberal arts.

But though the Jews certainly entertained many sentiments more rational and correct than their neighbours—sentiments which they had adopted from their own scriptures—yet they had gradually incorporated with them so large a mixture of what was fabulous and absurd, as nearly to deprive the truth of all its force and energy. Hence the many pointed rebukes which Jesus Christ gave to the Scribes and Pharisees, the prime leaders of religion in his day; telling them that they taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and that they had made the divine law void through their traditions.\* Their notions of the nature of God, are sup-

\* The Jews acknowledge *two* laws, which they believe to have been delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai: of which one was immediately committed to *writing* in the text of the Pentateuch, and the other is said to have been handed down from generation to generation, for many ages, by oral tradition. From the time of Moses to the days of Rabbi Jehuda, no part of the Oral law had ever been committed to writing for public

posed to have been closely allied to the Oriental philosophy on that subject, while to the prince of darkness, and his associates and agents, they attributed an influence over the world and the human race so predominant as scarcely to leave a superior degree of power even to the Deity himself. Of various terrific conceits, founded upon this notion, one of the principal was, that all the evils and calamities which befal the human race, were to be considered as originating with this prince of darkness and his ministering spirits, who had their dwelling in the air, and were scattered throughout every part of the universe. Their notions also, and manner of reasoning respecting angels, or ministers of divine providence, were nearly allied to those maintained by the Babylonians or Chaldæans, as may be readily perceived by those who will give themselves the trouble to investigate the subject.

But on no one point were the sentiments of the Jews of that day more estranged from the doctrine that was taught by their prophets, than on that which regarded

perusal. In every generation, the President of the Sanhedrim, or the prophet of his age, for his own private use, is said to have written notes of the traditions which he had heard from his teachers; but he taught in public only from word of mouth: and thus each individual wrote for himself an exposition of the law and the ceremonies it enjoined, according to what he had heard. Thus things were situated till the days of Rabbi Jehuda. He observed, that the students of the law were gradually diminishing, that difficulties and distresses were multiplying, that the kingdom of impiety was increasing in strength and extending itself over the world, while the people of Israel were driven to the ends of the earth. Fearing lest, in these circumstances, the traditions would be forgotten and lost, he collected them all, arranged them under distinct heads, and formed them into a methodical code of traditional law. Of this book, entitled the MISHNA, copies were speedily multiplied and extensively circulated; and the Jews at large received it with the highest veneration. See MR. ALLEN's *Modern Judaism*: ch. iii. p. 22—36. where the reader will find numerous quotations from the Rabbi's, shewing how this (supposed) Oral law is by them extolled above the written law of Moses—just as the Papists in later ages have made void the doctrine of Christ and his apostles by the traditions of the fathers,



the character of their Messiah. The greatest part of the Jewish nation were looking with eager desire for the appearance of the deliverer whom God had promised to their fathers. But their hopes were not directed to such an one as the scriptures described : they expected not a spiritual deliverer, to rescue them from the bondage of sin and Satan, and to bestow upon them the blessings of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, the adoption of children into his family, and the hope of an eternal inheritance in the world to come ; they looked for a mighty warlike leader, whose talents and prowess might recover for them their civil liberty. Fondly dreaming of a temporal kingdom for their Messiah, their carnal minds were so rivetted under the dominion of this master prejudice, that, in general, their hearts were blinded to the real scope of the law and the prophets.

It is abundantly manifest from the New Testament scriptures, that at the time of Christ's appearance, the Jews were divided into various sects, widely differing in opinion from each other, not merely on subjects of smaller moment, but also on those points which enter into the very essence of religion. Of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the two most distinguished of these sects, both in number and respectability, mention is made in the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. Josephus, Philo, and others, speak of a third sect, under the title of the Essenes ; and it appears from more than one authority, that several others of less note were to be found among them. The evangelist Matthew notices the Herodians ; a class of men who, it seems highly probable, had espoused the cause of the descendants of Herod the Great, and contended that they had been unjustly deprived of the greater part of Palestine by the Romans. Josephus makes mention also of another sect, bearing the title of Philosophers ; composed of men of the most ferocious character, and founded by Judas, a Galilean—a strenuous and undaunted assertor of the liberties of

the Jewish nation, who maintained that the Hebrews, the favourite people of heaven, ought to render obedience to God alone, and consequently were continually stimulating one another to throw off the Roman yoke and assert their national independence.

The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes, the three most powerful of the Jewish sects, were cordially united in sentiment respecting all those fundamental points which constituted the basis of the Jewish religion. All of them, for instance, rejected with detestation the notion of a plurality of gods, and would acknowledge the existence of but one Almighty Power, whom they regarded as the Creator of the universe, and believed to be endowed with the most absolute perfection and goodness. They were equally agreed in the opinion, that God had selected the Hebrews from amongst all the other nations of the earth as his peculiar people, and had bound them to himself by an unchangeable and everlasting covenant. With the same unanimity, they maintained the divine mission of Moses; that he was the ambassador of heaven, and consequently that the law delivered at Mount Sinai, and promulgated by his ministry, was of divine original. It was also the general belief among them, that in the books of the Old Testament were contained ample instructions respecting the way of salvation and eternal happiness; and that whatever principles or duties were inculcated in those writings, must be reverently received and implicitly obeyed. But an almost irreconcilable difference of opinion, and the most vehement disputes, prevailed among them, respecting the original source or fountain from whence all religion was to be deduced. Both the Sadducees and Essenes rejected with disdain the oral law, to which the Pharisees, however, paid the greatest deference. And the interpretation of the written law, yielded still further ground for acrimonious contention. The Pharisees maintained that

the law as committed to writing by Moses, and likewise every other part of the sacred volume, had a twofold sense or meaning; the one plain and obvious to every reader, the other abstruse and mystical. The Sadducees, on the contrary, would admit of nothing beyond a simple interpretation of the words, according to their strict literal sense. The Essenes, or at least the greater part of them, differing from both of these, considered the words of the law to possess no force or power whatever in themselves, but merely to exhibit the shadows or images of celestial objects, of virtues, and of duties. So much dissension and discord respecting the rule of religion, and the sense in which the divine law ought to be understood, could not fail to produce a great diversity in the forms of religious worship, and naturally tended to generate the most opposite and conflicting sentiments on subjects of a divine nature.

THE PHARISEES, in point of number, riches, authority, and influence, took precedence of all the Jewish sects. And as they constantly manifested an extraordinary display of religion, in an apparent zeal for the cultivation of piety and brotherly love, and by an affectation of superior sanctity in their opinions, manners, and dress, the influence which they possessed over the minds of the people was unbounded; insomuch that they may be almost said to have given whatever direction they pleased to public affairs. It is unquestionable, however, that the religion of the Pharisees was, for the most part, founded in consummate hypocrisy; and that in reality, they were generally the slaves of every vicious appetite; proud, arrogant, and avaricious, consulting only the gratification of their lusts, even at the moment of their professing themselves to be engaged in the service of their Maker. These odious features in the character of the Pharisees, drew upon them the most pointed rebukes from our Lord and

Saviour; with more severity indeed than he bestowed on the Sadducees, who although they had departed widely from the genuine principles of religion, yet did not impose upon mankind by a pretended sanctity, or devote themselves with insatiable greediness to the acquisition of honours and riches. The Pharisees admitted the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and of a future state of rewards and punishments. They admitted, to a certain extent, the free agency of man; but beyond that, they supposed his actions to be controuled by the decrees of fate. These points of doctrine, however, seem not to have been understood or explained by all the sect in the same way, neither does it appear that any great pains were taken to define and ascertain them with accuracy and precision, or to support them by reasoning and argument.

THE SADDUCEES, if we may credit the testimony of Josephus concerning them, were a sect much inferior in point of number to that of the Pharisees, but composed entirely of persons distinguished for their opulence and prosperity. He also represents those who belonged to it, as wholly devoid of the sentiments of benevolence and compassion towards others; whereas the Pharisees, according to him, were ever ready to relieve the wants of the indigent and afflicted. He further describes them as fond of passing their lives in one uninterrupted course of ease and pleasure; insomuch that it was with difficulty they could be prevailed on to undertake the duties of the magistracy, or any other public function. Their leading tenet was, that all our hopes and fears terminate with the present life; the soul being involved in one common fate with the body, and, like it, liable to perish and be annihilated. Upon this principle, it was very natural for them to maintain, that obedience to the divine law would be rewarded by the Most High with length of days, and an abundance of the good things



of this life, such as honours, distinctions, and riches; whilst the violators of it would, in like manner, find their punishment in the temporary sufferings and afflictions of the present time. The Sadducees, therefore, always connected the favour of heaven with a state of worldly prosperity, and could not regard any as virtuous, or the friends of heaven, but the fortunate and happy: they had no bowels of compassion for the poor and the miserable; their desires and hopes centered in a life of leisure, ease, and voluptuous gratification—for such is precisely the character which Josephus gives us of them. And indeed, it appears to be countenanced by the inspired writings—especially if, as is now generally admitted by the learned, our Lord, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, (Luke, ch. xvi.) designed, in the person of the former, to delineate the principles and manner of life of a Sadducee. Considering the parable in this point of view, we cannot fail to see great force and beauty in it, which do not appear upon any other hypothesis. That the rich man was a Jew is evident, from his terming Abraham his father; and his request that the latter would send Lazarus to his father's house, for the purpose of converting his brethren to a belief of the soul's immortality, and the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments, is convincing evidence that during his life-time he had imagined that the soul would perish with the body, and had treated with derision the doctrine maintained by the Pharisees respecting the happiness or misery of a future state; and that the brethren whom he had left behind entertained similar sentiments—sentiments which decidedly mark them as the votaries of that impious system to which the Sadducees were devoted.

THE ESSENES, though not particularly mentioned by the writers of the New Testament, existed as a sect in the days of our Lord, and are frequently spoken of by Josephus, who divides them into two branches; the

one characterized by a life of celibacy, dedicated to the instruction and education of the children of others; whilst the other thought it proper to marry, not so much with a view to sensual gratification, as for the purpose of propagating the human species. Hence they have been distinguished by some writers into the *practical* and the *theoretical* Essenes.

The practical Essenes were distributed in the cities and throughout the countries of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Their bond of association embraced not merely a community of tenets, and a similarity of manners and particular observances, like that of the Pharisees or the Sadducees; but it extended also to an intercommunity of goods. Their demeanour was sober and chaste; and their mode of life was, in every other respect, subjected to the strictest regulations, and submitted to the superintendence of governors, whom they appointed over themselves. The whole of their time was devoted to labour, meditation and prayer; and they were most sedulously attentive to the calls of justice and humanity, and every moral duty. In common with the rest of the Jews, they believed in the unity of God; but from some of their institutes, it appears that they entertained a reverence for the sun; probably, considering that grand luminary as a deity of an inferior order, or perhaps regarding him as the visible image of the Supreme Being. They supposed the souls of men to have fallen, by a disastrous fate, from the regions of purity and light, into the bodies which they occupy; during their continuance in which, they considered them to be confined, as it were, within the walls of a loathsome dungeon. For this reason, therefore, they did not believe in the resurrection of the body; although it was their opinion that the soul would be rewarded or punished in a future state, according to its deserts. They cultivated great abstinence, allowing themselves but little bodily nourishment or gratification, from an apprehension that the

immortal spirit might be thereby encumbered and weighed down. It was their endeavour, too, by constant meditation, to withdraw the mind as much as possible from the contagious influence of the corrupt mass by which it was unhappily enveloped. The ceremonies, or external forms, which were enjoined in the law of Moses to be observed in the worship of God, were totally disregarded by many of the Essenes; it being their opinion that the words of Moses were to be understood in a mysterious and recondite sense, and not according to their literal meaning. Others of them, indeed, so far conformed as to offer sacrifices; but they did this at home; for they were wholly averse from the rites which it was necessary for those to observe who attended the Temple worship. Upon the whole, it does not seem an improbable conjecture, that the doctrine and discipline of the Essenes arose out of an ill-judged attempt to make the principles of the Jewish religion accord with some tenets which they had fondly imbibed from the Oriental philosophy, of which we have already treated.

Though the practical Essenes were very much addicted to superstition, society derived no inconsiderable benefit from their labour, and the strictness of their morals. Those of the theoretical class, however, seem to have set scarcely any bounds whatever to their silly extravagance. Although they professed themselves to be Jews, and were desirous to be considered as the disciples of Moses, they were almost entirely strangers to the Mosaic discipline. Renouncing employment of every description, and all worldly possessions, they withdrew themselves into solitary places, and there dispersed about in separate cells, passed the remnant of their days without engaging in any kind of bodily labour, and neither offering sacrifices, nor observing any other external form of religious worship. In this state of seclusion from the world and its concerns, they studied

to reduce and keep the body low, by allowing it nothing beyond the most slender subsistence, and, as far as possible, to detach and disengage the soul from it by perpetual contemplation, so that the immortal spirit might, in defiance of its corporeal imprisonment, be kept constantly aspiring after its native liberty and light, and be prepared, immediately on the dissolution of the body, to re-ascend to those celestial regions from whence it originally sprang. Conformably to the practice of the Jews, the theoretical Essenes were accustomed to hold a solemn assembly every seventh day. On these occasions, after hearing a sermon from their President, and offering up their prayers, it was usual for them to feast together,—if that can indeed be called a feast, which was restricted to a mutual participation of salt and bread and water. This repast is said to have been followed by a sacred dance, which was continued throughout the whole night, until the dawn appeared. At first the men and women danced in two separate parties; but at length, their minds, according to their own account, kindling with a sort of divine extacy, the two companies joined in one, mutually striving, by various shouts and songs of the most vehement kind, accompanied with the most extravagant motions and gesticulations of the body, to manifest the fervent glow of that divine love with which they professed to be enflamed. To such an extent of folly may men be led by the spirit of enthusiasm, and in consequence of their entertaining erroneous principles respecting the Deity, and the origin of the human soul!

As to the moral doctrine of these sects of the Essenes, as well as that of the Pharisees and Sadducees, into which the Jewish people were divided, it cannot be considered as having in any degree contributed towards promoting the interests of virtue and genuine piety. The Pharisees, as was frequently objected to them by Christ, who knew their hearts, were destitute of the love



of God and their neighbour, the essential principles of righteousness—they were hypocritical in their acts of worship—proud and self-righteous—harsh and uncharitable in their judgment of others—while they made the divine law void through their traditions. They paid little or no regard to inward purity or sanctity of mind, but studied by all possible means to attract the eyes of the multitude towards them, by an ostentatious solemnity of carriage, and the most specious external parade of piety and brotherly love. They were continually straining and perverting the most important precepts of the divine law; whilst, at the same time, they enforced an unreserved obedience to ordinances which were of mere human institution. The Sadducees regarded all those persons as righteous, who strictly conformed themselves to the ritual observances prescribed in the law of Moses, and that did no injury to any of Jewish nation, from whom they had received none. And as their principles forbade men to look forward to a future state of rewards and punishments, and placed the whole happiness of man in the possession of riches and in sensual gratification, they naturally tended to generate and encourage an inordinate love of money, a brutal insensibility to the calls of compassion, and a variety of other vices equally pernicious and degrading to the human mind. The Essenes laboured under the influence of a depressing superstition; so that, whilst they were scrupulously attentive to the demands of justice and equity in regard to others, they appear to have altogether overlooked the duties which men owe to themselves. Those of them who were distinguished by the name of Therapeutæ, or theoretical Essenes, were a race of men who resigned themselves entirely to the dictates of the most egregious fanaticism and folly. They would engage in no sort of business or employment on their own account; nor would they be instrumental in forwarding the interests of others. In short, they appear to have considered them-

selves as released from every bond by which human society is held together, and at liberty to act in direct opposition to almost every principle of moral discipline.

It cannot therefore excite any reasonable surprise that, owing to the various causes which we have thus enumerated, the great mass of the Jewish people were, at the period of the birth of Jesus Christ, sunk in the most profound ignorance as to divine things; and the nation, for the most part, devoted to a flagitious and dissolute course of life. That such was the miserable state of degradation into which this highly privileged people had fallen, is incontestibly proved by the history of our Lord's life, and the tenour of his discourses and conversations which he condescended to address to them. Hence his comparison of the teachers among them to blind guides, who professed to instruct others in a way with which they were totally unacquainted themselves; and the multitude to a flock of lost sheep, wandering without a shepherd. Matt. xv. 14. John, ix. 39. Matt. x. 6. and ch. xv. 24.

In addition to what has been already said respecting the sources of error and corruption among the Jews, we have still further to remark, that, at the time of Christ's appearance, numbers among them had imbibed the principles of the Oriental philosophy respecting the origin of the world, and were much addicted to the study of a mystical sort of learning to which they gave the name of *Cabbala*.\*

THE SAMARITANS are spoken of in the New Testament as a sect altogether distinct from the Jews; and as they were inhabitants of Palestine, they merit attention in this place. Their sacred rites were performed in a Temple erected on Mount Gerizim; they were in-

\* For a very ingenious and interesting account of the *Cabbala*, the reader is referred to *Mr. Allen's Modern Judaism*, ch. v. p. 65.

volved in the same calamities which befel the Jewish people, and were no less forward than the Jews in adding, to their other afflictions, the numerous evils produced by factions and intestine tumults. They were not, however, divided into so many religious sects; although the instances of Dositheus, Menander, and Simon Magus, plainly prove that there were not wanting among them some who were carried away by the love of paradox and a fondness for novel speculations; and that they debased the religion of their ancestors, by incorporating with it many of the principles of the Oriental philosophy. Much has been handed down to us by Jewish authors respecting the religious sentiments of the Samaritans, on which however we cannot place reliance, as it was unquestionably dictated by a spirit of invidious malignity. 'Tis certain, however, that our Lord attributes to the Samaritans a great degree of ignorance respecting God and divine things; it cannot therefore be doubted, that in their religious system the truth was much debased by superstition, and the light in no small degree obscured by the mists of error. They acknowledged none of the writings of the Old Testament as sacred, or of divine authority, but the five books of Moses only. We learn, nevertheless, from the conversation of the woman with our Lord at the well of Samaria, John iv. 25. that the Samaritans confidently expected the Messiah, and that they looked forward to him in the light of a spiritual teacher and guide, who should instruct them in a more perfect and acceptable way of worshipping the Most High than that which they then followed. Whether they were carried away with the fond conceit of his being a warlike leader, an hero, an emperor, who should recover for the oppressed posterity of Abraham their liberty and rights, and to the same extent that the Jews were, it would not be easy to determine. In this one thing, at least, they appear to have shewn themselves superior to the.

Jews in general, that they did not attempt to gloss over or conceal the many imperfections of their religion, but frankly acknowledged its defects, and looked forward with hope to the period when the Messiah should reform what was amiss, and communicate to them a larger measure of spiritual instruction, of which they stood so much in need.\*

So exceedingly great was the fecundity of the Jewish people, that multitudes of them, from time to time, were constrained to emigrate from their native country; and at the æra of Christ's birth, the descendants of Abraham were to be met with in every part of the known world. In all the provinces of the Roman Empire, in particular, they were to be found in great numbers, either serving in the army, or engaged in the pursuits of commerce, or practising some lucrative art. Of the truth of this we have evidence in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we learn that on the day of Pentecost, there were assembled at Jerusalem, Jews "out of every nation under heaven," who had come up to attend the festival. Their dispersion over all the west, was the consequence of the subjugation of Judea to Rome, and it was an important link in the chain of divine provi-

\* "Jeoida, the high priest at Jerusalem, had a son named Manasseh, who married a daughter of Sanballet, governor of the Samaritans. Nehemiah, governor of Jerusalem, banished Manasseh for this breach of the law. This exile carried a copy of the Pentateuch with him, read it to the Samaritans, and dissuaded them from idolatry, to which they never afterwards returned; and it was his father-in-law Sanballet, who obtained leave of Darius Nothus to erect the Temple on Mount Gerizim, of which Manasseh was the first high priest. Hence proceeded a race of men, as the Jews acknowledge, *more exact in worshipping the true God than themselves*. Hence came the Samaritan Pentateuch in the old Phœnician character, which confirms that of the Jews. Hence also went a Greek version of the Pentateuch, for the use of Hellenistic Samaritans resident in other countries, and especially for those at Alexandria; and of course the conversion of the Samaritans was an event in providence favourable to the general knowledge and worship of the one true God." *Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches*, p. 27.



dence ; for it placed them, as they express it, “ witnesses of the unity of God in all the nations of the world,” and this at a time when idolatry and vice overwhelmed all the rest of mankind. Those of them who thus ventured to establish themselves without the confines of Palestine, were every where successful in obtaining that general sort of encouragement and protection from violence, which was to be derived from various regulations and edicts of the emperors and magistrates in their favour : but the peculiarities of their religion and manners caused them to be held in very general contempt, and not unfrequently exposed them to much vexation and annoyance from the jealousy and indignation of a superstitious populace. Many of them, in consequence of their long residence and intercourse among foreign nations, fell into the error of attempting to accomodate their religious profession to the principles and institutions of some of the differerent systems of heathen discipline, of which it would be easy to adduce numerous instances. On the other hand, however, it should not be overlooked, that the Jews were often successful in proselyting to their faith many of those among whom they sojourned, giving them to perceive the superiority of the Mosaic religion to the gentile superstition, and were highly instrumental in causing them to forsake the worship of a plurality of gods.

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# HISTORY


OF THE

## CHRISTIAN CHURCH.



### CHAPTER I.

A VIEW OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY  
FROM THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE CLOSE OF  
THE FIRST CENTURY.



#### SECTION I.

*From the Birth to the Death of Christ.*

THE kingdom of the Messiah forms an important article in the writings of the Hebrew prophets. Those holy men who, from time to time, were raised up to exercise their ministry in the Jewish church, had foretold the advent of this illustrious personage, and described, in the most glowing colours, the majesty of his character, the extent and perpetuity of his empire, the blessings of his government, and the happiness which his subjects should enjoy under his mild and gentle reign. Accordingly, the chosen tribes, throughout successive ages, anticipated his appearance with eager expectation.\*

It was a custom among the eastern monarchs, when entering upon an expedition, to send harbingers before them to announce their approach, and prepare for their

\* 2 Sam. vii. 11—16.—Psal. ii. 8. and xxii. 27. and lxxii. *passim*, and lxxxix. 19—36. Isa. ix. 6, 7. and chap. xi. 1—9. chap. lx. Jerem. xxiii. 5, 6. chap. xxxiii. 15. *ad finem*. Dan. ii. 44. and vii. 14.

reception. Isaiah had taught the Jews to expect that such also should be the case with their promised Messiah; that he should be preceded by “the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.”\*

In conformity with this prediction, the sacred historian informs us, that the joyful intelligence of the Messiah’s immediate appearance was announced, in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius, by the preaching of John the Baptist in the wilderness of Judea.†

The leading object of John’s ministry was to proclaim the kingdom of heaven at hand; in virtue of which he called upon all who heard him to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins; whilst the testimony that he bore to the character of his divine Master was the most honourable that can be conceived.‡

The Jewish Sanhedrim, hearing of his fame, sent to interrogate him, whether he were the promised Messiah; and if not, to inform them what he professed himself to be. John immediately directed their attention to the prophecy of Isaiah, declaring that he was merely the herald of his Sovereign—“the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah.”—That there stood among them one whom they knew not, whose character was infinitely more dignified than his own—one who, though he came after him, was preferred before him, and so much his superior that he considered himself not worthy to loose even the latchet of his shoe.§

\* Isa. xl. 3.

† Luke iii. 1.

‡ Matt. iii. 1.

§ John i. 19—27.

When Jesus had attained the age of thirty, the period of life at which the priests entered upon their ministrations in the temple, and was about to commence his public ministry, he was solemnly inaugurated in his sacred office by means of the ordinance of baptism, administered by the hands of his fore-runner. Impressed with sentiments of the most profound veneration for his Lord, John hesitated, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Jesus, however, reminded him, that there was a necessity for this—that his baptism was to serve as an emblematical figure of the manner in which he was to accomplish the work of human redemption: for as in baptism the individual is buried under, and raised again from, the water, even so it became him to fulfil all righteousness, by dying for the sins of his people, and rising again for their justification. This being, accordingly, transacted in a figure, the evangelist informs us, that "the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descending like a dove, alighted upon Jesus, and a voice was heard from heaven declaring, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED." \*

The ministry of Jesus, which continued during a period of three years, was restricted to the benefit of the Jewish nation. The writer of the Acts of the Apostles sums it up in two words, "He did and taught."† He went about all Galilee "teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."‡ His doctrine comprehended the nature and perfections of God—the misery of fallen man—a declaration of his own character as the Son of God and promised Messiah—the design of his mission into this world, which was to seek and save the lost, to give

\* Matt. iii. 13—17.

† Acts i. 1.

‡ Matt. iv. 53.



his life a ransom for many, and call sinners to repentance—the immortality of the soul—the resurrection from the dead—the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments—that HE was appointed of God to judge the world in righteousness at the last day; and, finally, the gracious promise, that whosoever believeth the divine testimony concerning himself shall not perish, but have everlasting life.\*

In his doctrine he rescued the moral law from the false glosses imposed upon it by the Scribes and Pharisees; unfolded its spirituality and extent, as requiring perfect love to God and man; and enforced its indispensable obligation upon all men as the rule of their correspondence with God; declaring that he himself came not to abrogate or annul one tittle, but to fulfil its utmost requirements, by his own obedience and conformity thereunto, and adopting it as the unalterable law of his kingdom, which is to regulate the conduct of his disciples to the end of time.†

The fame of this divine teacher soon spread “throughout all Syria,” and “multitudes of people from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem, from all parts of Judea, and even from beyond Jordan, resorted to him to hear his discourses and be healed of their infirmities.”‡ The miracles which he wrought from time to time, were the fullest attestation of his mission that could possibly be given; for they demonstrated that “God was with him.”§ They were performed at his word, in an instant, on persons both near and at a distance; they were done by him in the most public and open manner—at Jerusalem and in every part of Judea and Galilee—in cities, in villages, in synagogues, in private houses, in

\* John iv. 24. ch. iii. 3—19.—Matt. xvi. 26.—John v. 27—29.—Mark xvi. 15, 16.

† Matt. v. vi. vii.

‡ Matt. iv. 24, 25.

§ Acts x. 38.

the public streets, and in the high-ways, in the fields, and in the wilderness—upon Jews and Gentiles—before Scribes and Pharisees and rulers of the synagogues—not only when he was attended by few persons, but when surrounded by great multitudes—and in a word, before men of every diversity of character. They were in themselves of such a nature as to bear the strictest examination, and they had every thing about them which could possibly distinguish them from the delusions of enthusiasm, and the artifices of imposture. Accordingly we find him appealing to them with all the confidence of an upright mind, fully impressed with a consciousness of their truth and reality. The appeal was short, simple, and decisive. He seldom reasoned on either their nature or design, but generally pointed to them as plain and indubitable facts, which spake their own meaning and carried with them their own authority. They were too public to be suspected of imposture, and being the objects of sense, they were secured against the charge of enthusiasm. They had no disguise, and were, in a variety of instances, of such a nature as to preclude the very possibility of collusion. They were performed in the midst of his bitterest enemies, and were so palpable and certain as to extort from them the acknowledgment, that “this man doth many miracles; if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him.”\*

An inattentive reader of the evangelic history would be led to conclude, from the accounts that are given us of the multitudes who followed Jesus, that the number of his disciples was immense. But we have frequent intimations of the fallacy of implicitly trusting to appearances in these things. Were we to consider only the interesting nature of his doctrine, the wisdom and energy with which it was delivered, and the stupendous works

\* White's Sermons at Bampton's Lecture.

of supernatural power by which it was accompanied—the little success that attended it, must have ever remained a source of perplexity to us; but the problem is solved by admitting the scriptural account of the depravity of the human mind, its alienation from God, and its natural enmity against his truth. The reception which the Messiah was to meet with, had been described by an ancient prophet in these remarkable words, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”—And the event justified the prediction. Some few indeed, and those chiefly from among the inferior ranks in life, believed on him as the hope of Israel, and found in him all their salvation and desire; and while his claims of being the Messiah were generally set at nought by their countrymen, they could say, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”\*

From among these latter, Jesus selected twelve whom he named apostles, and whom he qualified and sent forth to preach the doctrine of his kingdom, and to cure diseases; and some time afterwards he appointed seventy others also to labour in his vineyard. These he sent forth, two and two, into every city and place to which he himself would come, as his heralds, announcing his approach, and calling all descriptions of persons to repent and believe the gospel.†

It appears from the testimony of ancient historians, that about the time of Christ’s appearing, the Jews anxiously expected him as the great deliverer and chief ornament of their nation; and even among the heathens an opinion was at that time prevalent, probably derived from the Hebrew prophets, that a prince of unparelled glory was to arise in Judea, who was to found a kind of

\* John vi. 68, 69,

† Luke x. 1—16.

universal monarchy.\* But in the humble appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, the Jews found nothing that corresponded to the expectations they entertained on this subject. Their vain hearts, like those of the generality of men in all ages, were so intoxicated with the admiration of worldly pomp, that *that* was the only greatness for which they had any relish; and hence they formed a picture of Him, who was the desire of all nations, very unlike the original. Nor was the doctrine which he inculcated more suited to their taste, than his personal appearance answered to their expectations. For, while they fostered the presumptuous imagination, that in virtue of the privileges they enjoyed as God's covenanted people, and especially as being the descendants of Abraham, they had a peculiar claim to the divine favour and to all the blessings of their Messiah's kingdom, both Jesus and his fore-runner boldly attacked this master-prejudice, and evinced the futility of every such plea. They were now called upon to give up the erroneous sentiments which they entertained respecting their own characters, the way of acceptance with God, and the nature and blessings of their Messiah's reign, on pain of incurring eternal ruin. For whereas they expected eternal life as the reward of their Jewish privileges, or of their own personal righteousness, they were now taught, that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that the Son of God came to be lifted up upon the cross, as the antitype of the brazen serpent which Moses elevated in the wilderness, that whosoever, not of the Jews only, but among the Gentiles also, believed in him, should not perish, but obtain eternal life.†

And, with regard to the nature of the Messiah's king-

\* Suetonius in vita Vespasiani. ch. 1. Taciti Hist. l. v. cap. 13.

† John iii. 16, 17.



dom, the doctrines of Jesus were equally at variance with their fondest hopes; for, while they ardently longed for the accomplishment of the promises which God had made unto their fathers by the prophets, they seem in general to have had no other object in view than the establishment of a temporal monarchy, like the other kingdoms of this world, though doubtless much surpassing them all in its extent and splendour. Accordingly, being interrogated by their leaders “when the kingdom of God should come,” Jesus perceived the mistake of their hearts, and to correct it, told them that “the kingdom of God cometh not with observation”—that is, it did not at all resemble the kingdoms of this world—it was not to strike the senses of men by the glare of worldly grandeur: for as it is wholly spiritual, consisting in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, he added, “the kingdom of God is within you.”\* So also when he spake to them concerning their bondage to sin and vassalage to Satan, the god of this world, with the necessity of being set free from this spiritual tyranny before they could participate of the liberty of the sons of God, they resented it as the highest insult that could be offered them; “We are Abraham’s seed,” say they, “and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, ye shall be made free.”†

If we keep in view these false principles by which the minds of the Jewish people were led astray, the invincible obstinacy of their prejudices, and the contrariety of the doctrine and character of Jesus thereto, we shall cease to wonder at the issue to which matters were ultimately reduced between them. When he avowed himself to be the Son of God, and claimed equality with the MOST HIGH, they resisted his pretensions and accused him of blasphemy. And when he acknowledged

\* Luke xvii. 20, 21.

† John viii.

his regal character, they charged him with treason against the Roman government. On these grounds they demanded his death, and “the voice of them and of the chief priests prevailed.” \*

It cannot be necessary to pursue this part of the narrative in detail, since the result must be familiar to every Christian. “They that dwelt at Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which were read every Sabbath day,—they fulfilled them in condemning him; and though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain; and when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulchre. But GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.” †

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## SECTION II.

### THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

#### *From the Resurrection of Christ to the Promulgation of the Gospel among the Gentiles.*

THE resurrection of Jesus is an article of such importance in the system of Christianity, that, like the key-stone in the arch of the building, it is emphatically that which supports the whole superstructure. “If Christ be not risen,” says the apostle, “then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; yea, and we are found false witnesses of God.” ‡ That the Messiah should rise again from the dead, was an event clearly predicted in ancient prophecy; § and Jesus himself repeatedly foretold both the fact of his rising, and the

\* Luke xxiii. 23.      † Acts xiii. 27—30.      ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 14—19.

§ Psal. ii.—Psal. xvi. 10, 11.—Isa. liii. 10—12.

day on which it should happen, not only to his disciples but to his enemies also, and even rested the evidence of his divine mission upon that event.\* Of the truth and certainty of his resurrection, then, the apostles were witnesses, and they were every way qualified for substantiating the fact. "He was seen by them alive, after his crucifixion. It was not one person, but many who saw him. They saw him not only separately but together, not only by night but by day, not at a distance but near, not once only but several times. They not only saw him but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, examined his person to remove their doubts."† —"He shewed himself alive to them after his passion by many infallible signs, being seen of them forty days," during which time "he spake to them concerning the kingdom of God,"‡ which they were to be employed in setting up in the world.

To qualify them for this vast achievement he had promised to pour down upon them the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, and directed them to wait at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. When thus fitted for their work, they were enjoined to "go and teach all nations," or proclaim to them the glad tidings of salvation, to baptize all who believed the gospel, and then further to instruct them in all his commands.§ In doing this, they were to be witnesses for him both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.|| Thus having delivered them his last injunctions, he led them out as far as Bethany, where he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and while engaged in the

\* See Matt. xvi. 21. and xvii. 23. and xx. 19. also xii. 38.—John ii. 18—20. and x. 17. and viii. 28. also Matt. xxvii. 53.

† Paley's Evidences of Christianity, vol. ii. ch. 8.

‡ Acts i. 3.

§ Luke xxiv. 19.—Acts i. 4. || Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.—Mark xvi. 16.

very act of benediction, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven, a cloud receiving him out of their sight. \*

When the seventh Sabbath from the passover was completely ended, and the next day or first day of the week fully come, that is, fifty days after Christ's resurrection and ten days after his ascension, the apostles, with the hundred and twenty disciples, were all assembled together with one accord, agreeably to their stated practice. † “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, sitting upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” ‡

Such is the account given to us by the Spirit of inspiration concerning this extraordinary interposition of heaven, and the effects which it produced upon the apostles were certainly of the most stupendous kind. For, it is evident, that a flood of light now broke in upon their minds, as it were instantaneously, instructing them in the meaning of the prophetical writings, far beyond what they had hitherto attained; removing the films of prejudice which clouded their understandings, and leading them into just views of the spiritual and heavenly nature of their Lord's kingdom. Upon many occasions, during his personal intercourse with them, they had discovered strong prejudices in favour of a worldly kingdom, and slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had written; and even when their Lord had risen from the dead, and was about to ascend into heaven, they asked him, “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom

\* Luke xxiv. 50, 51.—Acts i. 8. † John xx. 19—26.—Acts ii. 1.—  
1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. ‡ Acts ii. 2—4.



to Israel?"\* But the illumination which now filled their minds, removed their ignorance, rectified their misapprehensions, and conformed their views to the scope of all the prophets, as well as to the doctrine which they had received from the lips of Christ himself.

It is also manifest that this effusion of the Holy Spirit had an amazing effect upon the apostles in animating them with a spirit of power, magnanimity, and zeal in their master's service. While he was yet with them, we may trace in their history numerous marks of timidity and weakness under the anticipation of danger. Such were their efforts to prevent his going into Judea; and their forsaking him at the time of his apprehension; on which occasion, it is recorded that they all forsook him and fled; even Peter, the most intrepid among them, denied that he knew him. But what a revolution took place in their conduct in this respect after the day of pentecost! We behold them inspired with fortitude and resolution to declare their testimony before magistrates and rulers, regardless of personal danger, and even "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake."

But the most astonishing effect of all was, that they were hereby qualified for speaking various languages which they had never learned, thus making known their message to men of all nations under heaven, and confirming its truth by performing such miraculous works as were an evident indication that God was with them. This indeed was in perfect consistency with Christ's promise to them when he said, "In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." An occurrence so remote

\* Acts i. 6.

from the common course of nature, we may readily suppose, would produce an astonishing sensation upon those who were witnesses of it. The sudden ability of so many rude and illiterate Galileans, to speak perfectly in all languages—to express themselves with propriety and force, so as not only to be clearly understood, but to impress the consciences of the hearers, was a phenomenon which carried with it a proof of divine interposition too incontestible to admit of a rational doubt. Those who first observed it, spake of it to others, and a rumour spread abroad. Jerusalem was at the moment the resort of Jews and Jewish proselytes dispersed throughout the various parts of the Roman empire, and multitudes had come from different countries to celebrate the feast. The promiscuous throng, who were collected by so strange a report, and had been accustomed to different languages, were therefore greatly astonished to hear them declare, each one in his own tongue, the wonderful works of God. While some expressed their surprise at this, others ascribed it to the effects of wine. This weak and perverse slander was, however, immediately refuted by the apostle Peter, who, standing up with the other eleven apostles, lifted up his voice and said unto them:—"Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you that these are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day\*—but this is that which is spoken by the prophet Joel."† He then quotes the words of Jehovah in which he had promised to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh—attended with the most awful denunciations against those who should despise it, but with a gracious promise of salvation to all that should call upon the name of the Lord. The illustration of this

\* Corresponding to our 9 in the morning.

† Acts ii. 14—16.

remarkable prophecy, and its application to what was now obvious to all their senses, paved the way for the apostle's drawing their attention to the great subject of his ministry, the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain.

The Holy Spirit gave energy to his doctrine. Like a torrent, it bore down all the vain imaginations and presumptuous reasonings by which the minds of his hearers were fortified; it reached conviction to their consciences; so that, like men frantic with despair, they cried out in the anguish of their hearts, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" To persons reduced to this extremity, conscious that they had been imbruing their hands in the blood of the Son of God, how unspeakably welcome must have been the words of the apostle, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." \*

This divine declaration of mercy, to men in the situation of these convicted Jews, pricked to the heart with a consciousness of their guilt and overwhelmed with despair, must have been like life from the dead. Three thousand of them joyfully received the apostle's doctrine, were baptized, and the same day added to the number of disciples that already existed in Jerusalem.

And here we contemplate the beginning of the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the world; or, which is the same thing, the erection of the first Christian church. But before proceeding further, it may not be improper to pause, and endeavour to trace out a concise description of it in a few leading particulars.

\* Acts ii. 38,

When Jesus was interrogated by the Roman governor concerning his claim to royalty, he replied that his *kingdom was not of this world*; and in the church of Jerusalem we see the truth of this exemplified. We there behold a company of self-condemned sinners, who under the impending wrath of heaven had fled for refuge to the mercy of God, freely proclaimed to them in the gospel of salvation. They were persons who believed what these inspired witnesses testified concerning the mission, the character, the sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven of the Son of God; and who, under all their accumulated guilt and wretchedness, found enough in these things to encourage their hope of forgiveness, and even fill their souls with peace and joy. The gospel which the apostles preached, was that which exactly suited their case—it contained no rules or directions about what they should do in order to atone for their deep and aggravated guilt; for they found all that was necessary to satisfy the most troubled conscience in the doctrine concerning the Son of God, as delivered for the offences of the guilty and raised again for their justification.

Hence we see that, in obedience to his command, “those who gladly received the truth, were baptized” in the name of the Lord Jesus. In this ordinance they confessed their faith in him as the Son of God, who died for their sins, was buried, and rose again the third day; publicly professing that all their hope of salvation centered in these things. They separated themselves from “an untoward generation;” and “all that believed were together.” They received from the apostles the various ordinances of public worship, the apostles’ doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the ordinances of prayer and praise; and in these things they continued stedfastly, having favour with all the people,



and receiving into their number, from time to time, such individuals as it pleased the Lord to call to the knowledge of the truth.

The doctrine which they believed, and in which they found all their happiness and joy, was the common bond of union among them. They loved one another for the truth's sake, which dwelt mutually in them. To this they were naturally attached, as being the common centre of their hope and joy; and it prompted them to take a lively interest in each other's spiritual welfare. Having experienced much forgiveness at the hands of God, they were influenced to love much. And this love was not an inactive, dormant principle in them, for it manifested itself in the most substantial acts of kindness and liberality. "There were none among them that lacked, for as many as were possessed of lands or houses sold them, and laid the amount down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made according as every man had need."\* It is evident, therefore, that they were not connected together by any of those ties which constitute the spring of action in the kingdoms of this world. In men actuated by such noble and disinterested principles, human policy could have no place. Their fears, their hopes, their joys, and their sorrows, were all of a spiritual and heavenly tendency; and they were animated by one object of pursuit, the attainment of that glory, honour, and immortality, promised them by the Lord Jesus.

Thus was the kingdom of Christ established with all possible evidence that it was not of this world. What laws were given were of divine origin and authority,—they were held superior to all other laws. *We ought*; say the servants of Jesus, *to obey God rather than man*:

\* Acts iv. 34.

What power appeared, was the power of God working in a miraculous manner, and with supernatural efficacy. The design of this extraordinary interposition was not to *restore again the kingdom to Israel*, or to bestow the honours and the riches of the world on the followers of Christ; but to deliver them from the present evil world, and save them from perishing in the destruction that awaits it. So far were they from being allowed the hope of reigning in this life, that they were assured of being exposed to poverty, contempt, and every form of persecution. Neither their principles nor their practices were conformable to this world; nor were their hopes or fears to be engaged by the concerns of it; but they were to wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and expect to reign with him in glory.

If this be a just representation of the church or kingdom of Christ as it appeared in its establishment, it is manifest that, wherever we trace it in subsequent periods, we must find something that resembles it in its leading features. We shall discern a people, holding the same views of the character and work of the Saviour; owning subjection to him as the King whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion; evincing their allegiance to him by an implicit obedience to his laws, institutions, and ordinances; and discarding the doctrines and commandments of men. As the church at Jerusalem was the first Christian church established by the ministry of the apostles, so it was designed to serve as a pattern, in its faith and order, to all succeeding churches, to the end of the world. It was constituted under the direction of the twelve inspired apostles, who for a course of time acted as the elders, bishops, or overseers of the flock of Christ, took up their station in it, and under divine direction, gave forth the law to regulate the practices of all other

churches: for out of Zion was to go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.\*

Having briefly glanced at this heavenly kingdom in its first establishment, and seen its origin, nature, laws, immunities, and the character of its subjects, I now proceed to trace its subsequent history, agreeably to the account given of it by the prophet Daniel. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms; and it shall stand for ever.” Dan. ii. 44.

The success which attended the first publication of the gospel, is very beautifully described in the book of the Revelation, ch. vi. 1, 2. by a vision which the apostle had of the Lamb, opening *the first seal*. “And I saw,” says he, “and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.” The history of the apostles and first preachers affords a striking comment on these words, at the same time, that it illustrates to us an ancient prediction concerning the Messiah;† for now we see the standard of Christ first erected as an ensign to the nations; from hence went forth the rod of his strength, by which he ruled in the midst of his enemies, and (from that time, or) in that day of his power, the willing nations submitted to him cheerfully, and “numerous as drops of morning dew.”

Among the Jews there were daily three stated hours of prayer, at which times some went up to the temple, and others prayed in their own houses with their faces directed towards the temple. The first of these stated times of devotion was at nine in the morning, which was the time of their offering the lamb for the morning sacri-

\* Acts xv. 6. 22—29.—Isaiah ii. 2.

† Psalm cx. 2, &c.

five; the second at twelve at noon, called by them the time of the great meat-offering; and the third, at three in the afternoon, when they offered the lamb for the evening sacrifice. Two of the apostles, viz. Peter and John, going up together into the temple, on one of these occasions, were addressed by a poor cripple, who solicited alms from them. The man had been lame from his infancy, and was carried daily to the gate of the temple, where he importuned the alms of the worshippers as they passed him. The apostles fixing their eyes upon him, demanded his attention to what they were about to say; assured him that silver and gold they had none, but that such as they had they were ready to communicate, adding, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."\* The power of the glorified Saviour gave energy to the word of his servants. Peter took him by the hand and lifted him up; his feet and ankle bones received strength, and the invalid was in an instant restored to the entire and perfect exercise of his limbs. Wonder and amazement seized the minds of the spectators of this miracle; the people collected together in vast concourse around the apostles in Solomon's porch, "greatly wondering" at what had taken place, but wholly unable to account for it. Peter seized the opportunity, a most favourable one unquestionably, to draw their attention to the grand theme of his ministry, the death and the resurrection of his Lord. He first reprehended their stupidity in supposing, for a moment, that a work so far exceeding the power of man, and so much above the course of nature, could have been accomplished by their own agency, or in virtue of their own holiness; pressed home upon them their guilt in putting to death the Prince of life; boldly testified that God had raised him again from the dead; and declared that the miracle

\* Acts iii. 1, &amp;c.



which they had witnessed, was effected solely by the power of Christ. The apostle admitted that their guilt had arisen from their own ignorance, and that of their rulers; and that God, whose province it is to educe good out of evil; who makes the wrath of man to praise him, and ordereth all things after the counsel of his own will, had over-ruled their wicked devices to subserve at once his own glory and the happiness of sinful man. He, therefore, exhorted them to repent and believe the gospel which he now preached, and which it was the divine good pleasure should first of all be made known among them who were the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with the fathers. He declared to them that Jesus of Nazareth was that great Prophet whose coming had been foretold by Moses; and of whom he was only the type; that it was their indispensable duty to hear HIM in all things whatsoever he should speak; and reminded them of the warning which Moses himself had denounced against every one that should not hear that great Prophet. “Unto you *first*,” says he, “God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

This discourse produced a second harvest of converts to the Christian faith; for “many who heard the word believed; the number being about five thousand.”\* By this time, however, the enemies of Jesus began to take the alarm. Peter had scarcely done speaking, when the priests and Sadducees, with the captain of the temple, rushing upon them, forcibly apprehended Peter and John, and committed them to prison. On the following day the Jewish Sanhedrim, their supreme court of judicature, was convened. It consisted of the rulers or chief priests; the heads of the twenty-four courses; the

\* Acts iv. 4.

elders of the other tribes; and the Scribes who were doctors of the law, commonly of the tribe of Levi. This great national council sat at Jerusalem. Annas, who had formerly been high-priest, but now ejected by the Roman procurator, was with them, and Caiaphas (his son-in-law) who was now high-priest; the very persons who had procured the death of Jesus Christ, and who of course were highly concerned to suppress this new doctrine. John and Alexander, two distinguished personages among the Jews, with others who were related to the high priest, were also present upon this interesting occasion. It was the custom for the Sanhedrim to sit almost in a circle, and to place the prisoners in its centre. The apostles being now brought out and placed in the midst, it was demanded of them to say by what power, or by what name, they had performed the wonderful cure on the preceding day.

Peter, who had formerly trembled at the voice of a girl, was now not afraid to use the utmost freedom with the council and heads of the Jewish nation. He confessed the name and cause of Jesus; charged home upon their consciences the guilt of putting him to death; assured them the miracle was wrought in his name and by his power; and while he pointed their attention to the voices of their own prophets, declaring that "the stone which should be set at nought of the builders, would become the head of the corner;" finally averred that Jesus was the alone medium of salvation to the children of men.

A little reflection upon this strange scene will be sufficient to apprise us of the dilemma in which the Sanhedrim was now involved. On the one hand, the fortitude, the wisdom, and the composure of the apostles struck them with surprise: for they perceived that they were men destitute of the advantages of education, and had no

pretensions to what the world calls wisdom. They were recognized by some as the former companions of Jesus previous to his crucifixion, in whose name they now declared the miracle to have been wrought; and the man who had been healed stood before them. There was no reasoning against matter of fact; the thing carried its own evidence along with it. But the question now was, how should the difficulty be got over? They, therefore, ordered the apostles out of court; held a solemn council among themselves; confessed that the miracle was incontrovertible; but that the best way of getting rid of the business was, as far as in them lay, to quash all further inquiry into this mysterious affair, and dismiss the apostles with a strict injunction that they should teach no more in the name of Jesus!

The number of the disciples continued to increase in Jerusalem, and, from the church there, the word of the Lord sounded out into the adjacent parts. The presence of Christ was conspicuously displayed among his people. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul;" the apostles were armed with fortitude to bear testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and "great grace was upon them all." The instituted discipline of the house of God was manifested, by punishing, in the persons of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, the odious crimes of dissimulation and hypocrisy; and this awful manifestation of the divine jealousy and holiness impressed the whole church with reverence and fear; while "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women."\* Then it was that Zion "looked forth as the morning, fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."†

The Sadducees, it would seem, had, at this time, the chief sway in the Jewish state. Josephus, their own his-

\* Acts v. 14.

† Cant. vi. 10.

torian, has described them “as remarkable for a fierce and cruel temper; and that, particularly when they sat in judgment, they were much more rigorous and severe than the Pharisees.”\* Of this sect were Caiaphas, the high priest, and his party. They heard of the progress of the gospel, and were filled with indignation. Upon this occasion all the apostles seem to have been the victims of their rage. They were seized and confined in the common prison. But how futile is the rage of man when opposing the counsels of heaven! One stronger than the whole Sanhedrim, even the Lord Jesus, dispatched his angel that same night, who opened the prison doors, and brought out the apostles, directing them to go in the morning into their very temple, and there speak to the people all the words of this life. How great must have been the amazement of the Sanhedrim at hearing, on their assembling on the morrow, and giving commandment to have the apostles brought forth, that the officers found the prison doors shut with all possible safety, and the guards at their posts, but not a prisoner within; and that the apostles were, at that moment, in the temple, teaching the people.

The report, as may easily be imagined, struck an unusual damp upon the whole court, who finding themselves so frequently foiled, began to hesitate about the result of all this. They had obstinately resisted the divine mission of Jesus, supported as it was by the most unquestionable miracles; and they had at length succeeded in putting him to death. Now they congratulated themselves that there was an end to him and his cause. But when they found his disciples, after his death, affirming that God had raised him from the dead, and exalted him to the highest glory in heaven; that

\* Antiq. b. 13. ch. 10. § 6. and b. 20. ch. 9. § 1. Jew. Wars, b. 2. ch. 3. § ult.



they carried on the same design, and that they wrought miracles in his name, they could see no end of the affair, and were wholly at a loss what course to take. Add to all this, that the sentiments of the multitude were now evidently with the apostles, and some little prudence was necessary, while they punished the latter, that they did not bring down upon their own heads the vengeance of the former. The officers, however, were sent to take them, and enjoined to do it without violence. The apostles peaceably yielded themselves; and being brought before the council, were severely reprehended for disregarding the late prohibition they had received from the council. They answered with their usual firmness, as they had done upon a former occasion, that it was only reasonable they should obey God, rather than man; but they avowed their determination to persevere, and even charged the Sanhedrim, in terms more pointed than ever they had yet done, with being the betrayers and murderers of the Lord of life. They, at the same time, asserted that "God had raised up Jesus from the dead, and exalted him to his right hand in heaven, to be a Prince and Saviour, to dispense repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins."

It is manifest that matters were now arrived at the utmost crisis, between the apostles and the Jewish rulers, who were cut to the heart by the answer which the former had given them. The rage of the Sadducees could no longer be restrained; and the destruction of the apostles was the first thing that occurred to them:—A true picture of the spirit of bigotry in every age, when men armed with power have been engaged in opposing the cause of truth and justice. But God, who in his overruling providence, had hitherto guarded the lives of his servants, and had still further occasion for their labours, restrained the wrath of the Jewish rulers, and averted

the purposes of this confederacy. There was among them a certain doctor of the Jewish law, of the sect of the Pharisees, (said to have been the son of good old Simeon, mentioned Luke ii. 25.) and certainly the preceptor of the famous apostle Paul, a person of great eminence in his profession, and deservedly venerated for his prudent counsel in cases of difficulty. Gamaliel, after requesting that the apostles might withdraw a little while from the hall of justice, gave his advice that they should let those men alone. He reminded them of the fate of several impostors who had risen up among them from time to time, but who had all come to ruin; and that if this new sect were a mere human institution, it was unnecessary to give themselves any trouble to suppress it, for it would of itself quickly come to an end; but if it were really of God, all their opposition would be in vain, and they themselves would only be found ultimately fighting against heaven. The advice of Gamaliel prevailed; the apostles were again called in, and again commanded not to speak any more in the name of Jesus; yet, to save appearances, they were not dismissed until they had been scourged and enjoined silence. But neither the stripes nor the injunctions had any influence upon them; they “retired from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus, whilst daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”\*

At this interesting period, while Satan's kingdom fell like lightning from heaven before the preaching of the everlasting gospel, and the number of the Christians was daily encreasing, a circumstance arose in the church, which demanded the attention and engaged the wisdom of the apostles. The church, though consisting wholly

\* Acts v. 41.

of Hebrews, comprised two classes of persons: one party understood only the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, which was used in their synagogues at Jerusalem and its vicinity, while the other had been accustomed chiefly to the use of the Greek language, into which the Old Testament scriptures had been translated, (the version which we now call the Septuagint) and which had been for some time in common use, previous to the coming of Christ, in all the Jewish synagogues, dispersed throughout the cities of Greece, as well as in Egypt. These last were called Hellenists, or Grecians; and of them, it would appear, there were at that time many in Jerusalem, members of the church. As the multitude relieved out of the common fund was very great, it can excite no surprise that a few individuals were occasionally overlooked. Hence a "murmuring is said to have been excited among the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." \*

Hitherto the twelve apostles had executed the different offices of apostle, elder, and deacon—the former or highest office in the Christian church, being evidently considered as including every inferior one. To redress the alleged grievance, the apostles convened the whole church, stated to them that the ministry of the word of God was that which claimed their own primary attention, and how unsuitable it would be for them to neglect it for the sake of attending to the poor; they therefore recommended it to their brethren to look out among themselves for seven men, full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit, to be appointed over this matter. "But we," say they, "will give ourselves wholly to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The proposal met the cordial approbation of all the church; and thus the office of

\* Acts vi. 1, &c.

deacon was instituted. They chose Stephen, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch. Some of them (probably all) were occasionally engaged in preaching the gospel, but this was no part of their office as deacons, the latter being restricted to the serving of tables, or ministering to the wants of the poor.

There were in Jerusalem a great number of synagogues, to which the people resorted for religious instruction. One of these was called the synagogue of the *Libertines*; that is, such Jews and proselytes as had been *Roman slaves*, but had obtained their freedom, or were the descendants of such free men. It was also the resort of the Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and those who came from Cilicia, (among whom, in all probability, was Saul of Tarsus\*) as well as others that came from Asia Minor. Stephen, by the boldness of his doctrine, and the miracles which he wrought among the people in attestation of it, had attracted the attention of certain persons belonging to that synagogue, who undertook to dispute with him; but not being able to resist the wisdom and the energy with which he spake, they had recourse to the old method of persecution. They suborned men to accuse him of blasphemy against Moses and against God. By this artifice Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrim, where, though alone and unsupported, in the midst of furious enemies, he stood firm and unmoved, like a rock in the midst of the waves. “And all that sat in the council looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” †

The noble defence which Stephen delivered on this occasion, will be found in the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, to which I must refer the reader; its

\* Acts xxiii. 34. and xxi. 39.

Acts vi. 15.



length precludes its insertion, and to abridge would be to injure it.

But what avail signs and wonders, the most splendid appeals of eloquence, or the most forcible convictions of truth, among the obdurate and incorrigible? For, notwithstanding the goodness of his cause, the miracles which he had wrought to support it, the lustre with which he now appeared, and the eloquence which flowed in torrents from his lips, “they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him to death.”\* His dying deportment evinced how eminently he was filled with the spirit of his divine Master, and is a pattern to all who are called to suffer in the same righteous cause. He kneeled down with the utmost tranquillity and composure, and having committed his departing soul into the hands of his Redeemer, his only remaining concern was for his murderers, and, in the temper and spirit of his dying Master, his last words were, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

The death of Stephen was so far from satiating the rage of the Jewish rulers, that it seems to have been regarded merely as the tocsin to fresh scenes of slaughter and blood. They now gave full vent to their cruelty, and raised a general persecution against the whole church. The loss of this first of “the noble army of martyrs” was deeply bewailed by his brethren; and as the only remaining token of their affection, “Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.”† During the last tragical scene, when his enemies were about to carry their vengeance into effect against him, they laid down their clothes at the feet of a young

\* Acts vii. 57—60.

† Acts viii. 1, 2.

man whose name was Saul, and who was one of those that gave their voice for his being put to death.

Saul was born at Tarsus, the chief city of the province of Cilicia. His parents were both of them Hebrew Jews, and his father, who was of the tribe of Benjamin, was a freeman of Rome. Having received the first rudiments of his education in his native city, he went to Jerusalem, where he entered himself of the sect of the Pharisees, and studied the law of Moses, with the traditions of the elders, under Gamaliel, a noted doctor of the laws. When Stephen was put to death, Saul, though but a young man, appears to have taken an active part upon the occasion; and now, flushed with the blood of that eminent martyr, he became outrageous. Armed with authority from the high priest, he made havoc of the church; pursued them from house to house, dragging them away to prison without mercy, and scourging them in the synagogues, compelled them to blaspheme the name of Jesus, not sparing even the weaker sex. \*

Conformably to the instructions which Christ himself had left them, † the disciples gave way to the storm, and dispersed themselves throughout the cities of Judea and Samaria, spreading the knowledge of the gospel wherever they came. And here it is scarcely possible for us not to contemplate the short-sightedness of human policy, as contrasted with the wisdom and over-ruling providence of God. The very methods taken to quash the cause of Christ became the direct means of promoting its progress. Philip, of whom we have lately seen that he was chosen a deacon of the church in Jerusalem, went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ among the inhabitants with great success. Intelligence being brought to Jerusalem that Samaria had received the word of God, two of the apostles went down thither, and

\* Acts xxvi. 9, 10.

† Matt. x. 23.

communicated to the new converts the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, and thus the second Christian church was planted. Soon after this, we find Philip, by divine direction, meeting with the Ethiopian eunuch, to whom he communicated the knowledge of Christ, and baptized him into the faith of it, by which means the gospel would be carried down to Ethiopia, and the prediction of the Psalmist consequently fulfilled, “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God.”\*

Philip, on returning from this interview with the eunuch, called at Azotus (the famous ASHDOD of the Philistines)† a town on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean sea, and from thence passed through several cities that lay in his way, preaching the gospel in each of them, until he arrived at Cæsarea, at that time the metropolis of Palestine, and residence of the Roman governor, where he appears to have afterwards settled for life.‡

In all this time the malice of Saul was raging with unabated fury. Intimation had probably been given him, that many of the persecuted disciples had taken refuge at Damascus. This was a most noble city, situated at the foot of mount Lebanon.§ It had formerly been the

\* Psalm lxxviii. 31.

† 1 Sam. vi. 17.

‡ Acts xxi. 8, 9.

§ So MILTON, in reference to the Syrian idol, whose temple was fixed in that city, thus writes;

————— “Rimmon, whose *delightful seat*

“*Was fair Damascus, on the fertile banks*

“*Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.*”

PAR. LOST. B. I. l. 467, &c.

Mr. Maundrell describes it as “situated on an even plain of so great extent, that one can but just discern the mountains which compass it on the farther side. It stands on the west side of the plain, about two miles distant from the head of the river Barrady which waters it. It is of a long strait figure, about two miles in extent, adorned with mosques and stee-

capital of Syria, and was still very considerable. Josephus says it abounded with Jews, and in one place mentions that the inhabitants, shut up in their baths and destroyed, in one hour, ten thousand of them : \* and upon another occasion he represents the Damascenes as having murdered eighteen thousand Jews with their wives and children, without the least colour or pretext. † To this city Saul petitioned the high priest to grant him letters of authority to go and search the synagogues for the disciples of Jesus, and that, if he found any, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Caiaphas was still in office, and, no doubt, every way as anxious as Saul himself could be to stop the growing heresy. The request was cheerfully complied with ; and, in the capacity of chief inquisitor, and breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Christians, Saul hastened on his journey to fulfil, as he thought, the holy errand of extirpating heretics. About noon, Saul and his companions arrived in the vicinity of the city of Damascus, when suddenly there appeared to him the *Schekinah*, or *glory of the Lord*, far more bright and dazzling than the sun in his meridian splendour, and this great light from heaven shone around them. Saul was sufficiently versed in Jewish learning to recognize this as the *excellent glory*, and he instantly fell to the earth as one dead. But how inconceivably great must have been his astonishment to hear himself addressed by name, “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? ” And yet, if alarmed at the question, his surprise could not be diminished on asking “ Who

ples, and encompassed with gardens, according to computation, full thirty miles round.”—The fruit tree called the *Damascene*, and the flower called the *Damask rose*, were transplanted from the gardens belonging to this city ; and the silk and linen, known by the name of *Damask*, were probably the invention of its inhabitants.

*An. Univ. Hist.* 3vo. vol. 1. p. 269.

\* Wars, b. 2. ch. 20. § 2.

† Ibid. b. 7. ch. 8. § 7.



art thou Lord?" to be told in reply, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest,—it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Trembling and astonished, Saul inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Jesus said unto him, "Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." And Saul arose from the earth, but the splendour of the vision had overpowered his bodily eyes, so that he was led by the hand into Damascus, where he remained three days without sight or food.

The Lord afterwards appeared in vision to a certain disciple, in Damascus, named Ananias, and directed him where he should find Saul, and what instructions he should give him as to his future conduct, telling him that he was a chosen vessel unto him, to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, "for I will shew him," said the Saviour, "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."\* Ananias obeyed the divine command, and laid his hands on Saul, when a thick film like scales fell from his eyes; his sight returned, his mind became tranquillized, and he was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Thus the lately persecuting Saul was numbered with the disciples; and in a few days "he straightway preached Christ in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God;" an event no less wonderful to the disciples which dwelt at Damascus than to their enemies; but "Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt there, proving that Jesus is the true Messiah."†

\* Acts ix. 1—16.

† Acts ix. 22.

## SECTION III.

## THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

*From the first preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles, to the return of Paul and Barnabas from their first journey.*

THE conversion of Saul of Tarsus to the faith of Christ is a memorable event in the annals of the Christian church. Whether we consider the nature of the change which then passed upon his mind, the extraordinary signs which accompanied it—such as the miraculous shutting and opening of his eyes—or the astonishing effects which these things produced, we shall find something to excite our admiration, and lead us to adore the riches and sovereignty of divine grace. Such a revolution was now produced in all his sentiments and in all the springs of his life, as resembled the course of a mighty river changed from east to west by the shock of an earthquake. The supernatural signs which affected his bodily frame, shewed what befel his mind, and at the same time served to exemplify the effects which his ministry should produce among the Gentiles, unto whom Christ now sent him “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”\*

“When it pleased God,” says he, “who called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.”† In that country he appears to have spent nearly the term of three years,‡ but the inspired historian has given us no account of the

\* Acts xxvi. 18. with ch. ix. 17, 18.    † Gal. i. 15—17.    ‡ Ver. 18.

fruit of his ministry there. Our own reflections, however, may teach us to contemplate the wisdom of God, in directing the steps of Saul into Arabia, at this particular juncture of his life. His conversion to the christian faith must, in the eyes of his unbelieving countrymen, and especially of his former associates, have been in the highest degree provoking. Engaged as he had formerly been in the most active measures for destroying the subjects of the kingdom of Christ, they must now necessarily have regarded him as a grand apostate, whose conversion tended greatly to weaken the cause in which *they* were so zealously engaged, while it strengthened the hands of the Christians.

But, notwithstanding the interval that had elapsed, and which, humanly speaking, might have given time for the fiercest rage to cool, Saul had no sooner returned to Damascus, than “the Jews took counsel to kill him.”\* The Lord, however, opened a way for his escape. For although his adversaries had prevailed upon the governor of the city to aid them with a military force; and though centinels were placed at the gates of the city night and day to prevent his escape; his friends let him down by night through a window in a basket, by the wall of the city, and thus frustrated their malicious designs.†

Saul, upon this, went up to Jerusalem to have an interview with some of the other apostles, where he met with Peter and James, and abode with them fifteen days. It is perfectly natural to suppose that such of the disciples of Christ, in that city, as had a personal knowledge of him, and had witnessed his former persecuting zeal against them, would, if unacquainted with his conversion, take the alarm on his again appearing among them. Such, in fact, was the case; for when he at-

\* Acts ix. 23.

† 2 Cor. xi. 32.

tempted to join himself to them, "they were all afraid of him, not believing him to be a disciple."\* Their fears, however, were instantly dispelled by the intelligence which Barnabas gave them of his conversion, and of his subsequent preaching at Damascus. He was therefore, received of the church, and gave them the most convincing proof of the sincerity of his profession, by the boldness with which, during the short time he was among them, he spake in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the members of the synagogue with whom he had been formerly connected. The consequence was, that another effort was made to destroy him, which coming to the ears of his brethren, he was safely conveyed down to Cæsarea, and from thence sent to Tarsus, the place of his nativity.

The persecution which had arisen in consequence of the death of Stephen, and which occasioned the dispersion of the greater part of the church, had now raged during a period of four years; but it pleased God at this time to grant his people a season of repose and tranquillity.

TIBERIUS, who had swayed the imperial sceptre at Rome for three and twenty years, was now dead, and had been succeeded, as emperor, by his grandson Caius Caligula. So infamous had been the conduct of the former, and so odious had he rendered his character in the eyes of his subjects, that, if we may credit historians, he was suspected of choosing the latter for his successor, "as foreseeing that Caius alone would outstrip him in what was vile and abominable."† Certain it is that his excessive wickedness, and intolerably shocking behaviour, tended in no small degree to obliterate the recollection of the horror and infamy that had attached itself to the name of Tiberius.‡

\* Acts ix. 26. † Dion. Cassius, b. 58. ‡ Suetonius' Life of Calig. c. xi. Josephus Antiq. b. 18. c. 6. § 10. Eutrop. Brev. Hist. Rom. b. 7. § 12.



The commencement of the reign of Caius was rather auspicious than otherwise. He signalized himself by several wise and beneficent actions, and gained upon the love and popularity of his subjects. They retained an affectionate remembrance of his father Germanicus, and hoped the son would tread in his steps. But the atrocious character of the new emperor speedily began to develope itself. One of his first vile actions was the murder of the younger Tiberius, who had been appointed, by the late emperor Tiberius, his colleague in the government of the empire. Another was the murder of Macro, a person to whom Caius himself owed the greatest obligations. When Caius did any thing unbecoming his dignity, it had been the custom of Macro to admonish him boldly of the impropriety of his conduct, a freedom which the despot soon grew weary of, and therefore ordered him to be put to death. To such a pitch of extravagance and impiety did he at length arrive, that he set himself up for a deity, and insisted upon being worshipped as such; a thing to which the Jews, of all nations, would never consent, and hence they incurred his resentment. Altars and temples were erected to Caius throughout the various countries then subject to the Roman arms, and the image of this detestable tyrant was set up as an object of adoration. An attempt was even made by some heathens who dwelt at Jamnia, a city of Judea, and who had an aversion to the Jewish laws, to build an altar of brick in honour of Caius, intending probably thereby, at once to vex the Jews and ingratiate themselves with the emperor. The Jews instantly demolished the altar, and the heathens complained to Capito, the questor (or collector of the Roman tribute) who transmitted an account of the affair to the emperor; though Capito himself was suspected of being the real author and contriver of the plot, in order to en-

snare and destroy the Jews. Caius, without delay, recalled Vitellius, the Roman governor of that province, from his station; a man whose mild and gentle deportment had greatly conciliated the Jews; and sent Petronius to succeed him, giving him orders to go to Jerusalem with an army and set up his statue in their temple, in the most holy place, with the name of Jupiter inscribed upon it; enjoining him to put to death every Jew that dared to resist, and to make all the rest of the nation slaves. This order from Caligula came upon them like a clap of thunder. At first, the Jews could scarcely credit the report of so execrable a design; but their incredulity was soon dissipated. Petronius marched with a large body of auxiliaries raised in Syria, from Antioch into Judea, and even advanced as far as Ptolemais. The Jews were thrown into the utmost consternation. An immense multitude of them were collected together, who, with their wives and children, went into the plain near Ptolemais, and supplicated Petronius, first for their laws and next for themselves. The friends of Petronius seeing them at a distance, mistook them for a large army; but, on a nearer approach, they found them only an unarmed, lamenting multitude. Advancing in sight of Petronius, who was seated upon an eminence, they threw themselves down upon the ground before him, uttering the deepest lamentations. When ordered to rise, they approached him with dust upon their heads, and their hands behind them like men condemned to die, and the Senate addressed Petronius to the following effect: "We come to you, sir, as you see, unarmed; we have brought with us our wives, children, and relations; and we throw ourselves down before you as at the feet of Caius, having left none at home, that so you may save all, or destroy all;" with much more to the same purport, declaring also that their love for their

temple and laws was greater than for their lives, accompanying the whole with expressions of the bitterest lamentation, and every token of anguish and distress. Their entreaties prevailed; Petronius humanely granted their request, and deferred executing his commission. Some, indeed, attribute his lenity to another cause. Caligula was expected to visit Alexandria in Egypt the ensuing summer; had Petronius pushed matters to an extremity at this moment with the Jews, it would, in all probability, have led them to neglect their harvest, and the cultivation of their lands; and as the emperor's journey must unavoidably be made through those parts, it was apprehended that such neglect would have prevented that plenty which was requisite to accommodate the vast concourse that might be expected to accompany him on such an occasion. He therefore wrote to the emperor, urging the most plausible pretexts for the delay, and especially the necessity that existed of deferring the matter, for fear of the scarcity that might ensue.

It has been usual with commentators to attribute the cessation of persecution at this time to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus; but I apprehend a much more adequate cause is to be found in the circumstances now related. The Jews were fully employed in warding off this terrible blow from themselves and their temple, which was their glory and confidence; and, in such a state of things, we may be fully assured, that they would want both the leisure and the inclination to pursue and persecute the Christians. Caligula died soon after, in the fourth year of his reign, being assassinated in his own palace by one of his officers. And thus "the churches had rest, throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comforts of the Holy Spirit, were edified and multiplied." It is probable,

also, that during this interval of external peace, many of the Christians, who had been driven from their families and houses, by the cruel hand of persecution, again returned to Jerusalem.\*

During this auspicious season, Peter revisited the churches already planted in Galilee and Samaria, and among other places came down to Lydda, where there appear to have been a few disciples not yet organized as a church. Here he wrought a miracle by restoring a man to health and soundness who had been afflicted with palsy, and confined eight years to his bed. At Joppa, a neighbouring town, he raised to life a female disciple, named Tabitha. These things were spread abroad, and drew the attention of such as heard of them, "and many believed and turned to the Lord." Peter took up his residence for some time in Joppa; and while he continued there, an event took place which merits particular relation.

The church of Jerusalem had been now planted about eight years, during which time the preaching of the gospel had been restricted to the natural descendants of Abraham. The period, however was now at hand, when, according to the divine good pleasure, the Sun of Righteousness was to arise upon the benighted Gentiles with healing in his wings. This mystery, which had been hid from ages and generations, was now unfolded to the mind of the apostle Peter, by means of a vision which he had while he abode at Joppa,† and by the interpretation of that memorable vision, he was instructed to consider the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles as no longer in force; that henceforward he was to call no man common or unclean. He was sent

\* Philo de Legat. ad Caium, p. 1010—1021. Josephus de Bello Jud. b. 2. c. 10. § 1. Lardner's Credibility, ed. 1730. p. 121—145.

† Acts x. 9.



down to Cæsarea to preach the gospel of Christ to Cornelius the centurion, and his household; and while engaged in making known to these Gentiles the way of salvation, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all his hearers in the same supernatural manner as had been formerly done upon the Jews on the day of Pentecost, to the astonishment of the apostle and of all the Jewish brethren who accompanied him from Joppa. Thus was his mind instructed into this part of the divine will; the believing Gentiles baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and received into the kingdom of the Messiah: and thus was Peter now honoured by his divine Master in opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, as he had previously done to the Jews at Jerusalem, for unto him were committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven.\*

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, he found his fellow apostles and all his Jewish brethren, labouring under the same mistaken sentiments concerning the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of Christ, which had recently occupied his own mind. They had heard with some surprize that the Gentiles had also received the word of God, and waited the apostle's arrival, probably with some impatience, to explain to them his conduct in going in to men uncircumcised and eating with them. Peter recapitulated the whole matter in detail, and terminated the narrative with this pointed appeal to themselves, "*Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, What was I that I should withstand God?*" This silenced all their scruples; for it is said, "they held their peace and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."†

When Saul of Tarsus was called by divine grace to the knowledge of the truth, he at the same time received

\* Matt. xvi. 18.

† Acts xi. 1—18.

a commission from the glorified Saviour, to execute his ministry among the Gentiles. Hence in explaining to the Churches of Galatia his apostolic authority, he says, "He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles."\* And to this great undertaking he devoted himself most unreservedly, as we shall perceive by taking a brief review of his labours. The place where we begin to trace the history of this great apostle of the Gentiles, is

ANTIOCH. There were formerly many cities which bore that name; but this was the metropolis of Syria, and indeed of all the East. For situation, magnitude, populousness, and various other advantages, it ranked as the third city in the Roman empire, being inferior only to Rome and Alexandria. The greater part of its inhabitants were Greeks; but Josephus says, that many Jews also settled in it. "The kings of Syria allowed the Jews the freedom of Antioch equally with the Greeks, so that their numbers increased exceedingly, and they were always bringing over a great many of the Greeks to their religious worship."† This city, which is situated on the river Orontes, was remarkable, not only for its local scenery, but also for the magnificence of its buildings, the extent of its commerce, and the learning of its inhabitants, insomuch that it seems to have been considered in those days as an honour to be one of its citizens. Hence Cicero, in his oration for the poet Archias, a native of Antioch, calls it "a noble city, once eminent and wealthy, abounding in men eminent for their great learning and true taste."

But however famous Antioch was for the things mentioned by Cicero, it became more remarkable in having

\* Gal. ii. 8.

† Josephus' Wars, b. 7. ch. 3. § 3.

the light of the glorious gospel bestowed upon it; for the success which the gospel had among its inhabitants, the fruit of which appeared in the erection of a numerous Christian church; and for its giving the name of CHRISTIAN to the followers of Jesus Christ. Here Christianity flourished to such a degree, for many ages, that it obtained the appellation of *Theopolis*, or *the city of God*, and this church was considered as the first and chief of the Gentile churches.

The gospel, indeed, had found its way into this great city previous to its being visited by Saul; for it appears from the inspired history that some of the teachers, who had been driven from Jerusalem by the persecution which arose about Stephen, had reached Antioch, where they made known the glad tidings of salvation among the Grecians or Hellenistic Jews; and “the hand of the Lord was with them, and a *great number* believed and turned unto the Lord.”\* When the report of these things reached Jerusalem, that church sent Barnabas to Antioch, who rejoiced at seeing the grace of God so illustriously displayed among them; and, by his own exhortations and discourses, he was eminently instrumental in promoting the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom among them. Hearing that Saul was at Tarsus, Barnabas went in quest of him, and having found him, he brought him also to Antioch, where they both continued a whole year labouring with much success in the work of the Lord.

Caius Caligula, whose death has been already noticed, and which took place about this time, was succeeded in the empire by Claudius Cæsar, who, soon after his entrance on the government, bestowed the kingdom of Judea on Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great, (mentioned Matt. ii.) and nephew to Herod the Tetrarch

\* Acts xi. 19—22.

who put to death John the Baptist. Herod Agrippa experienced much of the vicissitudes that usually accompany the pursuit of ambition. He had incurred the displeasure of Tiberius, by whose order he was put in chains and committed to prison. The account which Josephus gives us of this affair is as follows. Before Caius Caligula ascended the throne of the Cæsars, as Herod and he were one day riding together in their chariot, the former, who was anxious to ingratiate himself with the heir apparent to the throne, “wished to God that Tiberius was gone, and Caius emperor in his stead.” Eutychus, who drove the chariot, overheard the words, but concealed his knowledge of them at the moment. Some time afterwards, however, being accused by his master Herod of theft, he discovered the treason to Tiberius, who instantly had him arrested, and confined during the life of the latter. When Tiberius died, Caius not only liberated his old friend, but invited him to his palace, put a crown upon his head, and constituted him king of the tetrarchy of Philip, and bestowed on him a chain of gold, of the same weight as the iron one which he had worn during his imprisonment.\*

Herod was a professed zealot for the law of Moses and the peculiarities of Judaism, and studied by every means in his power to ingratiate himself with the Jews. He expended large sums in the defence and ornament of their city; but it was now in his power to attempt a more acceptable service, by exerting his authority against the Christians; and the motives of vanity and popular applause by which he was governed, prompted him to embrace the opportunity. He began by apprehending the apostle James, the son of Zebedee, and brother of John, whom he hastily put to death; and finding the Jews were highly pleased with this step, he

\* Josephus' *Antiq.* b. 18. ch. 6. § 5. and *Wars*, b. 1. ch. 9. § 4.



caused Peter also to be apprehended and imprisoned, intending to have him executed after the Passover; a period when, by reason of the influx of strangers from all parts to the city, he should have an opportunity of shewing his zeal against this new sect to a greater number of spectators. James indeed had finished his course, and was gone to receive the crown of righteousness from the hands of his divine master in the kingdom of God. But the work of Peter was not yet accomplished; and though marked out by Herod for a speedy sacrifice, he was still secure. So intent was Herod, however, upon his destruction, that he not only committed him to prison, but loaded him with two chains, and consigned him to the charge of sixteen soldiers, who were to watch him by turns, four at a time, two of them being chained to him, one on either side, and two placed as centinels at the prison door. 'Tis probable that the Jews still recollected how all the apostles had formerly escaped when put in prison, and perhaps they suspected the fidelity of the guards; nor is it unlikely that at their particular request, all these precautions were taken in the case of Peter. We may also realize something of the anxiety and concern which must have pervaded the church on this distressing occasion. They had lost Stephen and one apostle; and the life of the great apostle of the circumcision was in the utmost jeopardy: "But prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him."

How long it pleased God, in this instance, to exercise the faith and confidence of the church, does not clearly appear. It is thought by some,\* that Peter was apprehended about the beginning of April, or during the days of unleavened bread, which was the beginning of the feast of the passover. That feast lasted eight days, and

\* See Benson's *First Planting of Christianity*, ch. 5. § 6.

they date the transaction in the third year of the reign of Claudius. It was the usual practice of the Jews, during the festival, to indulge in mirth and jollity, and at the end to release the prisoners. On this occasion, however, they were anticipating the high satisfaction of seeing, as soon as the paschal lamb was eaten and the festival quite ended, the foremost of this sect brought out and put to death. His enemies congratulated themselves in thinking that they had him secure. The next day was appointed by Herod for his being publicly executed. But the night before this was to take place, the Lord interposed and rescued him out of their hands. Peter, in all probability, knew the time they had appointed for his martyrdom; but he seems to have been in the enjoyment of a serene and tranquil mind, and not in the least alarmed about their machinations. He was sleeping very composedly between the two soldiers, chained by the arm to each of them, when the angel of the Lord came upon him, accompanied by an effulgent brightness, and smiting Peter on the side, raised him up, saying, *Arise up quickly; and his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said, "Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals; and he did so. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee and follow me, and he went out and followed him,"* apprehending that he saw a vision. The prison was in the suburbs of Jerusalem, and when they had passed the first and second watch, they came unto the great iron gate which led towards the city. This opened to them of its own accord; and the angel having escorted Peter through one street, and completely delivered him out of the hands of his enemies, he departed from him.

In the morning, Herod found himself disappointed of his prey! The guards were examined, but being unable to give a satisfactory account of their prisoner, he com-

manded them to be put to death. It is not improbable that Herod might suspect a miraculous interposition in this instance; but to punish the guards as if they had been guilty of conniving at his escape, was the likeliest method to stop further inquiry, and prevent the people from suspecting any thing extraordinary in the affair.\*

Herod did not long survive this event. He lived and died a monument of the instability of human greatness. He was much devoted to his Roman masters, and had a taste for their magnificence. This induced him to celebrate games and shows at Cæsarea in honour of the emperor; on which occasions he laboured to display the utmost of his grandeur. His pride was farther flattered by an embassy from Tyre and Sidon. Those cities had incurred his displeasure; but as they chiefly drew their subsistence from his dominions, they were compelled to supplicate peace, which, though they had highly offended him, they obtained by their interest with Blastus, his chamberlain. The king appointed a day on which to receive their submission, when he appeared in the theatre with a splendour that dazzled the eyes of the spectators. He addressed himself to the ambassadors in a pompous oration, suited, we may suppose, to give them the highest idea both of his power and clemency. When he had ended, he heard his praises resound from every quarter;—the multitude shouted, “It is the voice of a god and not of a man.” His vain heart was elated with this impious compliment, which, considering that Herod professed the knowledge of the true God, displayed an awful instance of pride and impiety. The angel of the Lord smote him with an irresistible though invisible stroke, because he gave not God the glory; and while surrounded with the fancied insignia of majesty, and in the midst of their idolatrous acclamations, he was seized

with excruciating pains, “worms bred in his putrified flesh and devoured him alive.” In this wretched condition he continued five days, and then expired, an awful instance of God’s just judgment, “who resisteth the proud, and will not give his glory to another.”\*

While these things were transacting in Judea, the church of Antioch increased greatly, both in numbers and in gifts. For besides the stated office-bearers of bishops and deacons, which were common to all the churches, this at Antioch had several eminently gifted persons, as prophets (or exhorters), and teachers (or ministers of the word); among whom were Barnabas and Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen, and Saul. By means of a certain prophet who had come down from Jerusalem to Antioch in those days, the Lord was pleased to intimate his will that, among other things, a season of scarcity was approaching which would severely affect the disciples in Judea; an event which accordingly took place in the latter end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth year of the reign of Claudius, as is noticed by Josephus, Eusebius, and Orosius. In this calamitous event, we have a signal display, not only of the care of the blessed God,

\* The account which Josephus gives of the death of Herod, coincides with that given by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, except that the former goes more into detail, and has particularly noticed that the king himself could not but acknowledge the hand of God in his sufferings, and how flattering and unjust the acclamations were, which ascribed divinity to him, a mortal being, now seized with a disease which would quickly hurry him out of the world. He left behind him a son named AGrippa, then seventeen years of age, before whom Paul afterwards appeared and made the well known apology for Christianity, by which he “almost persuaded Agrippa to be a Christian. He also left two daughters, who are noticed in the New Testament, viz. BERNICE, who was married to Herod, king of Chalcis, her father’s brother, when she was only sixteen years of age; and DRUSILLA, who was afterwards married to the governor Felix. After the death of Herod Agrippa, the kingdom was again reduced to a Roman province, and then the persecution of the Christians, for a while, abated.



over his people, in revealing its approach by the ministry of this prophet, and thus giving them an opportunity to provide against it, at a time when many of the Christians in Jerusalem had forsaken all for the gospel's sake, and were labouring under peculiar difficulties; but we have also a manifestation of his divine wisdom and goodness in so ordering the course of events, as that, in the generous and disinterested conduct of the believing Gentiles, the church at Jerusalem should have a pledge of their fervent love and affection towards them as their Christian brethren, and of the sense they entertained of their obligations to those from whom the sound of the gospel first came out; for "having been made partakers of their spiritual things, they thought it perfectly reasonable to minister unto them in temporal things." And if we also take into the account, that even among the believing Jews there was at that time some little remains of the ancient jealousy about the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of Christ, we cannot but see how wisely adapted this was to dissipate all evil surmising from the minds of the former, and to promote the most cordial amity and concord between these different classes of Christians. Nothing has so powerful a tendency to meliorate the human heart, as acts of kindness and love; nothing softens the mind of man and infuses into it a favourable opinion of others like expressions of charity! No sooner was the approach of this famine intimated in the church at Antioch, than "the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren which were in Judea, which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

Soon after Barnabas and Saul had returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, the Lord was pleased to make known his will, that they should be separated for the great work

whereunto he had called them, which was accordingly done by fasting and prayer, accompanied with the imposition of hands. Saul had long been invested with the apostolic office; for he received it not from any man or body of men, as he himself declares, but immediately from Jesus Christ. We are not therefore to imagine that the act of the church, on this occasion, constituted either Saul or Barnabas apostles—but it recognized them as the apostles of Christ; and from the whole transaction we may at least deduce this instruction, that as God is not the author of confusion, but of order and peace in all the churches of the saints, so it is his will that all the affairs of his kingdom should be conducted, not as human wisdom may suggest, but from a regard to his authority, under the control of his revealed will, and in a dependence upon him for his blessing, without which the wisest and best concerted measures must prove fruitless.

Thus sent forth “by the Holy Spirit,” concurring with the act of the church at Antioch, they accordingly departed unto SELEUCIA, a place fifteen miles below Antioch, and situated upon the same river, Orontes, and five from the place where that river runs into the sea. From thence they sailed to the island of Cyprus, situated in the eastern part of the Mediterranean, being the native country of Barnabas. As this island lay contiguous to Judea, it abounded with Jews, as is attested by several ancient authors. The first place which the apostles visited in that island was

SALAMIS, a city lying on the eastern extremity, and one of the nighest ports to Syria. The gospel had already reached that island, but the knowledge of it was confined to the Jews.\* The apostles here found Jewish synagogues, which they frequented, and in which they

\* Acts xi. 19.

preached the word of God to both Jews and Gentiles. After this they travelled nearly the whole length of the island, till they came to Paphos, which was situated upon the western extremity, a place famed for its temple and obscene worship of the Paphian Venus. This was the residence of Sergius Paulus, the Roman Proconsul, who, hearing of the arrival of Barnabas and Saul, sent for them, desiring to hear from their mouths the word of God. Here the apostles were withstood by Elymas, a noted magician, who sought to turn away the deputy from the faith. Saul, however, detected his malicious intention; and, as Peter had formerly done in the awful instance of Ananias and Sapphira, so Saul by his apostolic power, denounced upon Elymas the impending judgment of God for his iniquity. Scarcely had he uttered the words when the sorcerer was struck with a total blindness, insomuch that he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand.\* The Lord was pleased by means of this judgment upon Elymas, to awaken the attention of the Proconsul to the things which concerned his everlasting peace, for "when he saw what was done, he believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

On this occasion, we find the first intimation of the change of the name of the great apostle of the Gentiles from Saul to Paul. Various conjectures for this have been offered by the learned. By some it is supposed that the latter title was given him because he had been the means of converting Sergius Paulus to the Christian faith; as Scipio obtained the appellation of Africanus from the circumstance of his having conquered Africa. Others, however, and among them ranks the judicious Benson, account for it, by supposing that at the time of his circumcision he received the two names of Saul and

\* Acts xiii. 5—12.

Paul—the latter as his Roman name, (for he was born a freeman of Rome) and the former as his Jewish name, for he was a Jew, or as he calls himself, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. As, therefore, he had been called Saul, while he continued among the Jews, and as he was henceforward to execute his ministry among the Romans he adopted his Roman name. And the same reason hath been assigned, for changing the name of his companion Silas into that of Silvanus. Paul and Barnabas quitting Paphos sailed to Perga, a town in Pamphilia, not far from the coast of Asia Minor, from whence they passed on to

ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA. And here we may remark, that, in executing their mission among the Gentiles, it was the invariable practice of these apostles, on their arrival at any city or town, where they had not previously been, in the first place to inquire whether there were any Jewish synagogue in it, and if they found one, they attended its worship on the ensuing Sabbath. Such was the case at Iconium, Acts xiv. 1.—at Thessalonica, ch. xvii. 1.—at Corinth, ch. xviii. 4.—at Ephesus, ch. xix. 8. and other places, and such was the case at Antioch in Pisidia, where “they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.”\* This manner of proceeding does not appear to have been arbitrary or capricious, but conformable to the revealed will of their divine master, who, in the commission which he gave to his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, commanded them “to begin at Jerusalem,” the place where he was crucified. This was altogether in unison with the nature and with the properties of the grace revealed in the gospel itself—which “Grand as the bosom whence it flowed, and kind as the heart that gave it vent,—out-shines the thoughts of shallow man.” So we find Peter

\* Acts xiii. 14. &c.



reminding the Jews that unto them *first* God, having raised up his Son Jesus, had sent him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities.\* And the conduct of Paul at Antioch was strictly conformable to this. He first addressed himself to the Jews, briefly glancing at their history from the period of the Exodus of their fathers from Egypt till the times of David, that eminent type of the Messiah; and from the mention of whom he is naturally led to speak of David's Son—the Saviour promised unto Israel. This, he proceeds to prove, was none other than Jesus of Nazareth, of whose character John the Baptist had spoken in the most exalted terms—whom the Jewish rulers had put to death, but whom God had raised again the third day, and of whose resurrection the apostles were witnesses. The important inference which the apostle deduced from these facts and doctrines is, that “through this man, Christ Jesus, is preached the forgiveness of sins, and that by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses;” and he enforced the whole by the most awful denunciations against those who should despise his doctrine and reject his testimony.

Many of the Jews had no ear to give to this doctrine; but to the Gentiles it was indeed glad tidings of great joy; and even some of the Jews and religious proselytes took part with the apostles, who exhorted them to continue in the grace of God.

The Gentiles having thus tasted that the Lord is gracious, expressed their earnest desire that the apostles would again preach to them on the following Sabbath; to which Paul and Barnabas consenting, almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. To those who know any thing of the value of the gospel

\* Acts iii. 26.

to human happiness, one can scarcely imagine a more interesting spectacle, than the bare idea of such a multitude flocking around these inspired teachers to receive from their lips the words of eternal life. Vastly different however, was its effect upon the unbelieving Jews;—they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which the apostles taught, contradicting and blaspheming.” Paul and Barnabas, however, animated with that fortitude which became them as the ambassadors of the Most High, thus solemnly warned them; “It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken unto you, but seeing ye put it from you, and thereby declare yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, (by the prophet Isaiah) I have set thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the ends of the earth.” This intelligence, that such things had been prophesied concerning them many ages ago, and that the Lord had commanded his apostles to receive them as subjects of his kingdom, without subjecting them to the law of Moses, was most acceptable to the poor Gentiles, who rejoiced in it as those that find great spoil; and they glorified the word of the Lord. Thus “as many of them as were ordained to eternal life believed; the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region, and the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”\* A persecution was, however, raised against the apostles by the unbelieving Jews, who stirred up the devout and honourable women and the chief men of the city, who speedily succeeded in causing them to be expelled out of their coasts. They therefore shook off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them, and came to

\* Acts xiii. 16—52.

ICONIUM, which was then the chief city of Lycaonia, and even to this day subsists as a considerable town under the name of Cogni, situated at the foot of Mount Taurus. Here also they found a synagogue of the Jews, in which they preached the gospel with such success that *a great multitude* both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed their testimony. From the number of those who in Iconium are said to have believed, we may infer that it was a great and populous city, as well as perceive the reason of the apostles' conduct in prolonging their stay in it to establish the disciples in the faith, and to comfort them under the persecution which the unbelieving Jews raised against them. But when matters arrived at such a crisis, that the city became divided, one part holding with the Jews and the other with the apostles, the latter, having received intimation that an assault was about to be made upon them to use them cruelly and stone them, they prudently withdrew and fled to

LYSTRA and DERBE, two other cities of Lycaonia, in which they preached the gospel. At the former of these places, the apostles met with one who had all his days been a cripple, having never walked; and Paul by a word restored him to the perfect use of his limbs, so that he leaped for joy. This extraordinary cure, performed so instantaneously, excited a kind of ecstasy and surprise in the minds of the spectators, who shouted aloud in the language of the Cappadocians, that the gods were come down in the similitude of mortal men. And they named Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury, because he was the chief speaker. The next thing was to make preparation for sacrificing oxen to them, and crowning them with garlands, as was customary with their heathen deities. But the apostles were very differently minded from Herod, (who received the blasphemous adulations

of the people upon a far less occasion); they no sooner heard of it than they ran into the midst of them, and after the eastern manner of expressing grief or indignation, they rent their clothes and exclaimed, “Sirs, why do ye these things—we are men of like passions with yourselves, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein, &c.” Nor was it without difficulty that, even with these arguments, they prevailed upon them to desist from their absurd purpose.

Among the fruit of their ministry here, however, at this time, the apostles had the satisfaction of enumerating Timothy, afterwards an evangelist; as well as his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, whose native city seems to have been Lystra.\* But the adversaries of the apostles who had formerly driven them from Iconium, at length pursued them to Lystra, where they seized Paul, drew him out of the city, and stoned him, leaving him, as they thought, dead. While his friends stood around him, however, he rose up and walked into the city, and the following day Barnabas and he took their leave and departed for Derbe, where they preached the gospel with much success, and from thence returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, establishing the minds of the disciples in the truths they had received, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and warning them that they must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Upon this second visit, they also ordained elders or bishops in every church, which was done by fasting and prayer, commending them to the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ on whom they believed. After this they passed throughout all the region of Pisidia and

\* Compare 1 Tim. i. 2. and 2 Tim. i. 5. with Acts xiv. 21. and chap. xvi. 1, 2.



came to Pamphilia, where they again preached the word in the city of Perga, and passing through Attalia, sailed for Antioch in Syria, the city from whence they had originally taken their departure.

Thus having accomplished their first journey, they reported to the church all that God had wrought by their means, and especially how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. This done they took up their abode again for a considerable while with the disciples at Antioch.\*

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## SECTION IV.

### THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

*From the return of Paul and Barnabas after their first journey, to the period of Paul's arrival at Jerusalem with the contribution for the saints; being his second and third journies.*

WHILE Paul and Barnabas were prolonging their stay with the church at Antioch, previous to their setting out on a second journey, a circumstance occurred in that church, which, on account of its great importance to all the Gentile converts, appears to have engaged their most serious and fixed attention.

It seems that at this particular juncture, "certain men came down from Judea, and taught the Gentile brethren at Antioch, that, unless they were circumcised, after the manner of Moses, and kept the law, they could not be saved."† Some suppose these teachers to have been

\* Acts xiv. 19—28.

† Acts xv. 1, 24.

Cerinthus and Ebion, the founders of two noted sects, of which the mention frequently occurs in ecclesiastical history; but the opinion rests solely upon tradition—a very doubtful guide in all cases, and more especially so in the concerns of religion. It is probable that, whatever were their names, they had formerly been of the sect of the Pharisees; and that when they became professors of the Christian faith, they still retained something of that old leaven, of which Jesus had warned his disciples to beware. The doctrine and spirit of that sect were very opposite to the religion of Christ; and when these men embraced the gospel, they had not discerned the difference so clearly as Paul did at his conversion—they rather reconciled the gospel to their former ways of thinking, than became themselves reconciled to its simplicity. Hence we find they became disturbers of the Gentile churches, as is evident from what took place at this time at Antioch, as well as from the epistle which Paul afterwards wrote to the churches of Galatia.

The doctrine of these teachers, which aimed at subjecting the Gentile converts to the rite of circumcision, and especially to make their obedience to that institute essential to their salvation, met with the most pointed opposition from these apostles. The subject involved the whole church at Antioch in dissension and disputation; and terminated in a general agreement that a deputation, consisting of Paul and Barnabas, with several others, should go up to Jerusalem to consult the apostles and the elders of that church about this question. In their way they passed through the regions of Phœnicia and Samaria, where they made known the calling of the Gentiles into the Christian church, and the success which their ministry had met with among them, to the inexpressible satisfaction of the Jewish brethren.

On their arrival at Jerusalem, they acquainted the

apostles and elders with the object of their mission, in consequence of which the church was convened to take the subject into deliberation. And it appears that even in that church, the proposal to subject the Gentiles to circumcision, found supporters, especially among those disciples who had originally been of "the sect of the Pharisees."\* When the church had been some time harassed with the dispute, Peter rose up and reminded them how God had formerly made choice of him to be the means of opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, and how he had also poured out the Holy Spirit upon them, making no distinction in his kingdom between Jew and Gentile, but purifying the hearts of each by faith. He therefore expostulated with them for attempting to bring the Gentile brethren under the severe yoke of Jewish ceremonies—a yoke so intolerable, that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear it; and pronounced the project of these men to be no less than a "tempting God." And he closed his speech by declaring the sufficiency of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to effect the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, without any regard to the peculiarities of Judaism.

When Peter had ended his address, Paul and Barnabas gave the church a particular account of the miracles and wonders which, by means of their ministry, God had wrought among the Gentiles; and when they had finished, the apostle James, who seems to have acted as President of the assembly on this occasion, summed up the whole subject, recapitulating what had been said, and giving his own judgment as an apostle of Christ, which was "That they should not trouble those who from among the Gentiles were turned unto God; but that they should write unto them, that they must abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from

\* Acts xv. 5.

things strangled, and from blood.” This met the unanimous approbation of the whole church; and accordingly letters were written to all the Gentiles, disclaiming the authority of these new teachers, protesting against their doctrine, and completely freeing the disciples from the yoke of bondage which was thus attempted to be imposed upon them. So Paul and Barnabas returned from Jerusalem to the church at Antioch, which being convened, they read the epistle, to the great consolation of all the Gentile brethren. The apostles, after this, continued at Antioch, teaching the disciples the commandments of the Lord Jesus, and preaching the glad tidings of salvation to all sorts of men, in which it seems they were assisted by many others on whom the glorified Head of the church had bestowed the gifts necessary for the work of the Christian ministry. \*

The interest of the kingdom of Christ was a subject that, of all others, lay nearest to the heart of the apostle Paul. The church at Antioch was now confirmed in the faith and obedience of the gospel; the question which had lately agitated them was set at rest; and it abounded with labourers in the Lord’s vineyard; he therefore proposed to Barnabas that they should leave Antioch, and pay a second visit to the different places in which they had formerly preached the doctrine of Christ, and examine the state of the various churches they had there planted. It is not at all improbable that Paul’s fear and jealousy might be excited, lest these corrupt teachers, who had troubled the brethren at Antioch, might also get access into other Gentile churches, and propagate the same pernicious sentiments, thereby subverting the doctrine of divine grace, and stumbling the Gentile disciples in their profession. Barnabas yielded to the proposal; but when they were about to proceed, a difference

\* Acts xv. 33.



of opinion arose between them as to the propriety of taking Mark with them as an evangelist, or assistant in the work of the ministry; and this diversity of judgment was over-ruled by their common master, no doubt, ultimately to promote his own glory and the happiness of numbers, by inducing the apostles to travel asunder and in opposite directions; for the result was, that Barnabas took Mark, his own nephew, and sailed unto Cyprus, his native country—while Paul chose Silas, one of the brethren that had returned with him from Jerusalem when he last visited it; and being commended by the church to the divine benediction, they took their leave and proceeded for Syria and Cilicia.

Many Christian churches were collected by the ministry of the first preachers of the word, of which we have no express mention in that very concise narrative,—the Acts of the Apostles. Thus, for instance, we have no particular account of any Christian churches being planted in Cilicia, yet we are informed that Paul and Silas went through Cilicia *confirming the churches*, which of course must have been previously gathered and set in order. And when we consider that this was Paul's native country, and that previous to his being first brought to Antioch by Barnabas he had spent some years in it, we may reasonably infer that his ministry had been owned by his divine master, and that he was the spiritual father of many in the regions of Cilicia.

Of the labours of Barnabas and Mark in the island of Cyprus, the sacred history is silent; but, that he who commissioned his apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and who also promised to be always with them while thus engaged even to the end of the world, did own their labours and grant them success, it were unreasonable to doubt.

Paul, accompanied by Silas, however, among other

places, revisited Derbe and Lystra, at the latter of which he had, during his former visit, converted Timothy, then quite a youth, to the faith of Christ. The father of Timothy was a Gentile, probably proselyted to the Jewish religion, but his mother and grandmother were both Jewesses. From his earliest years he had been instructed in the knowledge of the Old Testament writings—and, it would seem from an expression which Paul uses in one of his letters to him, \* that, upon his being first brought to the knowledge of the truth, the Holy Spirit had given a prophetic intimation of his future eminence as a minister of the word. So favourable was the report which the brethren of Lystra now gave the apostle, of the gifts, the zeal, and the amiable deportment of Timothy, that Paul chose him as an associate in the work of the ministry, with which office he was solemnly invested by the prayers of the church and the laying on of the hands of the Presbyters of the church at Lystra.† To prevent the Jews in that quarter from cavilling at his ministry, because they knew that his father was a Gentile, the apostle circumcised him with his own hand : after which they proceeded on their journey, every where delivering to the churches the decrees which had been ordained by the church at Jerusalem, and which ascertained in the fullest manner the liberty of the Gentiles from the observances of the Mosaic ritual ; and by these means they were established in the faith, and their numbers multiplied daily.

Their stay appears to have been very transient in Phrygia and the region of Galatia, on this occasion ; nor were they permitted by the Holy Spirit to preach the word at this time in Asia Minor ; but, passing by Mysia, they came down to

TROAS, a noted sea-port town, where travellers from

\* 1 Tim. i. 18.

† 1 Tim. iv. 18.

the upper coasts of Asia usually took shipping to pass into Europe. Here they appear to have been joined by Luke, the writer of the history of the Acts, a native of Antioch, as is generally believed, and who to the profession of a physician, had joined that of an evangelist or preacher of the gospel.\*

At Troas, Paul had a vision in the night. There stood beside him a man of Macedonia, and besought him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." Paul gave an account of this vision to his companions, who all concurred in one interpretation of it, namely, that the Lord had called them to preach in Macedonia. They therefore obeyed the heavenly admonition, loosed from Troas, and went direct for Samothracia, an island in those seas, famous for being the seat of certain religious mysteries, in equal estimation with those called Eleusinian; but it does not appear they went on shore, for they landed the next day at Neapolis, a sea-port town of Macedonia.

Thus Paul, having first preached the gospel at Damascus, after that in Arabia, next at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, then to the Gentiles in Syria and Cilicia, and most of the countries of the Lesser Asia, was now, by divine appointment, entering upon his career among the Greek nations. At Neapolis, where he first landed, he seems to have made little or no stay, but to have proceeded immediately to

PHILIPPI, which is said to have been the chief city of that part of Macedonia and a colony. Though an inland town, Philippi was situated on the river Strymon, which was the ancient boundary of Macedonia. It had formerly gone by the name of *Crenides*, owing probably to its springs or fountains of water; for, according to Appian, it was built upon a hill. Afterwards it took

\* Acts xvi. 9, 10.

the name of *Datus*, because of the gold mines which were in its neighbourhood. But Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, having conquered Thrace, added that part of it which lay between the rivers Nessus and Strymon to Macedonia, and observing that it might be made a good defence against the Thracians, he fortified it and gave it the name of Philippi in honour of himself. Lucian, in his dialogue entitled *The Fugitives*, introduces Hercules describing Philippi in the following manner: "The plain, which is very fertile, raises itself into little hills, which serve for a defence to the city of Philippi, whose walls are washed by the river Hebrus." Pierce, in his Synopsis prefixed to this epistle, mentions certain coins of several Roman emperors, and particularly one of Claudius, the inscription of which intimates that a colony of Romans was planted at Philippi by Julius Cæsar, and afterwards augmented by Augustus, who sent the adherents of Mark Anthony into this and other cities of Macedonia, so that, having twice received inhabitants from Italy, of a small town it became a great city, and enjoyed all the privileges of a Roman colony.

It appears as though there were but few Jews resident at Philippi, since we find no mention made of any synagogue in it. There was, however, an Oratory or *Proseucha*, a place in which the Jews and their proselytes were accustomed to assemble for prayer, without the city, by the river side, to which Paul and his companions resorted on the Sabbath day, and being set down, they spake unto the women which resorted thither. Among these was Lydia, a Jewish proselyte, of the city of Thyatira, who had taken up her residence at Philippi for the sake of commerce. The Lord opened her heart so that she understood and believed the doctrine which Paul taught. Lydia and her domestics were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and with this Christian family



the apostle and his associates afterwards took up their abode, during their stay at Philippi, which is said to have been "many days."

Upon several occasions, as they went to the place where the Jews assembled for prayer, they were annoyed by a certain damsel, possessed with a spirit of divination, or of the Pythian Apollo—probably a species of fortune-teller, by means of which she brought her employers much gain. She seems to have indulged herself in pouring ridicule upon the apostle and his companions, whom she followed through the streets, exclaiming aloud, "these men are the servants of the Most High God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." Paul, grieved with her conduct, ejected the evil spirit out of her—which greatly enraged her masters, for they perceived that there was now an end to their emoluments from that quarter; and seizing him and Silas, they drew them before the magistrates and rulers of the city, making bitter complaints against them as persons who "exceedingly troubled their city, teaching customs which it was not lawful for them to observe, being Romans." This speech incensed the populace against them, and the too credulous magistrates used them in a manner that was both shameful and barbarous—ordering the lictors to tear off their clothes and beat them with rods, which they instantly did and with great severity. We find Paul afterwards alluding to this cruel treatment, 1 Thess. ii. 2. and again 2 Cor. xi. 23. where reciting some of his sufferings he says, "he had received stripes above measure." Not satisfied, however, with this brutal outrage, they cast them into prison, enjoining the jailer to keep them *safely*. The latter well understood their meaning, and to comply with it, "thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."\*

\* Acts xvi. 24.

In this situation, distressing no doubt, and, in the eyes of many, very contemptible, at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, in the hearing of the other prisoners. And now the Lord caused a great earthquake which opened all the doors of the prison, and loosed every one's bonds. The jailer was by the noise roused from his slumbers, and thrown into the utmost consternation; and finding all the doors of the prison open, he drew his sword and was on the eve of committing suicide, suspecting the prisoners to be fled, and probably recollecting the strict orders he had received the day before concerning Paul and Silas. The apostles, however, perceiving that he was about to lay violent hands upon himself, cried with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm, for we (the prisoners) are all here." Upon hearing which, the jailer called for lights, rushed into the prison, and trembling, fell down before Paul and Silas, whom he brought out, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The answer was direct and unequivocal—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and unto all that were in his house.

Nothing could possibly be better suited to the jailer's case, than the doctrine which the apostle now preached unto him. It was an immediate and an effectual relief under all the horrors of a guilty conscience. He found in it what reconciled his mind to God, and filled him with joy and peace, as the sequel shews; for, believing, he rejoiced in God with all his house, and was baptised, he and all his straightway. The fruits of his faith were instantly apparent in his kind and tender treatment of Paul and Silas; for he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes, and, taking them into his house, exercised towards them that hospitality which became a christian brother.

Such were the transactions of this memorable night. The earthquake had, no doubt, been felt over the whole city; and the miraculous opening of the prison doors would soon be communicated to the magistrates, who, when morning arrived, sent an order for the discharge of the prisoners. Paul, however, did not think it inconsistent with christian meekness to demand from them an apology for the illegal treatment he and his friend had sustained, especially considering that they were Roman citizens. Of this latter circumstance, the magistrates seem never to have had the least apprehension; but on being told it, they took the alarm, waited upon them personally, made due acknowledgments of the impropriety of their conduct, and besought them to depart out of their city. The apostle complied with that request; but his conduct on the occasion shews, that while he considered it to be his duty to demean himself as a quiet and peaceable subject of the government under which he was placed, he did not think it inconsistent therewith, to claim the protection of that government, and all the civil rights and privileges to which he was entitled. So quitting the prison, they went to the house of Lydia to visit their brethren, and having comforted them, took their leave of Philippi, leaving, as is supposed, Luke behind, who probably continued some years with this infant society.\*

\* The following are some of the grounds on which this supposition is founded. The writer of the Acts of the Apostles, previous to this event, carries on the narrative in the following manner. Acts xvi. 11—16. "Loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothrace—and on the Sabbath day we went out of the city, by a river side—and it came to pass as we went to prayer, &c." But after Paul and the rest departed from Philippi, the writer changes his style, thus—"Now when THEY had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, THEY came to Thessalonica," &c. Nor does he resume his former manner of writing, until chap. xx. where, describing Paul's voyage to Syria, he thus writes—"These going before tarried for us at Troas; and we sailed from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto THEM to Troas, where

Thus have we reviewed the origin of the church of the Philippians—a church which, of all that were planted by this apostle, seems to have enjoyed the greatest share of his esteem and affection. But their love was evidently reciprocal. For it is manifest that the sufferings which the apostle had undergone in their city, for the sake of communicating to them the knowledge of salvation, more precious than gold, had greatly endeared him to the church there; while, on the other hand, the brethren at Philippi lost no opportunity of evincing their gratitude to the apostle; for when he was at Thessalonica, they twice sent him a pecuniary contribution, thus enabling him to make the gospel without charge to the Thessalonians. They also sent him money during his first imprisonment at Rome, that he might want nothing necessary to his comfort which they could supply. \*

Passing through Amphipolis, a city built in an island formed by two branches of the river Strymon, and a colony of the Athenians, and from thence through Apollonia, they came to

THESSALONICA, † now the metropolis of all the countries comprehended in the Roman province of Macedonia. It was the residence both of the proconsul and questor; so that being the seat of government, it was constantly filled with strangers, some to attend the courts of judicature, and others to solicit offices. Placed at the bottom of the Thermaic gulf, it was conveniently situated for commerce, and many of its inhabitants were merchants, who carried on an extensive trade with foreign countries. The Jews resorted to this city in such

we abode seven days." It is therefore very probable that Luke remained with the new converts at Philippi until Paul, several years afterwards, in his way from Corinth to Syria, came to Philippi and took him with them.

\* See Phil. iv. 15, 16. and ver. 18. with chap. ii. 25.

† Anciently called Thermæ; it still subsists as a place of some note, and is now in possession of the Turks, under the name of Salonichi.



numbers as to form a large synagogue, to which, according to his usual custom, the apostle, on his arrival there, had recourse.

The account which is left us, by the sacred historian, of the apostle's method of procedure in the synagogue of Thessalonica, though concise, is remarkably comprehensive. According to his usual custom, he, during three Sabbath days, reasoned with them out of the scriptures (of the Old Testament, which were esteemed by themselves as the oracles of God); unfolding their meaning, and alleging from their true import, that the Messiah must necessarily have already come; and, moreover, that he must have been a suffering person, since their own prophets had clearly described him under this view; nay, that he must also have risen again from the dead, concerning which event the spirit of prophecy had spoken particularly; and, finally, that this Jesus of Nazareth, unto whom he bore witness, was **THE CHRIST**, or true Messiah, whom they were anxiously expecting. The result was, that some of the Jews believed that Jesus whom he preached was the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, and consequently consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks *a great multitude*, and of the women of chief note in the city not a few. \*

It seems probable that Paul and his associates continued their attendance on the synagogue worship no longer than three Sabbath days, though it appears from Phil. iv. 16. that they remained some considerable time after that in Thessalonica. But having now repeatedly declared their testimony, they withdrew, and separated the disciples. After this Paul and Silas appear to have preached, without reserve, among the idolatrous Gentiles, and to have wrought many miracles, all which were at-

\*Acts xvii. 1—4.

tended with the most amazing success; for in the first epistle, which he wrote not long afterwards to this church, he reflects with the most grateful emotions of mind upon the success which his ministry had among them—that the gospel which he preached came unto them not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; so that they became followers of the apostles and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, insomuch that the Thessalonians became ensamples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia—that the gospel sounded out from them; and in every place their faith towards God was spoken of; so that the unbelieving Jews who persecuted them, were ready to attest the power which the gospel had upon these idolatrous Gentiles, and how it became the means of turning them to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered them from the wrath to come.\*

Paul and his companions were at length driven from this city in consequence of a persecution raised by the envious, unbelieving Jews, who instigated the rabble against them, setting all the city in an uproar, and assaulting the house of Jason, whom they drew, along with other brethren, before the rulers of the city. In this state of things it was judged prudent to withdraw, which they accordingly did unto

BEREA, where also they found a synagogue of the Jews, and into which they entered, declaring their testimony, as at Thessalonica. To the honour of the Bereans, it is recorded that they received the doctrine which the apostle preached, and with the utmost readiness of mind examined the scriptures daily whether the things he de-

\* 1 Thess. i. 5—10.

clared were so or not—the happy result of which was that “many of them believed, of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men not a few.” Intimation, however, having reached Thessalonica that Paul was preaching with great success at Berea, the unbelieving Jews, who had recently driven him from that city, followed him to Berea also, and there excited the multitude against him. The brethren therefore, sent him away, as though he were going towards the sea, reserving Silas and Timothy among them, who seem to have been less obnoxious to the Jews than Paul was. But the friends of the latter, anxious for his safety, privately conveyed him to

ATHENS, styled, by general consent, “the seat of the muses”—once the first city of Greece in every point of view; and though it had at this time passed the zenith of its political splendour, it was still as famous for learning as it had ever been: for at the time Paul visited it, the city was full of philosophers, rhetoricians, orators, painters, poets, statuaries, and of young men who resorted thither to be taught philosophy and the liberal sciences. Pausanias says that there were more images in Athens than in all Greece besides, and that they worshipped the gods more than all Greece did. No place could possibly afford a greater fund of speculation and amusement to a curious mind than Athens. Temples, altars, statues, historical memorials, living philosophers of various sects, the works of the learned of every age, a confluence of the most polite and literary persons from various countries, all indulging the luxury of learned leisure, were objects that must at once have obtruded themselves upon the apostle’s notice. Nor was he incapacitated, either by defect of natural taste or of education, from relishing the beauties or appreciating the value of such things. He had enjoyed a liberal education, had

read their poets, and we have repeated instances of his quoting striking passages from them. But in Paul the Christian predominated over the philosopher and the critic. He plainly saw that with all their advantages, they lacked "the one thing needful"—the knowledge of the true God, and the enjoyment of his life-giving favour; without which, all their luxury was but splendid misery.

Having carefully surveyed the city, Paul found the inhabitants were almost wholly devoted to idolatry, and he therefore sent an urgent request to Silas and Timothy, who were still at Berea, to come to him with all possible expedition. Finding a synagogue of the Jews, his first object was to dispute with *them*, and with the Gentiles proselyted to their religion; and after that, with such of the idolatrous inhabitants as he met with in the market-place. The apostle was soon attacked by some of the philosophers belonging to two of their most renowned sects, viz. the Epicureans and the Stoics. The Epicureans are said to have ascribed neither creation nor providence to God, but held that the world was made by a casual conflux of atoms—That the gods, if there were any, were of human shape, who lay lolling upon the clouds in ease and indolence, entirely unconcerned about human affairs. They also held, that in the present state, pleasure is the chief good; and that men are not to expect a resurrection from the dead, or any future state of rewards and punishments. The Stoics, who were intolerably proud and arrogant, held that matter was eternal, God corporeal, and that either God was the soul of the world, or the world itself a god. They looked upon all things as subject to an irresistible fatality; that virtue was its own sufficient reward, and vice its own sufficient punishment. They fluctuated as to their belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, though they had some



expectation of an hereafter, as well as of the conflagration and renovation of the world.

In the eyes of these philosophical gentlemen, the apostle appeared a mere babbler; and in the plenitude of their superior wisdom, they looked down upon him with all the pride and disdain that has ever characterised persons of similar tenets and pretensions. When Paul preached to them Jesus and the resurrection, they regarded him as a setter forth of new deities. However, as it belonged to the court of Areopagus to take cognizance of such things, they brought Paul before it.

They had at Athens two courts of judicature, of which one was chosen annually, consisting of five hundred persons. The other was perpetual; and the members of it were accustomed to assemble in the forum called Areopagus, which stood upon a hill, and was the highest forum in Athens. The judges belonging to this latter court were held in such veneration, that, to be an Areopagite was a term used proverbially among them for an excellent person.\* They were the Athenian senate, or standing court of judicature;† and, besides other things, matters of religion, blasphemy against the gods, contempt of the holy mysteries, and all sorts of impiety, the consecration of new gods, the erecting of temples or altars, and the introduction of new ceremonies into divine worship, were referred to the judgment of this court. Conceiving, therefore, that the apostle had some new object of worship to propose to the Athenians, it was perfectly natural for them to conduct him before this venerable assembly, which having done, they requested him to explain himself concerning this new doctrine; they frankly acknowledged that he brought strange things to their ears, in talking to them about Jesus and the resurrection, and they desired to know what these things meant.

\* Aulus Gellius, b. 12. ch. 7.

† Potter's Gr. Antiq. vol. i. p. 105.

The apostle's discourse upon this occasion has always been admired as a model of fine address and of cogent reasoning. He had carefully inspected their religious rites and worship; and, among the multiplicity of their altars, had observed one that was dedicated to "the unknown God." He began, therefore, by stating, that he perceived them to be extremely religious;\* for besides the number of temples and altars which they had in common with the other cities of Greece, he observed one with this peculiar inscription, "To the unknown God." He might therefore fairly presume that it would not be unacceptable to them to be made acquainted with the character of that Being whom they ignorantly worshipped. "God," says he, "who made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, since he giveth to all life and breath and all things, and hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth." And here we may remark, in passing, the different method which the apostle pursued, in reasoning with the idolatrous Gentiles, from that which he uniformly adopted with the Jews. The latter had in their hands the writings of Moses and their prophets, which they themselves acknowledged to be the oracles of God. In attempting to engage their attention to his testimony, he had nothing to do but make his appeal to those scriptures, and convince them that their own prophets had foretold all that he now testified unto them, for that in reality "he said none other things than what Moses and the prophets did say should come, viz. that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first to rise from the dead,

\* *Very religious*, for so the word, *deisidaimonesterói*, should be translated, as has been frequently remarked by critics, and not *too superstitious*, as our translators have it.

and should shew light to his people Israel and to the Gentiles." But with the Athenians, who had no written revelation in their hands, he proceeds upon quite other principles: he appeals to the volume of creation, and argues from the impressions of power, wisdom, and goodness every where displayed before their eyes; he asserts the providence and the omnipresence of God; that he is the fountain of life and all its comforts—the supreme disposer of all events, and the common father of mankind; appealing in proof of this part of his doctrine to Aratus, one of their own most favourite poets. From these first principles, founded in reason, and which commend themselves to the consciences of all men, the apostle justly infers the folly of their idols. Admitting as they did, that they themselves were the offspring of God, how absurd was it in them to imagine "the Godhead like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art or man's device." Thus having shewn the gross absurdity of their idolatrous worship, he declared to them that the Most High had for a course of time allowed men to go on in their ignorance, without instructing them by messengers divinely commissioned, that he might shew them by facts and their own experience, the insufficiency of their reason in the concerns of religion. But the state of things was now changed; for the time was come when God commanded all men every where to repent of their ignorance, idolatry and wickedness, having "appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by his Son Jesus Christ, whom he had raised from the dead," and in that event hath given the highest certainty of the fact.

When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, the Epicureans mocked him, and the Stoics found so little interest in his reasoning, that they gladly adjourned the meeting, promising, like Felix upon another occasion,

to hear him again of this matter at a more convenient season. Some few individuals, however, were struck with his doctrine, and received it as divine truth; amongst whom was Dionysius, one of the Areopagite judges, and a woman of some note named Damaris, with a few others, who consequently clave to the apostle and consorted with him. The handful of seed, however, sown at this time, at Athens, produced, in due season, the harvest of a numerous church, as will be seen in the history of the next century.

While Paul was thus employed at Athens, Timothy arrived from Berea, and informed him that the enemies of the faith at Thessalonica had raised a dreadful persecution against the disciples there; on hearing which, the apostle thought it best to be left alone at Athens, and without delay dispatched Timothy to Thessalonica to succour the brethren in their distress; to comfort their hearts, and prevent their being turned aside from the good profession they had made, by the afflictions they were now enduring.\* Timothy soon afterwards returned to the apostle, bringing him a most pleasing account of their steadfastness in the faith, their regard for Paul, and their anxious desire to see him again, all which greatly refreshed and cheered his mind.† From Athens he proceeded to

CORINTH, a city situated on a narrow neck of land which joined the Peloponnesus to Greece, in consequence of which it commanded the commerce of both Asia and Europe. On the eastern side of the isthmus were the ports of Cenchrea and Schænus, and being thus advantageously situated for commercial purposes, it soon became extremely rich and populous. Its original name was Ephyre, but during the Achæan war, the Roman consul, Mummius, burnt it to the ground. It was, how-

\* 1 Thess. iii. 1—6.

† Ib. ver. 6, 7.



ever, rebuilt by Julius Cæsar, after having long lain in ashes, and by his command it was colonized with the ancestors of those Gentiles to whom Paul preached the everlasting gospel. When Achaia was made a Roman province, Corinth, becoming the seat of government, soon regained its ancient celebrity in regard to commerce and its attendants, riches and luxury; so that, at the time it was visited by Paul, it was almost as famous for learning and the arts as Athens itself. Here philosophers taught science, and established academies for the instruction of youth; and in such high reputation were its seminaries, that an education at Corinth became proverbial for the most finished cultivation of manners, in every polite and literary accomplishment.\* With all its advantages, however, it seems to have outstripped every city of Greece in laxity of morals; insomuch that a Greek word, formed by the name of this city, has been used to signify all that lasciviousness and profligate corruption which leave the human heart enslaved to the basest and most headstrong passions. According to Strabo, there was in it a temple dedicated to Venus, at which no less than a thousand priestesses attended, who made prostitution a part of their devotions to the goddess.

Paul, on his arrival in this city, found a Jewish Christian, of the name of Aquila, and his wife Priscilla, just arrived from Italy, in consequence of a decree which had been issued by the Roman emperor Claudius Cæsar, commanding all Jews to depart from Rome. It is affirmed by Dio, an ancient historian, that Claudius did not banish the Jews from Rome, but only prohibited their assemblies. This, however, even though his decree proceeded no further, was in effect banishing all those who had any conscience of religion. But Suetonius, who

\* Thus the Roman poet Horace,

*“Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum.”*

lived nearer the time, expressly says, that “he expelled the Jews from Rome, who were continually making tumults; CHRESTUS being their leader or the occasion of their disturbances.”\* It is a matter of dispute among the learned, whether by CHRESTUS, Suetonius meant Jesus Christ, or not. The probability is, that he did; for in other places he has shewn himself peculiarly virulent against the Christians.† And, admitting this to have been his meaning, it shews us that the decree of Claudius was occasioned by the tumults which the unbelieving Jews were continually raising at Rome against the disciples of Christ, just as they persecuted Paul and his party at Lystra, Thessalonica, and Berea, and afterwards at Corinth, not to mention their conduct in the cases of Stephen, the apostles, or the Lord Jesus himself.

The Jews being numerous in Corinth, and having a synagogue, Paul, according to his custom, had immediate recourse to it; and there, for some time, “he reasoned every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Jewish proselytes, testifying in the boldest manner that Jesus was the Messiah.” But when they opposed and reviled his doctrine, he shook his raiment, to indicate that he had done with them, adding, “Your blood be upon your own heads, I am clean; from henceforth I will go to the Gentiles;” on saying which he departed from the synagogue and went into the house of Justus, which lay contiguous to it. Crispus, however, the chief ruler of the synagogue, received Paul’s testimony, as did also his household, and “*many* of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptised.”‡

It is not improbable that the apostle experiencing so much opposition as he at first did from the Jews in this city, was about to take a speedy departure from it; but

\* Life of Claudius, ch. 25.

† Life of Nero, ch. 16.

‡ Acts xviii. 8.

if such was his purpose, he was prevented from carrying it into effect, by a vision which he had during the night. The Lord Jesus appeared to him, to animate and encourage him to persevere in preaching the gospel at Corinth. "Be not afraid," were his gracious words, "but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." Thus encouraged, he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God, who gave testimony to the word of his grace, and made the labours of his servants instrumental in gathering a numerous church, enriched with a plenitude of spiritual gifts. While here, he also wrote his First Epistle to the Thesalonians, which is generally thought to have been the first written of all his fourteen Epistles. By some, however, it is thought he had previously written his Epistle to the churches of Galatia, and that he did it at Antioch, before he left that city to take his present journey into Greece.

During these eighteen months that Paul is said to have passed at Corinth, it seems probable that he made an excursion from that city into the region of Achaia, or the Peloponnesus, where were many synagogues of the Jews, and from whence he returned again to Corinth (2 Eph. ch. xi. ver. 10.); and if we consider that his Second Epistle is addressed "to the saints which are in all Achaia," it plainly shews that he had made many converts at other places in that quarter besides the city of Corinth. Accordingly his return to it is spoken of as a *second* coming to Corinth, for he tells them, 2 Cor. xii. 14. and chap. xiii. 1. that he was then coming to them the *third* time, though in the Acts of the Apostles there is no mention of his having been at Corinth more than once before he wrote his Second Epistle to that church.

The great success which crowned the apostle's ministry

at this time, seems to have exasperated his enemies to the highest pitch. They formed a conspiracy to apprehend him, in which they succeeded, and dragged him before the judgment seat of the deputy of Achaia, complaining bitterly that he persuaded men to worship God contrary to the law of Moses. Gallio was the present proconsul, and had just entered upon his new dignity. This man was the elder brother of the famous Seneca, the Stoic philosopher and tutor to Nero, and it is conjectured he obtained the office through the interest of his brother Seneca. The latter has described Gallio,\* as a man of the most mild and amiable disposition, of great suavity of manners, and benign to men in general. Dion Cassius also commends him as a man of great wit and good sense.† As his conduct regards the case of Paul, he has been severely censured by many Christian writers, but probably without due consideration. He rather seems to have been aware of the futility of the charge which these Jews alleged against the apostle, and like a wise magistrate, who considered matters of opinion quite beyond his province, so long as they did not disturb the peace of society, he told the Jews that if they had any accusation to prefer against Paul for a breach of the civil law, he was ready to listen to them; but if it was merely a question of words and names and matters regarding their law, they must settle it among themselves, for he would be no judge in affairs of that nature; which having said, he drove them from his judgment seat.

After this the apostle prolonged his stay some time at Corinth, from whence it would seem that the rulers were not unfriendly towards him; but afterwards taking his leave of the brethren, he sailed from the port of Cenchrea, accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla; and the vessel touching at Ephesus, Paul left them there; for, having

\* Senecæ Præfat. ad Natural. Quest. lib. 4.

† Lib. 10. p. 688, &amp;c.



come under a vow while at Cenchrea, it was necessary he should offer the appointed sacrifices at Jerusalem, at the ensuing feast of the passover, which was then just at hand. He therefore bade them farewell ; yet perceiving that Ephesus stood much in need of the light of the glorious gospel, he promised to return to them, when the Lord should permit ; and quitting that city, he landed at Cæsarea, from whence he went up to Jerusalem and saluted the church, performed his vow, and returned to Antioch. After spending some time there with his old friends, he went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening the disciples ; and passing through the upper coasts, he at length returned to

EPHESUS, which was at that time the metropolis of the province of Asia, and an exceedingly populous city. It was situated upon the river Layster, and famous, among other things, for an immense temple dedicated to the worship of the goddess Diana. This amazing edifice was four hundred and twenty-five feet long, and two hundred and twenty broad, supported by an hundred and twenty-seven stately pillars, each of them sixty feet high, the work of a king, who erected them as a token of his piety and magnificence. The entire structure was two hundred and twenty years in building, and reared at the common charge of all Asia *propria*; and so admirable was it, that it ranked as one of the seven wonders of the world. It had been twice destroyed by fire previous to its present enlarged and improved state ; the first time on the very day that Socrates was poisoned, and the second on the night in which Alexander the Great was born, when it was designedly set on fire by Erastratus, who being condemned to die for it, confessed that he had destroyed so exquisite a stricture, solely “ that he might be remembered in future ages.” The common council of Asia, however, not only put him to death, but passed

a decree that "his name should never be mentioned more." The fame of Erastratus, nevertheless, survived their decree; for though silence may have been imposed upon that generation, his conduct has been recorded by almost every historian who has written of those times. It was, however, again rebuilt, upon a plan of the celebrated architect Denocrates, and most magnificently adorned by the Ephesians. When Paul visited the city, this temple was in all its glory. Here a prodigious concourse of people always resorted; some to worship the goddess Diana, others to learn the arts of sorcery and magic, which were taught and practised with such reputation at Ephesus, that the magical words or sentences used in sorcery were taken from the name of the city, being called *Ephesian letters*. Many came to prosecute law suits, or to solicit offices from the Roman governor of the province, who resided here; to all which may be added, that multitudes resorted to it for the purposes of commerce, or were continually passing through it in their way to and from Europe.

But that which more especially renders Ephesus interesting to the Ecclesiastical historian is, that Satan had there erected his very throne of idolatry, superstition, and magic, and reigned over the minds of his deluded subjects with uncontrolled sway. The apostle on his way to Jerusalem, had caught a transient glimpse of the state of things in that city, and having discharged his vow, he returned as expeditiously as was consistent with his purpose in visiting the countries that lay in his way, now to invade this empire of darkness, and storm the strong holds of the prince of the power of the air.\* Thus Ephesus became his residence during a space of three years.

On his arrival, accompanied by Gaius and Aristarchus,

\* Eph. ii. 2, 3.

two of the brethren out of Macedonia, called his companions in travel,\* and by Timothy, and Erastus the chamberlain or treasurer of the city of Corinth, and probably by Titus also, Paul found here twelve men who had been the disciples of John the Baptist, and, as some understand, baptized by him. These men appear to have believed the preaching of John, as it respected the immediate appearance of the Messiah and the setting up of his kingdom, but they seem not to have been acquainted with Christ or his apostles, nor to have known that the Messiah had actually appeared, that he had been crucified, and was risen again. They, therefore, knew nothing of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, in his miraculous operations, which was now communicated to them by the apostle, in consequence of which they spake with divers tongues and prophesied. After this the apostle went into the synagogue of the Jews which he found there, and for three months reasoned with them, and persuaded them concerning the things of the kingdom of God; but finding many of them obstinate, their minds filled with prejudices, and that they began to revile him and his doctrine, Paul separated the disciples; and from that period met daily in the school of Tyrannus, who had probably himself been converted by the preaching of the apostle. And this continued during the space of two years, which gave an opportunity to many who resided in distant parts of the province, and who had heard of Paul's preaching and miracles, to visit Ephesus, and to hear the word of God from his mouth, so that by this means the knowledge of the gospel was communicated to all Asia.

And now the divine power manifested itself remarkably, in owning the mission and doctrine of Paul; for "God wrought special miracles by his hands;"—dis-

\* Acts xix. 29.

eases vanished, not only at his touch but at his word, and evil spirits were ejected out of many that were possessed with them. Some of the wandering Jews, who had practised the art of exorcism, supposing that Paul's miracles bore some affinity to their own tricks, undertook to imitate them, by expelling a dæmon out of one that was possessed; but when they invoked the name of Jesus whom Paul preached, "the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded," to the consternation of all the Jews and Greeks that dwelt at Ephesus; "and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." The most amazing consequences succeeded this display of divine power; for many of the necromancers received the apostolic testimony, and came and confessed their diabolical practices, and the arts by which they had deceived the multitude. Many of those also who had been engaged in the devices of exorcism, conjuration, and magic, brought their books, in which were prescribed the various forms of incantation, and spontaneously set fire to them in the presence of all the people; and they computed their value, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver, equal to seven thousand five hundred pounds sterling—an amazing effect of the prevalence of divine truth over all the powers of darkness!

Yet notwithstanding the success of his ministry, Paul had many adversaries at Ephesus. A number of the inhabitants enriched themselves by manufacturing representations in miniature of the temple of Diana, and of the image that was said to have fallen down from Jupiter; by means of which they amassed considerable wealth. Perceiving that if Paul's doctrine were suffered to spread, their trade would be ruined, they convened a meeting of all that were of the same occupation, and



very gravely deliberated what was best to be done, in order to check the growing evil: "Sirs," said one of them, "ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. It is evident, moreover, that not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath turned away much people, saying that they are no Gods which are made with hands; so that not only our trade is in danger of being destroyed, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana will be despised, and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." Interest is a powerful stimulus to the passions of men; and on this occasion the speech of Demetrius, which was founded upon it, produced the desired effect, for, "when they heard these things, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The utmost confusion ensued throughout the city: the artificers ran about the streets, spreading the alarm to the multitude; and having seized two of Paul's companions, viz. Gaius and Aristarchus, they ran with one accord into the theatre, intending, probably, to cast them to the wild beasts usually kept there. The apostle would himself have also entered, but his friends dissuaded him. Anarchy had now reached its highest pitch,—some exclaimed one thing, and some another,—the multitude was confounded, and the greater part knew not the cause of their coming together; they continued, however, for the space of two hours, crying out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The rage of the rioters became at length exhausted; the proconsul's secretary appeased the people, and addressed them to the following effect: "Ye men of Ephesus, who is there that knows not that the city of the Ephesians worshippeth the great goddess Diana? since this is evident, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. For ye have brought hither these men, whom ye have not yet

proved to be either spoilers of temples, or blasphemers of the goddess; if therefore Demetrius and his craftsmen have any thing to allege against them, the courts of law are open, where the matter may be fairly tried." He also reminded them, that they were in danger of being called to account by the Romans for the riot they had raised, there being no justifiable cause for it. On saying which, he liberated Gaius and Aristarchus, and dismissed the assembly.

During Paul's stay at Ephesus, a church had not only been gathered, but set in order with its bishops and deacons.\* By means of his preaching, multitudes had been converted to the Christian faith, amongst whom were "certain of the chiefs of Asia," supposed to have been priests of the temple of Diana, who had the care of the games celebrated in honour of that goddess.† These, the apostle having called together, after the uproar, embraced them, and then taking his leave, departed for Macedonia. Having visited the churches in that country, and given them much exhortation, he went into Greece, and there continued about three months; after which he went down to Troas, a place he had formerly visited,‡ and where he preached with great success. ||

The disciples of Christ being at this period reduced to great straits in Judea, Paul had written to the Gentile churches in Macedonia and Greece to assist them by a general contribution; and during his abode among them at this time, he received the various collections which those churches had made for their relief. Having carried into effect this important service, he sailed for Syria, and landed at the port of Tyre, from whence passing by Ptolemais, and thence to Cæsarea, he arrived at Jerusalem, where he delivered the contributions, and was most cordially received of the brethren.

\* Acts xx. 17, 28.

† See Whitby on Acts xix. 31.

‡ Acts xvi. 8.

|| 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

## SECTION V.

## THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

*From Paul's arrival at Jerusalem with the contributions from Asia, to the period of his death.*

WE are now arrived at a period in the life of the great apostle of the Gentiles, when a circumstance arose which has occasioned no little perplexity to commentators, and drawn from many of them either unmerited reproaches or needless apologies.

It seems that previous to the apostle's arrival in Judea, a report had got into circulation, that he was in the practice of teaching the Jews who were dispersed throughout the Gentile countries, "to forsake the law of Moses, and neither circumcise their children, nor walk after the Jewish customs."\* This was an unfounded representation of his conduct in regard to this matter. He indeed taught the Gentiles that they should observe none of these things; but he well knew that the time which God had appointed for putting an end to the political constitution of the Jews, had not yet arrived. He, therefore, conformed to the rites of Judaism himself, though aware that the whole of that typical dispensation had been *virtually* abolished by the death of Christ; and he instructed his Jewish brethren to do the same, until, by the destruction of their temple and city, the providence of God should co-operate with his word in rendering it impossible for them any longer to adhere to Moses. It was, therefore, necessary that the Jews in

\* Acts xxi. 21.

Jerusalem should be undeceived in this matter ; and, in order to this, it was recommended to him by James the apostle, and the elders of the church, to give a proof to all his Jewish brethren that what they had heard of him was incorrect, by joining himself to four men who were under a vow, and subjecting himself to the charges that were necessary to the performance of it, "that all might know that the things which they had heard concerning him were nothing, but that he himself walked orderly and kept the law." Paul complied with this advice ; and the following day, purifying himself with them, they all entered into the temple, to signify to the priest their resolution to accomplish the seven days of their purification. But before these were ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up all the people against him, and apprehending him by violence, cried out, "Men of Israel help ; this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place, and hath polluted this holy temple by bringing Greeks into it." By this means an universal ferment was excited throughout Jerusalem, for the people ran together, and seizing Paul, drew him out of the temple, closing the doors, being resolved, it would seem, to put him to death. At this critical moment, when they were actually engaged in beating him, Claudius Lysias, the commander of the Roman garrison, interposed with a band of soldiers and rescued Paul, demanding to know who he was and what he had done. Finding it impossible, however, from the contrariety of their reports, to arrive at any certainty in the affair, he ordered the soldiers to take him into the castle, whither he was pursued by the multitude, crying out, "away with him."

Having reached the top of the stairs, Paul asked leave of the chief captain to address them ; which being



granted, he beckoned to them with his hand, and when he had obtained silence, accosted them in the Hebrew tongue, recapitulating the most material circumstances of his history, particularly his conversion to the Christian faith; appealing to the high priest and elders for the truth of what he said; and closing the narrative with stating the commission he had received from Jesus Christ, to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The very mention of this was enough for these Jews. Hitherto they had listened to him patiently, but no sooner had he spoken of his commission to the Gentiles, than they became outrageous, exclaiming, "Away with such a fellow from the earth; it is not fit that he should live:"\* on saying which, they rent off their clothes and threw dust into the air.

Lysias, in all probability, understood nothing of what Paul had spoken in Hebrew; but seeing the effects which his speech had produced upon the Jews, and that they were driven to frenzy by it, he concluded that certainly he must be some notorious malefactor, and, therefore, commanding him to be brought into the castle, he was preparing to have recourse to the Roman custom of extorting a confession from his own lips, by means of torture,—one method of which was by binding the person to a pillar and severely scourging him. †

When the soldiers had stripped Paul, and were extending his arms to the utmost stretch, that they might bind him with thongs to the pillar, he enquired from the centurion, whether it were lawful for him to scourge a free-man of Rome, before he was convicted of any crime? The officer, upon receiving this hint, that the apostle was

\* Acts xxii. 1—22.

† See Suetonius' *Life of Augustus*, ch. 19. Tacit. *Annals*, b. 15. ch. 56, 57. Joseph. *Antiq.* b. 16. ch. 10. § 2—5.

a Roman citizen, desisted from his purpose, and apprised the chief captain of the fact, who interrogating Paul, and finding that he was free born, began to regret what he had done, and liberated him from his bonds.

On the following day the apostle was brought before the Jewish Sanhedrim, with the view of having his conduct investigated before that great national council. When placed in the midst, he surveyed the assembly with earnestness and composure, and was proceeding to renew his vindication before them, but the first sentence he uttered provoked the high priest, who commanded the by-standers to smite him on the mouth. Paul complained of this as an unjust procedure on the part of his judges: probably he was not aware whence the order to smite him originated; at any rate, he was not apprised that it came from the high priest, whose office was then become quite a marketable commodity, and in which the Romans were of course making frequent changes. The apostle, however, recalled his words, and apologized for them; but continuing to look round upon the council, and perceiving that one part of them were Pharisees and the other Sadducees, he made an appeal to the former, that he had been one of their sect, and that he was now called to answer for the hope which he had of a resurrection from the dead,—a doctrine wholly denied by the latter. A contention immediately arose between the two parties, and the Sanhedrim became divided. In this state of confusion, the chief captain, fearing Paul might be sacrificed between them, ordered a company of soldiers to go down and take him by force, and bring him into the castle.

In the ensuing night the Lord Jesus appeared in vision to his servant, encouraging him to “be of good cheer,” and telling him, that as he had borne witness of him in Jerusalem, he must now also do the same at

Rome. A conspiracy was formed among forty of the Jews, the next morning to put him to death; "they bound themselves by a curse," that they would neither eat nor drink till that object was accomplished. The stratagem, however, failed; the plot was defeated. Paul's sister's son got intimation of it, and conveyed it to his uncle, who called one of the centurions of the garrison, desiring him to introduce the young man to Lysias, the tribune, he having something to communicate to him. Paul's nephew developed the whole plot to Lysias, who enjoining upon him the utmost secrecy, immediately gave orders for an escort of two hundred soldiers, with the same number of spearmen, and seventy horsemen, to be got ready against nine o'clock at night, and also to provide a horse for Paul to ride upon to Cæsarea, to which place he was accordingly conveyed in safety, with a letter from Lysias to the Roman governor there, explaining the reasons of the whole procedure.

FELIX was at this time governor of Cæsarea; and Lysias, having now transferred the whole affair between Paul and his adversaries to his jurisdiction, he ordered the high priest and some others of the Sanhedrim to appear before him in five days, which they did, accompanied by Tertullus, an advocate or Roman orator, who was to lay Paul's crimes before the governor. When the day arrived, the apostle was brought into court, and the orator, in a pompous speech, interspersed with flattering compliments to Felix, accused him vehemently of being a pestilent fellow, an exciter of seditions among the Jews everywhere, a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes, who had profaned their holy temple, and that they would have judged him according to the Jewish law, had they not been prevented by the conduct of Lysias, who took him out of their hands; to the truth of all which the Jews gave their assent.

By the Roman law both parties were to be heard, before sentence was passed. When, therefore, the governor had beckoned with his hand for Paul to speak, he addressed them in a firm and undaunted manner, denying the accusation which they had thought proper to prefer against him of being an exciter of tumult and sedition, and boldly challenging his enemies to the proof. He admitted, indeed, that after the way which they called "heresy," so worshipped he the God of his fathers, believing all things that were written in the law and in the prophets; and this he did in the confident expectation, that there would be a resurrection from the dead, both of the just and unjust. Felix, who was no doubt tolerably well acquainted with the affairs of the Christians, and the temper of the Jews towards them, put off the decision of the case for the present, promising that when Lysias came down to Cæsarea, he would institute a more strict inquiry into the subject; and in the mean time Paul was remanded to the care of a centurion, who was instructed to allow him all the liberty that was consistent with his being a prisoner, and to prohibit none of his Christian brethren from having free access to him.

Felix was at this time living in an adulterous intercourse with Drusilla, a Jewess. One day during the apostle's confinement at Cæsarea, they sent for Paul, wishing to hear him concerning the faith in Christ. The apostle wisely adapted his address to the characters of his audience; he stated the obligation under which all mankind are to obey the law of God; the guilt and wrath incurred by a breach of it; and the final account to be given in the great day of retribution. Nothing could be more strikingly calculated to arouse the consciences of Felix and Drusilla. Tacitus, speaking of the former, says, he exercised the authority committed to him with all manner of cruelty and lewdness;



and as for Drusilla, with whom he cohabited, she was the lawful wife of Azizus, king of the Emesenians. How pertinent, therefore, were the topics of Paul's reasoning, viz. righteousness, temperance, and a future judgment! The portrait which the apostle drew of an iniquitous and licentious governor, so exactly corresponded to the original before him, that Felix could not help shuddering at the representation of his own moral deformity; while conscience, that faithful monitor within, made the application, and told him that the mirror in which Paul shewed him the features of an abandoned heart, did him no injustice. "Felix trembled, and said, Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." He did indeed again send for him, and communed often with him, but it was under the expectation of having his avarice gratified, by obtaining from the prisoner a sum of money to purchase his release. No attempt, however, being made to gratify the governor in that way, he detained him during the remaining years of his government; and even when he was compelled to leave the province, he declined releasing him, from a wish to please the Jews, who earnestly desired to have Paul put to death.

Felix was succeeded in the government by Porcius Festus, who went up to Jerusalem three days after his landing at Cæsarea. And now the Jews interceded with him, to have the apostle sent back to their city for trial, intending to lay wait for him and kill him. Festus, however, was aware of their design, and refused his consent. Paul, he said, should be kept at Cæsarea; and if they had any thing to lay to his charge, they might go down there and accuse him of it. After continuing ten days among them at Jerusalem, Festus returned, and the following day ordered Paul to be brought before him. The Jews were again present, and laid many grievous

complaints against him, which they could not prove; against all which Paul defended himself. But when Festus, with a view to gratify the Jews, proposed that he should go up to Jerusalem and there be judged, the apostle objected to it, telling the governor that if he had done any thing worthy of death, he would not refuse to die; that (as Festus very well knew) he had done the Jews no injury; that they could not prove any of the things which they alleged against him, consequently that he ought not to be delivered into their hands; and he further added, that he stood at Cæsar's judgment seat, where he ought to be judged, and to Cæsar he made his appeal; for it was one of the privileges of the freemen of Rome, that, if they apprehended justice would not be done them, they could, before sentence was passed, appeal to the emperor, and, having made that appeal, they were then reserved to be judged by the emperor himself. After conferring some time with his council what was best to be done, Festus yielded to Paul's request, and informed him he should be sent to Rome.

Previous, however, to Paul's departure from Cæsarea, king Agrippa, accompanied by his sister Bernice, came there to pay their respects to Festus. The latter, when they had been with him some days, mentioned Paul's case to the king, and what had already taken place in regard to it. Agrippa expressed a wish to see him; and on the following day, when the king, his sister, and all the tribunes and principal men of the city, were entered into court, the apostle was brought before them. Festus, in a short address, stated to Agrippa and all that were present, what already had been done in the affair, and how the Jews had failed to make good their charges against Paul—that he had once more brought him into court, that the king himself might have an opportunity of examining him previous to his being sent to Rome.

Agrippa then addressed Paul, and told him he was permitted to speak for himself; upon which the apostle stretched forth his hand, and declared how happy he thought himself in being permitted to answer the accusations of the Jews, before one who was so expert in the Jewish religion and laws, as the king was. He then went over the particulars of his birth, education, and manner of life to the time of his conversion; the remarkable circumstances of which he laid before the monarch in the most striking manner, declaring how Jesus had appeared to him, and remonstrated with him upon his conduct in persecuting his disciples as he had done, and finally that he had given him a commission to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He avowed, in the most explicit manner, the effect which this heavenly vision had had upon him—that he did not attempt to resist it, but had shewed to the Jews at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all Judea, the necessity that there was for their repentance and turning to God. These were the things for which the Jews sought to kill him; but “having obtained help from God, he continued unto this day, saying none other things than what Moses and the prophets did say should come; that the Messiah should suffer, and should be the first to rise from the dead, and to shew light to the people and to the Gentiles.”

This noble defence seems to have completely arrested the attention of both Festus and Agrippa. The former could endure it no longer, but cried out, “Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.” The apostle, with that dignity which always becomes the advocate of divine truth, replied, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.” And then addressing himself to the king, he boldly appealed to him for the truth of what he had said concerning his conversion; the facts were notorious; they were not done in a corner. Besides, as to

what he had stated concerning the voices of the prophets, he knew that Agrippa acknowledged their divine authority, and was competent to judge how far he was right in quoting them. This appeal forced from Agrippa an acknowledgment, that Paul's address had "almost persuaded him to be a Christian." The apostle replied in the most benevolent and prophetic manner, "I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

It being now determined to send Paul to Rome, he was committed to the custody of a centurion, named Julius, with whom he embarked in a vessel that was on a trading voyage to several parts of the Lesser Asia. Aristarchus, and some other of his friends, went with him; and particularly Luke the evangelist. On the following day they touched at Sidon, where the centurion gave him liberty to refresh himself and visit his friends. At the next port, which was Myra in Lycia, a vessel offering which was bound direct for Italy, they went on board her. In the beginning of their passage they were retarded by contrary winds. At length they reached the island of Crete, now called Candia, and having put into a port called "the Fair Havens," Paul wished to persuade them to continue there for the present, intimating, that as the winter was now advancing, they would be subject to many inconveniences and dangers, if they ventured to proceed any farther. His remonstrance, however, was over-ruled, the centurion preferring the opinion of the master of the ship to that of Paul. It was also thought best, if possible, to reach another haven at the west end of the island, which was considered more commodious and safe than the place Paul proposed; and a favourable wind springing up from the south, determined their resolution.



Their hopes, however, were soon blasted; for immediately after sailing, they were overtaken by a sudden and violent storm. The name given it by the historian, *Euroclydon*, expresses its direction to have been from the east, and also its energy upon the waves. The tempest irresistibly overpowered the mariners, and rendered their skill impracticable and vain. They were compelled to abandon the ship to the direction of the wind, and were hurried away they knew not whither. Considering themselves to be in the utmost jeopardy, they had recourse to various expedients for securing the ship, at one time by undergirding it with ropes, and at another by throwing a considerable part of the cargo into the sea. In this perilous situation, expecting every hour to be either swallowed up by the waves, or dashed to pieces against unknown rocks or shores, they continued fourteen days. When nearly exhausted with hardship, anxiety, and hunger—the seamen having seen neither sun nor stars for many days—and when all hope of safety had forsaken them, Paul stood forth in the midst, and exhorted them to be of good courage, and take their food; for that God, to whom he belonged, and whom he served, had given him assurance, by an angel, not only of his own safety, but that the lives of all on board should for his sake be preserved. Paul's words were verified; the ship indeed was wrecked, but the whole crew, consisting of two hundred and seventy-six persons, were ultimately brought safe to land.

The island on which they were cast is called, by Luke, *Melita*, and many have contended that it is the present *Malta*; but the latter island is not in the *Adriatic* sea, and it has been convincingly shewn,\* that it was an island belonging to *Dalmatia*, formerly called *Melitè*,

\* See Bryant's *Observations on Ancient History*, and *Pliny's Nat. History*, b. 3. ch. 26.

but now Mleet, by the Sclavonians, and is subject to Ragusa. Here the inhabitants, though called Barbarians, received and accommodated them with great humanity, and manifested a tenderness not always found among those who bear the Christian name. They brought them under cover, and kindled fires to warm and dry them. As Paul was assisting in supplying the fire with fuel, a viper came out of the heat and fastened on his hand. The inhabitants of the island who were spectators, no sooner saw the venomous animal suspended from his hand than they said among themselves, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped shipwreck, vengeance suffereth not to live." Under this conviction, they confidently expected to see him fall down dead; but when they saw the apostle shake the viper into the fire, and found that he had not received the least injury from its bite, they changed their opinion of him, and said that he was a god.

The apostle and his friends were for three days courteously entertained by Publius, the governor of the island; and during his stay there, he wrought many miracles upon persons that were sick and diseased, among whom was the father of Publius, who at that time lay ill of a fever and bloody flux. These kind offices procured them many favours from the inhabitants; and when, after a residence among them of three months, they were about to depart, they liberally supplied them with every necessary accommodation for their journey.

Sailing from thence in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered at the island, they proceeded to Syracuse in Sicily, where they tarried three days, and soon after arrived at Regium, and from thence, in two days at Puteoli near Naples, where they disembarked, and continued a week, in compliance with the wishes of the

Christian brethren whom they found there. From Puteoli to Rome their journey was about a hundred miles by land.

Several of the disciples at Rome, hearing of Paul's approach, proceeded to meet him at Appii-forum, and the Three Taverns; the former place being about fifty, and the latter thirty miles from the city. The sight of these Christian brethren inspired the apostle with new life and vigour, for it is said, "When he saw them, he thanked God and took courage." And thus in the month of February, of the sixteenth year of the Christian era, and seventh of the reign of the emperor Nero, the apostle arrived at

ROME, the imperial city, and metropolis of the whole world, situated in Italy, on the banks of the Tiber, at the distance of about 16 miles from the sea. The foundations of this celebrated city were laid by Romulus, 753 years before the birth of Christ, at which time it consisted of only a small castle on the summit of Mount Palatine. But it had risen, by gradual and almost imperceptible degrees, to the proud eminence of being the first city in the world, in point of extent, population, and splendour. The populousness of that great capital, says Gibbon, cannot perhaps be exactly ascertained; but the most modest calculation will not surely reduce it lower than a million of inhabitants.\* It was built upon seven hills,† and is said to have been twenty miles in circumference. There were in it no less than

\* Decline and Fall, vol. 2. ch. 15.

† Hence it was called *Urbis septicolis*, and a festival was celebrated in December, called *Septimontium festus*, to commemorate the addition of the seventh hill. The names were Mons Palatinus, Capitolinus, Aventinus, Quirinalis, Cœlius, Viminalis, and Exquelinus. There is a very striking allusion to this local circumstance, Rev. xvii. 9. and the reader may see the subject ably illustrated in Hurd's Introductory Sermons, vol. 2. Sermon 11.

four hundred and twenty temples, crowded with statues; the priests were numerous, and each divinity had a separate college of sacerdotal servants. Previous to the establishment of Christianity in the empire, the worship and sacrifices of the Romans were uncommonly superstitious. The will of the gods was consulted upon every occasion; and no general marched to an expedition, without the previous assurance from the augurs that the omens were propitious. Their wars were declared in the most awful and solemn manner, and prayers were always offered in the temples for the prosperity of Rome, when a defeat had been sustained or a victory won. They raised altars, not only to the gods who, as they supposed, presided over their city, but also to the deities of conquered nations, as well as to the different passions and virtues.

The gospel had found its way to this imperial city long before it was visited by Paul, who had himself written his epistle to the church there several years prior to his being brought thither as a prisoner. It seems very probable that the knowledge of Christ was conveyed to Rome soon after the day of Pentecost; for, it is expressly mentioned, that among the multitude who were witnesses of the miraculous gift of tongues, there were "strangers from Rome, both Jews and proselytes." \* Such of these as were converted to the Christian faith, would, on their return home, 'carry with them the glad tidings of salvation, and communicate it to others. When Paul wrote his epistle to that church, it must have been numerous, for he acknowledges that "their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." † He mentions a considerable number of them by name, in his last chapter, though he had never been among them; and they must have made great progress in their Christian profession, for he declares that "he was persuaded

\* Acts ii. 10.

† Rom. i. 8.



of them that they were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.”\* The apostle had had “a great desire for many years”† to visit that church, and had been long arranging his plans to accomplish his wish;‡ but his purpose was now effected in a manner altogether different from what he had been expecting.

During the whole voyage, it is evident that Paul had been treated by Julius, the Roman officer, to whose custody he was committed, with great humanity and kindness. At Sidon he allowed him to go on shore to visit his Christian friends. And when they were shipwrecked on the island of Melité, he kept the soldiers from killing the prisoners, that he might save Paul. When Paul's friends at Puteoli wished him to remain with them a week, probably that they might enjoy his company on the Sabbath, he kindly granted their request. Julius had been favoured with many opportunities of knowing the character of his prisoner; he no doubt knew the favourable opinion which was entertained of his case by Festus and Agrippa, and all the tribunes at Cæsarea; but the things that had occurred during the voyage must also have tended greatly to increase his respect for him; and, it is highly probable, that to the esteem which Julius had for him, the apostle was indebted for the indulgence which was shewn him immediately on his arrival at Rome. For he was not shut up in a common jail with the other prisoners, but, from the very first, was permitted to dwell in his own hired house, attended by a soldier who guarded him by means of a long chain fastened to his right wrist and the soldier's left arm. In this manner Herod Agrippa was chained to a soldier when he was thrown into prison by Tiberius. §

\* Rom. xv. 14.

† Ib. ver. 23.

‡ Rom. i. 11—13.

§ Josephus' Antiq. b. 18. ch. 6. § 6, 7.

On the fourth day after his arrival, Paul called the chief of the Jews together, and explained to them the circumstances of his case ; the treatment he had received in his own country ; how he had been delivered at Jerusalem a prisoner into the hands of the Romans, who after investigating his affair, would have liberated him, had not the clamour of the Jews prevented it ; and, in short, that it was “ for the hope of Israel ” he was bound with the chain which they then saw. It seems Paul’s accusers had not yet arrived from Judea. The Jews whom he had called together, therefore, confessed that they had not received any letters from that quarter, nor any information concerning him through any other medium ; they were desirous, nevertheless, of knowing his opinion of the Christian sect, which was every where spoken against. A day was therefore appointed, on which many came to his lodgings, to whom, from morning till evening, he narrated fully the history of Jesus, testifying concerning the nature of the kingdom of God, and persuading them both from the law of Moses and from the writings of the prophets. The result was, that some believed the things that were spoken, and others believed not. Thus the apostle having discharged his duty in first making known the glad tidings of salvation to his own brethren according to the flesh, took his leave of them, and thenceforward associated with the Gentiles, who had been previously formed into a church in this city, and to whom he had already addressed his important and invaluable epistle. “ And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, unmolested by any one.” And with this information the inspired historian closes his narrative of the great apostle of the Gentiles.

During the two years that Paul was detained, on this occasion, a prisoner at Rome, he wrote several of those epistles to the churches which now enrich the scriptures, and constitute so important a part of divine revelation. Amongst these are enumerated, that to the Ephesians—to the Philippians—to the Colossians—and the short letter to Philemon; and, it is thought, that immediately on his release he wrote the epistle to the Hebrews. From these letters we may collect, that during his imprisonment at Rome, he was attended by many of the disciples and friends, who either accompanied him from Judea, or followed him to Italy. Of this number was Tychicus, by whom he sent his epistle to the Colossians, ch. iv. 7, and Onesimus, ver. 9, and Mark, ver. 10, and also Jesus, who was called Justus, all of the circumcision, ver. 11, except Onesimus. Demas too was with him, ver. 14. and Timothy, Phil. i. 1.; and Aristarchus, who was imprisoned for his zeal in preaching the gospel, Col. iv. 10.; and Luke, the beloved physician and evangelist, ver. 14. He also enumerates Epaphras, who seems to have been one of the pastors of the Colossian church, ver. 12.; and Epaphroditus, a member of the church at Philippi, Phil. ii. 25. All these christian brethren, residents of very remote countries, appear to have been with the apostle during his first confinement at Rome.

Of the circumstances attending his trial and release, we have no authentic particulars; but that he was liberated after a period of two years, seems deducible from the words with which the sacred historian closes the book of the Acts of the Apostles. Nor have we any certain information concerning his travels and preaching from this time till his death. Intimations, indeed, are given in the epistles which he wrote from Rome, of his purposes, from which some writers have undertaken to sketch the transactions of the latter period of his life,

and there is at least a probability that it was to the following effect.

After being released, in the spring of the year 62, he embarked with Titus, and probably with Timothy also, at some of the ports of Italy, and touched at the island of Crete, where he preached in many cities, and collected the disciples into societies; but finding it requisite to quit Crete, he left Titus there, to set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city.\* From thence he proceeded to Judea, to fulfil the promise which he had made, in his epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xiii. 23, of visiting the church at Jerusalem, and the other churches in that country. After spending some time among them, accompanied by Timothy, he left Judea to visit the churches of the Lesser Asia, taking Antioch in his way, and travelling through Cilicia into Galatia, from whence he went to Colosse, where he had desired Philemon to provide him a lodging, † as he had intended to spend some time in that city.

While at Colosse he wrote his epistle to Titus in Crete, and from thence proceeded to Ephesus, where he left Timothy to direct the affairs of that numerous church. ‡ From Ephesus Paul went into Macedonia, calling at Troas in his way, where, lodging with Carpus, he left behind him the cloak (which some suppose his father had received as a badge of his Roman citizenship), and likewise some parchments (probably the autographs or original copies of his epistles to the churches). These he afterwards requested Timothy to bring with him, when he came to visit him at Rome, during his second imprisonment. § In Macedonia he visited the church at Philippi, agreeably to the intimation he had given them in his letter, || and from thence proceeded to Epirus,

\* Titus i. 5.

† Philemon, ver. 22.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 3.

§ 2 Tim. iv. 13.

|| Phil. i. 25, 26.



where he spent the winter at the city of Nicopolis,\* and where he had desired Titus to come from Crete and give him the meeting. Here also, or at Philippi, he wrote his first epistle to Timothy, instructing him how to conduct himself in the house of God, fearing it would not be in his power to return to Ephesus at the time he proposed.† Accordingly, Titus having brought him such a report of the state of the churches in Crete, as made it necessary for the apostle to visit them, he set out early in the spring from Nicopolis for that island, accompanied by Titus, Trophimus, and Erastus, and, taking Corinth in his way, Erastus, who was a native of that city, chose to abide there. When they arrived at Crete, Trophimus fell sick, and was left in Miletum, a city of that island.‡

But while Paul was thus employed in conveying the glad tidings of mercy to guilty men, or confirming the churches in the truths they had already learned, a dreadful storm was gathering at Rome, which burst upon the church there with tenfold fury. Nero, who had swayed the imperial sceptre about ten years, and who had arrived at such a pitch of wickedness as to prepare the minds of his subjects for the belief of any act of tyranny, cruelty, or vileness which was reported of him, is said to have set fire to the city of Rome, on the 10th of July, A. D. 64, in consequence of which a great part of it was laid in ashes. Mischief and the misery of others were his delight; and he is said to have expressed great pleasure at the spectacle, indulging himself in singing the burning of Troy while his own city was in flames. He, however, very soon became the suspected incendiary, and consequently the object of popular hatred. To clear himself from the odious charge, he endeavoured to fix the crime on the Christians; and, having thus falsely and tyranni-

\* Titus iii. 12.

† 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 20.

cally imputed the guilt to them, he put them to death by various methods of exquisite cruelty. The account which is given us by Tacitus, a heathen historian, is too remarkable to be omitted. Speaking of Nero, and the conflagration of Rome, he thus proceeds. "To divert suspicion from himself, he substituted fictitious criminals, and with that view inflicted the most exquisite tortures on those men, who, under the vulgar appellation of Christians, were already branded with deserved infamy. The confessions of those who were seized, discovered *a great multitude*\* of their accomplices, and they were all convicted, not so much for the crime of setting fire to the city, as for their hatred of human kind. They died in torments; and these were embittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses, others sewed up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs,—others again were smeared over with combustible materials, and used as torches to illumine the darkness of the night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the melancholy spectacle, which was accompanied by a horse race, and honoured with the presence of the emperor, who mingled with the populace in the dress and attitude of a charioteer. The guilt of the Christians deserved indeed the most exemplary punishment; but the public abhorrence was changed into commiseration, from the opinion that these unhappy wretches were sacrificed, not so much to the rigour of justice, as to the cruelty of the jealous tyrant."†

\* "*Ingens multitudo*," is the expression of Tacitus, the literal translation of which is, "a very great multitude." It is impossible for us, in the present day, to ascertain the exact import of this phrase: Gibbon, who evinces no solicitude to overrate the number of Christians, has ingeniously compared these words of Tacitus with the import of the same words as used by Livy on another occasion; a careful inquiry into the meaning of which had furnished the result to be seven thousand. *Decline and Fall*, vol. 2. ch. 15.

† Tacit. *Annal.* b. 15. c. 44.

Intelligence of these cruelties being brought to Paul while at Crete, and, thinking his presence might be useful in comforting the minds of his brethren, he set out for Italy, and probably arrived at Rome in the beginning of the year 65, where he was apprehended, as being a chief man among this obnoxious sect. He appears to have been twice brought before the emperor or his prefect, whence it is presumed that he had been confined at least a year before he was condemned.

We may easily conceive how perilous it must have been for any of Paul's friends to avow an open attachment to him, under existing circumstances; and indeed it appears from the second epistle to Timothy, which he wrote while waiting his execution, that most of them fled the city. Of the conduct of Onesiphorus, however, he makes the most honourable mention. (2 Tim. i. 16—18.) During the apostle's stay at Ephesus, he had been extremely kind to him. But having occasion to visit Rome, while Paul was in confinement, Onesiphorus "sought him out very diligently and found him." He was not ashamed of the apostle because he was immured in a jail and loaded with a chain; on the contrary, he bestowed upon him the most kind and tender assiduities, and cheerfully ministered to his temporal necessities. Paul could not reflect upon this affectionate behaviour of his friend, without having all the sensibilities of his soul excited; and he gave vent to it, by offering up his prayer to God that he would "grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus in the great day of account;" repeating his supplication, "the Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." But Onesiphorus had now returned to Ephesus: Luke alone was with him; and even *he* appears to have been so intimidated, that, at the apostle's first examination, he was afraid to stand by him. In this state of things, "about to be

offered up, and viewing the hour of his departure at hand," he urged Timothy to hasten to him to receive his last instructions, and assist him in the ministry during the short time he had to live. And thus, according to the most credible records, he was condemned and put to death in the twelfth year of the reign of Nero, answering to the sixty-sixth of the Christian æra. Two years after that, Nero put an end to his own life, and to this terrible persecution, which had raged during a period of four years, and swept off a prodigious number of the disciples of Christ.

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## SECTION VI.

### THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

*From the period of the death of Paul, A. D. 66, to the close of the first century.*

IT has been pertinently remarked by one of the ancients, that the writer of the Acts of the Apostles *leaves the reader thirsting for more*. But concise as his narrative is, it ought to be regarded by us as an invaluable part of the sacred writings; and for this reason among others, because it shews us in what sense the apostles understood the commission which their Lord had given them, previous to his ascension into heaven. From their discourses, recorded in that book, we learn what were the doctrines they preached; what the laws and institutions they enforced upon the disciples; and the manner in which they set up his kingdom in the world. In attempting a sketch of this interesting subject, we have hitherto prosecuted our journey under the light of divine



revelation ; but, henceforward, we must be content to explore our way under more uncertain guides.

A mind accustomed to reflection, naturally inquires, how were the other apostles of Christ occupied during the period that Paul was engaged in conveying the glad tidings of salvation throughout the Gentile countries. But the volume of revelation does not give such ample information upon this subject as we might wish. It may however, be remarked, that, as Jerusalem was the place from whence, according to ancient prophecy, “the word of the Lord was to go forth, and the law to proceed out of Zion,” so we may see special reasons why the Lord appointed them their stations for a season in that church. It seems evident, that at the first they not only discharged the apostolic office, in giving forth the new testament revelation of doctrine, and delivering to the churches the ordinances of public worship, but they also acted as bishops, elders, pastors, or ministers of the word, and also as deacons, having the care of the poor. In process of time, however, we find other persons appointed to fulfil the two last mentioned offices,\* and that, even while some of the apostles still remained with the church at Jerusalem. We may also infer, that though the twelve were stationed there by the head of the church, they, nevertheless, made occasional excursions into different parts of Judea and Samaria, to propagate the knowledge of Christ, and gather his disciples into churches, as we see Peter doing (Acts ix. 32.); and that when it became no longer necessary for them to remain with that church, they proceeded to carry into effect the commission which the Lord Jesus had given them, to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”†

\* Compare Acts vi. 5. with xi. 30. and xv. 6, 22, 23.

† Mark xvi. 15.

It appears from credible records, that the gospel was preached in Idumea, Syria, and Mesopotamia, by Jude; in Egypt, Mamorica, Mauritania, and other parts of Africa, by Mark, Simeon, and Jude; in Ethiopia by the Eunuch and Matthias; in Pontus, Galatia, and the neighbouring parts of Asia, by Peter; in the territories of the seven Asiatic churches by John; in Parthia by Matthew; in Scythia by Philip and Andrew; in the northern and western parts of Asia by Bartholomew; in Persia by Simeon and Jude; in Media, Carmania, &c. by Thomas; from Jerusalem and round about Illyricum by Paul, who also published it in Italy, and probably in Spain, Gaul, and Britain.\*

James, the brother of the apostle John, and son of Zebedee, as we have formerly noticed, had been put to death by Herod; and, if we may credit Jerome, Peter also was put to death in the twelfth year of the reign of Nero, about the same time that Paul finished his course and was taken to receive the crown of righteousness which his divine master had promised to bestow upon him. By this time, also, James, the Lord's brother, had sealed his testimony with his blood. The following account of his death is given us by Josephus the Jewish historian. "Ananus, who had seized the office of high priest, was a man bold in his temper, and very insolent. He was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who surpass all the other Jews in their rigid manner of judging offenders; and he thought he now had a proper opportunity of exercising his authority. Festus was dead, and Albinus, who had been sent into Judea to succeed him, was upon his journey thither. So he assembled the Sanhedrim of judges, and brought before him the brother of Jesus

\* Young's History of Idolatrous Corruptions in Religion, vol. ii. p. 216—240. See also a Sermon by Dr. Geo. Campbell, entitled "The Success of the Gospel a Proof of its Truth."

who was called Christ, whose name was *James*, and some others of his companions, and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, *he delivered them to be stoned.*" \* Eusebius, the ecclesiastical historian, gives a somewhat different account of the death of James, and thinks he was killed, not in consequence of a judicial trial, but in a popular tumult, the occasion of which he thus explains. "When Paul had appealed unto Cæsar, and had been sent to Rome by Festus, the Jews who had aimed at his death, turned their rage against James, the Lord's brother, who had been appointed by the apostles, bishop of Jerusalem." † These different accounts are certainly not irreconcilable, and the fact itself is unquestionable, that he was put to death by the Jews, about the year 64, and only a short time after the writing of that excellent epistle which forms a part of the sacred canon.

The divine long-suffering was, however, now fast drawing towards a close with the devoted city and people of Jerusalem. The measure of their iniquities was at length filled up. To all their former crimes they had now added these, that "they had both killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted his servants the apostles" even unto death; and the wrath of Heaven was about to come upon them to the uttermost. Christ himself, during his personal ministry, had foretold their doom, and bewailed it in the most pathetic strains. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest those that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not: behold your house is left unto you desolate." ‡ For "the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every

\* Antiq. b. 20, ch. 9. † Eccles. Hist. b. 2, ch. 25. ‡ Luke xxiii. 34.

side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another.” \* As the accomplishment of these predictions ended in the utter abolition of the Jewish church and state, a constitution which was originally founded in divine appointment, and had existed during a period of fifteen hundred years ; and, as it was unquestionably the most awful revolution in all the religious dispensations of God, and which, moreover, in various ways, contributed greatly to the success of the gospel, it seems to merit a more detailed account than is generally to be found of it in the histories of the Christian church.

NERO, the Roman emperor, whose death has been already adverted to, left the empire in a state of extreme confusion, and Judea partook of it in a remarkable degree. To him succeeded Galba, who reigned from June the 9th, 68, to January 15th, 69, when he was followed by Otho, who scarcely swayed the imperial sceptre three months. Then came Vitellius, who reigned no longer than to December 21st of the same year—there having been, if we include Nero who preceded, and Vespasian who followed, no less than five different emperors in the short space of eighteen months ; during which the empire was a scene of confusion, desolation, and misery. It has been remarked that Christianity at first derived some advantages from the abandoned characters of the Roman emperors, who at this time swayed the sceptre. They had other crimes and other mischiefs in view, and this left them little leisure to harass a sect so contemptible, when compared with Paganism, as was that of the Christians. Accordingly, from the death of Christ to that of Vespasian, for about the space of thirty-seven

\* Luke xix. 43.



years, the Romans paid little regard to the progress of the gospel. They were ruled by weak, frantic, or vicious emperors; the magistrates and senators, and every worthy man of any note, stood in continual fear for their own lives. Nero indeed had destroyed many of the Christians at Rome; but it was for a supposed crime, of which all the world knew them to be innocent; so that this cruel treatment raised compassion, and rather did service than harm to the Christian cause, and the persecution was soon over.

After the death of king Herod Agrippa, the particulars of which the reader will find recorded Acts xii. Judea again became a province of the Roman empire, and CUSPIUS FADUS was sent to be its governor. Upon his arrival he found the country infested with banditti, which were grown both numerous and powerful, whom he was compelled to suppress, and also to quell an insurrection which the Jews had raised against the inhabitants of Philadelphia, formerly the city of Rabbah, the capital of the Ammonites. During the government of Fadus, there arose a notable impostor, named Theudas, who drew great numbers of the deluded Jews after him, inviting them to follow him beyond Jordan, and promising them that he would divide the waters of that river, as Joshua had done by his single word. Fadus sent some military troops against him and his followers, who killed some and took others prisoners, and among the latter Theudas himself, whom he caused to be beheaded, and his head brought to Jerusalem.\* Fadus was soon afterwards succeeded by TIBERIUS ALEXANDER, an apostate Jew, who very shortly gave way to make room for

VENTIDIUS CUMANUS, during whose government of Judea, those troubles began which ended in the ruin of

\* Joseph. Antiq. b. 20. ch. 1. and 5.

the Jewish nation. The great concourse of people which their festival brought to Jerusalem, obliged the Romans at such times to keep a guard before the gate of the temple to prevent tumults. It was now the pass-over, when one of the Roman soldiers upon duty, had the impudence, probably intending an insult to the Jews, by shewing that he was not of the circumcision, to expose his nakedness. This indignity roused the resentment of the Jews to such a height, that they went and complained of it to Cumanus, and very insultingly told him that the affront was offered by his order, not merely to the nation, but to their God. Cumanus at first tried to appease them by fair means, but finding them grow more tumultuous, he ordered all his troops to the spot, which so alarmed them that they fled in the greatest consternation, insomuch that ten thousand (Eusebius and Jerome say thirty thousand) were stifled to death in their flight, by running over one another in the confined avenues that led to and from the temple.\*

Cumanus was soon afterwards succeeded in the government of Judea by CLAUDIUS FELIX, under whom the Jewish affairs proceeded in a progressive course of deterioration. The country swarmed with robbers and insurgents, and Jerusalem itself became the prey of false prophets and pretended workers of miracles, who were continually blowing the embers of discontent and sedition. Add to which, that numbers of *Sicarii* or assassins crowded into all the cities and towns of the country, committing the most horrible murders, under the pretext of zeal for their religion and liberties. Felix did not content himself with merely inflicting punishment upon those who violated the public peace, but he extended it to almost all others indiscriminately, whom

\* Joseph. Antiq. b. 20. ch. 5.

his avarice or resentment marked out for destruction. His cruel behaviour induced a very old priest, named Jonathan, who had been instrumental in procuring him the office, to complain of his ill conduct; which Felix at length becoming unable to bear, procured a person in whom Jonathan reposed great confidence, to assassinate the latter, and it was accordingly done. This murder going unpunished, because the person who should have avenged it was the instigator to it, proved the occasion of an almost infinite number of others, which were committed every where, the temple not excepted; insomuch that the Jewish chiefs, and even the pontiffs, made no hesitation of hiring the assassins above mentioned to rid them of all such persons as were obnoxious to them.\*

Felix was succeeded in the government by FESTUS, † who, on coming into the province, found the very priesthood engaged in a civil war among themselves, occasioned by the frequent depositions of the pontiffs (or high priests) and their continuing to insist upon being allowed a greater portion of the tythes than the inferior priests could afford them. Agrippa had the preceding year deposed Ananias, and put Ishmael in his room. There were still several other discarded pontiffs alive, all of whom claimed the same share in the tythes which they had enjoyed while in office; the yielding of which must of course impoverish the inferior priests, who therefore resisted the demand. Their rancour at length arose to such a height, that each party was accustomed to walk the streets accompanied by a troop of the *Sicarii*, and upon every rencontre they fell foul on each other, killing all that opposed them, and filling both city and country, and even the very temple itself, oftentimes with blood.

\* Joseph. Antiq. b. 2. ch. 13.

† Acts xiv. 27.

Festus, therefore, had a threefold task upon his hands; he had to suppress the violence of the priesthood against each other—that of the seditious laity against the Romans, and such as contentedly submitted to their government—and that of the banditti abroad, who infested the whole country, and robbed, plundered, and massacred, every where without mercy.\* These concerns occupied the greater part of his time during his short government.

Festus dying soon after Paul was brought before him,† Nero nominated as his successor ALBINUS, of whom we had lately occasion to speak, the high-priesthood having in the mean time been, by Agrippa, transferred to Ananus. Of this governor it is related by historians, that he was such a cruel and rapacious monster, that Felix and Festus, with all their faults, were angels when compared with him. His first care, however, was to suppress the Sicarii, robbers, and banditti, which were now grown more numerous and daring than ever. He punished with the utmost severity as many as came into his hands; yet the rest only became thereby more bold and impudent. Albinus, after a two years tenure of office, was recalled by Nero, and succeeded by

GESSIUS FLORUS, the last and worst governor that Judea ever had. Josephus seems at a loss for language sufficiently strong in which to paint him correctly, or a monster black enough with which to compare him. His rapines, and cruelties, and acts of oppression; his compromising with the banditti for large sums of money; and, in short, his whole behaviour, was so openly flagitious, that the Jews were disposed to regard him rather as a bloody executioner sent to torture, than as a magistrate to govern them. His design seemed to be that of goading them to an open rebellion, either that he might

\* Joseph. Antiq. b. 20. ch. 8.

† Acts xxvi.



have the brutal satisfaction of seeing them destroy each other, or to prevent them from inquiring into his own oppressions and atrocities. And, indeed, he but too well succeeded in this; for by his means a war was kindled, which only ended with the total ruin of the Jewish nation.\* My confined limits render it inexpedient to go into any ample detail of this dreadful catastrophe, and I shall therefore restrict myself to a few of the leading particulars, referring such of my readers, as desire a more full account of the matter, to the volumes of Josephus.

While Felix was governor of Judea, a dispute arose between the Jews and the Syrians concerning the city of Cæsarea—the former maintaining that it belonged to them, because it had been built chiefly by Herod; the latter insisting that it had always been esteemed a *Greek city*, inasmuch as their monarch had erected temples and statues in it. From words they proceeded to blows, and took up arms against each other. Felix, for the moment, put an end to the contest, by sending some of the chief men of each nation to Rome to plead their cause before the emperor. The latter decided in favour of the Syrians; but the decision was no sooner announced in Judea, than it became the signal for a general revolt—the Jews every where taking up arms; and thus began the fatal war, in the second year of the government of Florus, in the twelfth of Nero's reign, and in the sixty-ninth year of Christ. Agrippa, who was at Jerusalem at the beginning of the revolt, used every exertion to moderate their rage; they pelted him with stones, and compelled him to leave the city, which was instantly in a flame. Florus beheld all this with inhuman pleasure, and without lifting his finger to quell the tumult. The

\* Joseph. Antiq. b. 20. ch. 11.

evil spread throughout all Judea, and nothing was to be heard of but robberies, murders, and every species of cruelty—cities and villages filled with the dead of all ages and of each sex, and of every quality down to the tender infant. The Jews, who were almost every where the sufferers, on their part spared neither Syrians nor Romans, but retaliated their cruelties wherever they got the better of them, in consequence of which many of their peaceful brethren were murdered in their places of abode. The Cæsareans fell suddenly on those of their city, and massacred twenty thousand of them; two thousand were murdered at Ptolemais; and fifty thousand at the city of Alexandria in Egypt. At Jerusalem, Florus one day caused his troops to go and plunder the market, and to kill all they met; and they accordingly murdered three thousand five hundred persons, men, women, and children. This, however, was far from satiating the monster—the streets of the city continued day after day to be deluged with human blood. Bernice, the sister of Agrippa, happening to be detained at Jerusalem during this time, to perform the vow of the Nazarene, which required thirty days for its accomplishment, used every entreaty to soften the brutish prætor, even at the risk of her own life. And when repulsed one day, she repeated her exertions on the next, going barefoot, and throwing herself at the footstool of his tribunal, in the most submissive terms beseeching him to put a stop to the shedding of so much blood. He disdained to shew her the least token of common respect, and she ran the risk of being torn to pieces before she could reach her own home. Florus wrote to Cestius, the governor of Syria, casting all the blame of these horrible cruelties upon the Jews.\*

The revolt still spreading wider, the Jews at length

\* Joseph. Wars of the Jews, b. 2. ch. 14, 15.

carried their conquests beyond Jordan, where they took the fortress of Cyprus, razed it to the ground, and put all the Romans to the sword. Cestius, whom I have just mentioned, and who had hitherto kept himself an idle spectator of these mutual devastations, began to think it high time to exert himself in putting a stop to their further progress. He, therefore, marched into Judea with a powerful army, burned all the towns and villages in his way, massacred all the Jews he could come at, and then encamped before Gibeon about the feast of tabernacles. The Jews at Jerusalem no sooner heard of his approach, than forsaking the solemnities of their religion, and, even though it was on the Sabbath day, they flew to arms, and proceeded to meet him with such fury, that had not the cavalry arrived at the moment to the support of his infantry, he had sustained a signal defeat. He lost five hundred men, while the Jews lost but twenty-two. Here Cestius tried to conciliate the latter by sending two of his principal officers to offer them a pardon and terms of peace. Instead of listening to his proposals they put one of them to death, and wounded the other, who narrowly escaped with his life—an action so base and treacherous, that it was condemned by the more moderate of the Jews themselves. Cestius enraged at this, pursued them almost to Jerusalem, and halting at a village called Scopas, about a mile from the city, waited three days, in the hope that their terror would induce them to relent; but not finding *that* to be the case, he advanced in order of battle on the 30th October, 69, and put them into such consternation, that they abandoned all the outworks and retired into the inner cincture near the temple. Cestius set fire to the former, and began to lay siege to the latter, taking up his head quarters in the royal palace. \*

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 2. ch. 18.

Had the governor vigorously pushed the siege, it is probable he might have succeeded at this time in putting an end to the sedition; but that sinful nation was to be reserved for much sorer evils. Means were found to corrupt his generals, which gave new life to the insurgents. They made a sortie and succeeded in repulsing him, pursued him to his camp at Gibeon, harassing his rear, whilst, having secured the passes, they attacked his army in flank. Hemmed in on all sides, the mountains re-echoed with the hideous cries of his soldiers, and having lost four thousand foot and two hundred horse, favoured by the intervening night, they, on the 8th of November, happily found a pass through the narrow straits of Bethoron and escaped.\*

Intelligence being brought to Nero of the ill success of Cestius, and that the Jews were making the most vigorous preparations to carry on war against the Romans, he gave orders to Vespasian, who had greatly signalized himself, both in Germany and Britain, to march speedily into Judea with a powerful army. In the beginning of the ensuing year, accompanied by his son Titus, at the head of sixty thousand men, all well disciplined, he entered Galilee, and having burnt Gadara, was marching to besiege Jotapata. Josephus, the celebrated Jewish historian, was at that time governor of the province; and being apprized of the intention of Vespasian, he threw himself into Jotapata which, during a period of forty-seven days, he defended with great bravery. It was at length taken by assault, about the beginning of July, and given up to fire and sword; not one Jew escaped to convey the dreadful tidings, but all were either murdered or made prisoners. Of the former, the number was computed at forty thousand, and of the latter only

\* Ibid. b. 2. ch. 19.



twelve hundred, among whom was Josephus the governor\*.<sup>†</sup>

Whilst Vespasian was carrying on the siege of Jotapata, his son Titus was sent against Jaffa in the neighbourhood, which he subdued on the 20th of June. On taking possession of the town, the inhabitants made a desperate resistance in the streets during the space of six hours; but being at last overpowered, all the men were put to the sword, and the women and children taken prisoners. A week after, the Samaritans, who had assembled upon mount Gerizzim, with the intention of defending themselves, having been closely surrounded by a Roman detachment, were reduced to the utmost distress for want of water. Many of them died with thirst, and those who refused to surrender were all put

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 3. ch. 7.

† JOSEPHUS, whose "History of the Wars of the Jews" is too well known to need any description from me, was, by his father, of the race of the priests, and of the first of the twenty-four courses; and by his mother, he was descended from the Asmonæan family, in which the royal power was united with that of the high-priesthood. He was born at Jerusalem, in the first year of Caius Caligula. At sixteen years of age, he began to inquire into the sentiments of the different sects among the Jews,—the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. At twenty-six he went to Rome, to petition the emperor Nero in behalf of several priests of his acquaintance, whom Felix had sent bound to Rome. At Puteoli he became acquainted with Aliturus, a Jewish comedian, who had ingratiated himself with Nero. Through this man he was introduced to Poppæa, the wife of Nero, by whose interest he succeeded in obtaining liberty for his friends, and from whom he also obtained many considerable presents. The following year he returned into Judea, when he saw every thing tending to a revolt under Gessius Florus. In the beginning of the Jewish war, he commanded in Galilee. When Vespasian, who was a general of the Roman army under the reign of Nero, had conquered that country, Josephus was taken at Jotapata. He and forty more Jews had concealed themselves in a subterraneous cavern, where they formed the desperate resolution of killing each other rather than surrender themselves to the Romans. Josephus, having been governor of the place, and therefore entitled to priority in point of rank, it was at first proposed by the rest to yield it to him as an honour, to

to the sword. Joppa, which had been laid waste by Cestius, being again repeopled by a great number of seditious Jews, who infested the adjoining countries, Vespasian sent troops to take it, which they soon achieved. Above four thousand of them endeavoured to escape the massacre, by fleeing to their ships. A sudden tempest drave them back, so that they were all either drowned or put to the sword. Tarichea and Tiberias were next taken—after the reduction of which, all the other cities of Galilee submitted to the Romans, except Gischala, Gamala, and mount Tabor.\*

Gamala was situated upon the lake of Genesareth, opposite to Tarichea, and had stood the siege of Agrippa become the first victim. He, however, contrived to divert their minds from this, by proposing to cast lots for the precedence; and after thirty-nine of them had ballotted and killed one another, he, and the other who survived, agreed not to lay violent hands upon themselves, nor to imbrue their hands in one another's blood, but deliver themselves up to the Romans. Upon this, Josephus surrendered himself up to Nicanor, who conducted him to Vespasian. When brought into the presence of the latter, Josephus told him that he had something to communicate to him which would probably strike him with much surprise, and perhaps not obtain his immediate credit—it was that he, Vespasian, should become emperor of Rome, in less than three years. Aware that the General might think this was merely a stratagem on the part of Josephus to save his life, the latter told him, that he did not ask for his liberty,—he was content to be kept as a close prisoner during the interval; and that, should his prediction not be realized, he was content to be then put to death. Vespasian yielded to his request, although he, at first, placed no credit in what Josephus had said. He, however, kept the latter with him, as a prisoner, while he himself continued in those parts; but when he heard that he had been elected emperor at Rome, he gave him his liberty, and raised him to his confidence and favour. Josephus continued with his son Titus, who took the command of the army after his father Vespasian was gone to Rome. He was present at the siege of Jerusalem, and was a spectator of the awful desolations of the city, temple, and country; and soon after wrote his *History of the Jewish Wars*, and *Jewish Antiquities*. The whole were finished in the 56th year of his age, in the 13th of Domitian, and Anno Christi, 93.

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 3. ch. 7, 9, 10.

near seven months ; but, still holding out, the Romans were obliged to come to his assistance. But of all the places which they had yet been called to subdue, none put the courage and strength of the Romans so severely to the test as Gamala. Having at length succeeded in beating down one of their towers, the army entered in at the breach, and put four thousand of its inhabitants to the sword ; while a much greater number perished by their own hands, precipitating themselves down from the rocks and walls, as well as by other violent methods. In the mean time Placidus, a Roman general, by a dexterous stratagem, succeeded in obtaining possession of mount Tabor.\*

The inhabitants of Gischala, against which Vespasian sent his son Titus, seemed disposed to make a voluntary surrender of themselves, to which Titus, who by this time was satiated with the carnage that had ensued at Gamala, earnestly exhorted them. The voice of the more peaceable citizens, however, was overruled by that of a factious and vile fellow, named John, the son of Levi, who succeeded in getting the mob at his beck, and overawed the whole city. It being the sabbath, this wretched man begged of Titus to forbear hostilities till the morrow, when he would accept of his offer ; but, succeeding in his request, he, in the mean time, fled to Jerusalem, where he was the occasion of much mischief. On the morrow the citizens went out and surrendered themselves, informing Titus of John's flight, supplicating his clemency towards the innocent, and beseeching him that he would only punish the factious. Titus readily yielded to their request, and despatched some of his horse after the fugitives. John himself reached Jerusalem, but the Romans put to death six thousand of his

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 4. ch. 1.

followers upon the road, and brought back three thousand women and children prisoners. The taking and garrisoning of this place completed the conquest of Galilee, and Titus on this rejoined his father at Cæsarea, where they gave their troops a respite before they proceeded to besiege Jerusalem.\*

Here it may be proper to digress a little, and compare with the preceding melancholy detail, the predictions of Jesus Christ concerning this devoted people. He had been foretelling the destruction of the temple, when his disciples came and asked him, "But when shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, let no man deceive you, for many shall come, saying, I am the Christ; and the time draweth near—go ye not after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions be not terrified, for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not yet—for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be great earthquakes in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and great signs shall there be from heaven. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to those that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."†

\* Joseph. Wars. b. 4. ch. 2.    † Luke xxi. Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii.



It may be useful to keep these things in view, while we now proceed to mark the accomplishment of this awful prophecy in the prosecution and final issue of this dreadful siege.

Vespasian discovered no haste to depart from Cæsarea, and commence the siege of Jerusalem, but prolonged his stay, insomuch that his officers began to be amazed at his inactivity, and took the liberty to remind him that he was losing the most favourable opportunity of making himself master of that city and of all Palestine. But that prudent General soon made them sensible that his continuing thus idle at Cæsarea was the surest means of effecting the conquest of which they were speaking, with the least difficulty and risk of his troops. There can be little doubt that he was fully apprized of the shocking state of things *within* the city, which at this time was given up to such intestine broils and massacres that the strength of the Jews was daily exhausting itself, while the Romans were nourishing theirs. In fact the whole nation was at this moment divided into two opposite parties; one of which, foreseeing that the war, if continued, must end in the total ruin of their country, were for putting an end to it by a speedy submission to the Romans; while the other breathed nothing but hostility, confusion, and cruelty; and opposed all peaceable measures with invincible obstinacy. This latter party was by far the most numerous and powerful; besides which, it consisted of men of the vilest and most profligate characters that perhaps the pen of the historian ever recorded. They were proud, ambitious, cruel, rapacious, and addicted to the most horrid crimes. If we may credit Josephus, their own historian, they acted more like infernal beings than men. John of Gischala, formerly mentioned, was then at the head of this party in Jerusalem. Upon one occasion they put to death

twelve thousand persons of noble extraction and in the flower of their age, butchering them in the most horrid manner. In short, their rage and cruelty had grown to such a height, that the whole nation trembled at their very name, while none durst be seen or heard to weep for the murder of their nearest relatives, nor even to give them burial.\*

Thus every thing succeeded to the wish of Vespasian. The party of John of Gischala, having massacred or driven away their opponents, began to turn their murderous weapons against each other. In the mean time the Roman general, having passed his winter at Cæsarea, marched out in the beginning of the spring, and penetrated Idumea, plundering and burning every place through which he passed, except where he thought it necessary to leave a garrison to keep the country in awe.†

A few months previous to this time he had received the news of Nero's death, and of Galba being appointed his successor. Titus, his son, was therefore despatched to Rome to compliment the new emperor, and to know his pleasure about prosecuting the war against the Jews. Taking his journey by sea, and detained by adverse winds, he had reached no further than Achai, when the news arrived that Galba was murdered, after a reign of seven months, and Otho proclaimed in his stead. The latter, in about three months, shared the fate of his predecessor, and was succeeded by Vitellius, whose short reign issued in Vespasian being chosen emperor. Suetonius, describing the state of things at this period, compares Rome to a ship at sea, tossed about by contrary winds, and ready at every moment to sink. And such was its fluctuating state, when the election of Vespasian happily restored tranquillity to the empire. As soon as

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 4. ch. 6.

† Ibid. b. 4. ch. 9.

he had received the news that his election was confirmed at Rome, he left the best of his troops with his son, ordering him to go and besiege Jerusalem and utterly destroy it, while himself returned to the capital of his empire.\*

Titus lost no time in carrying into effect the injunctions of his father; and, accordingly, in the beginning of April, near the time of the feast of the passover, he put his army in motion; and, advancing as close to the city as he thought expedient, went personally, attended only by six hundred horse, to reconnoitre its strength and avenues. It was strongly situated by nature; surrounded by three stout walls, and many stately and strong towers. The first or old wall, which, by reason of its vast thickness, was looked upon as impregnable, had no less than sixty of these towers, lofty, firm, and strong. The second had fourteen, and the third eighty. The former, besides its extraordinary height and thickness, was raised on a high and steep mountain, having beneath it a valley of prodigious depth. The other two were high and strong in proportion. The whole circumference of the city was nearly four English miles.†

Before he commenced a regular siege, Titus despatched Josephus, the Jewish historian, with offers of peace to the inhabitants, but they were indignantly rejected. He was sent a second time with fresh overtures, but with no better success. Titus now resolved to begin the assault in good earnest. In fourteen days a breach was made in the first wall, by means of the battering rams which played against it, at which the Romans entered, and the Jews abandoning this last enclosure, retired behind the next. Titus, in five days more, succeeded in destroying a tower in the second enclosure, which gave his troops admittance into that also; but being

\* Joseph. Wars. b. 4. ch. 9.    † Ibid. b. 4. ch. 11. and b. 5. ch. 2. and 4.

bent on saving the city, he would not suffer any part of the wall or streets to be demolished, which left the breach and lanes so narrow, that when his soldiers were repulsed by the besieged, they experienced great inconvenience, and many of them were killed. The oversight was speedily rectified, and the attack renewed with such vigour, that they resumed their advantage in four days after the first repulse.\*

At this time the internal state of the city was, beyond description, horrible. For besides that faction prevailed against faction, and the streets became deluged with the blood of the people, famine raged in a terrible manner among them, which was soon followed by a pestilence; and as these two dreadful judgments increased, so did the fury of the factions, who by their intestine feuds, had destroyed such quantities of provisions, that they were forced to prey upon the people with unheard of cruelty. They broke into their houses, and, if they found any store of provisions, put them to death for not apprizing them of it; and if nothing was found but bare walls, which was generally the case, they inflicted torture upon them, under the pretext that they had some provisions concealed. "I should undertake an impossible task," says Josephus, "were I to enter into a detail of all the cruelties of these impious wretches; let it suffice to say, that I do not think that since the creation of the world, any city ever suffered such dreadful calamities, or abounded with men so fertile in every species of wickedness."†

Titus was not unapprised of their miserable condition, and was still desirous of sparing them. He granted them four days for reflection, during which he caused his army to be mustered, and provisions to be distributed to them in the sight of the Jews, who flocked upon the

\* Joseph. Wars, ch. 7—9.

† Ibid. b. 5. ch. 19. and b. 6. ch. 1.



walls to see it. He then sent Josephus to expostulate with them, which he did, exhorting them not to run themselves into inevitable ruin, by obstinately persisting to defend a place which could hold out but a very little longer, and which the Romans already looked upon as their own. Josephus has given us a copy of his elaborate and pathetic speech on this occasion, which he tells us drew a flood of tears from his eyes. They requited his kindness by darting their arrows at him, and rejected the merciful overtures of Titus.\*

It is difficult for us in the present day to form any adequate conception of the extremity of wretchedness to which the inhabitants of this devoted city were reduced. While the poor were carried out at the gates, to be buried at the public expence, Titus was informed by a deserter, that at one of the gates where he was stationed, there were carried out one hundred and fifteen thousand, eight hundred and eighty, between the fourteenth of April, when the siege commenced, and the first of July. Another told him that they had carried out at all the gates six hundred thousand, and that then, being unable to carry them all out, they had filled whole houses with them, and shut them up.

I must not disgust the reader by reciting in this place, the miserable resources to which the wretched inhabitants were now reduced, in order to prolong the sad remains of life; but one circumstance is so materially connected with the narrative, that it cannot with any propriety be suppressed. It was in this sad and pinching conjecture that an unhappy mother was reduced to the extremity of feeding upon her own child! This lady, whose name was Miriam, had taken refuge, with many others, in this devoted city, from the breaking out of the war. As the famine increased, her house was repeatedly plundered

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 6. ch 1.

of such provisions as she had been able to procure. She had vainly endeavoured by her entreaties to prevail upon them, or by her execrations to provoke them, to put an end to her miserable existence, but the mercy was too great to be granted her. Frantic at length with fury and despair, she snatched her infant from her bosom, cut its throat, and broiled it; and having satiated her present hunger, concealed the rest. The smell of it soon drew the voracious human tigers to her house; they threatened her with the most excruciating tortures, if she did not discover her provisions to them. Upon which she set before them the relicts of her mangled infant, bidding them eat heartily and not be squeamish, since she, its *once* tender mother, had made no scruple to butcher, dress, and feed upon it. At the sight of this horrid dish, inhuman as they were, they stood aghast, petrified with horror, and departed, leaving the astonished mother in possession of her dismal fare.\*

When the report of this spread through the city, the horror and consternation were as universal as they were inexpressible. They now, for the first time, began to think themselves forsaken of the providence of God, and to expect the most awful effects of his anger. Nor were their fears either unreasonable or ill-founded, for no sooner had Titus heard of this inhuman deed, than he vowed the total extirpation of the city and people. "Since," said he, "they have so often refused my proffers of pardon, and have preferred war to peace, rebellion to obedience, and famine to plenty, I am determined to bury that cursed metropolis under its ruins, that the sun may never more dart his beams on a city, where the mothers feed on the flesh of their children, and the fathers, no less guilty than themselves, choose to drive

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 6. ch. 3.

them to such extremities, rather than lay down their arms." \*

This dreadful event happened about the end of July, by which time the Romans had got possession of the fortress or castle of Antonia, which obliged the Jews to set fire to the stately galleries that joined it to the temple, lest it should facilitate a passage to the besiegers into it. On the seventeenth day of that month, the daily sacrifices, for the first time, ceased, there being no proper person remaining to offer them up. On the 28th of July, Titus set fire to the north gallery of the temple, which enclosed the outer court, from fort Antonia to the valley of Cedron, by means of which he got an easy admittance into it, and forced the besieged into that of the priests. Six days he tried to batter down one of the galleries; yet such was the strength of the wall, that it eluded the force of his battering rams, as well as the art of sapping. His next attempt was to get possession by scaling, but his men were so vigorously repulsed, and with such loss, that he was obliged to desist. The gates were then set on fire, which, being plated with silver, burnt all that night, whilst the metal dropped down in the melting. The flame communicated itself to the porticos and galleries, which the besieged beheld without offering to stop it, contenting themselves with sending out volleys of impotent curses against the Romans. On the ninth of August, Titus gave orders to extinguish the fire, and called a council to determine whether the remainder of the temple should be saved or not. He himself was for the former—but most of his officers for the latter, alleging that it was no longer a temple, but a scene of war and slaughter, and that the Jews would never be at rest, so long as any part of it was standing. But when they

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 6. ch. 3.

found Titus so inflexibly bent on preserving so noble an edifice, against which he told them he could have no quarrel, they all came over to his mind. The next day, August the tenth, was therefore determined upon for a general assault. \*

In the mean time, something on the part of the Jews, having turned up which exasperated the Roman soldiers, or as Josephus thinks, *pushed by the hand of Providence*, one of them of his own accord, took up a blazing fire-brand, and getting on his comrade's shoulders, threw it into one of the apartments that surrounded the sanctuary, through a window, and instantly set the whole north side in a flame up to the third story. Titus, who was gone to rest himself awhile in his pavilion, was awaked at the noise, and ran immediately to give orders for the fire to be extinguished. He called, entreated, threatened, and even caned his men, but all to no purpose. The confusion was so great, and the soldiers so obstinately bent upon destroying all that was left, that he was neither heard or regarded. Those that flocked thither from the camp, instead of obeying his orders, were busy, either in killing the Jews or increasing the flames. Observing that all his endeavours were ineffectual, Titus entered into the sanctuary and most holy place, the remaining grandeur and riches of which, even yet, surpassed all that had been told him of it.† Out of the former he saved the golden candlestick, the table of the shew-bread, the altar of incense, all of pure gold, and the book of the law, wrapped up in a rich golden tissue. Upon his quitting that sacred place, some soldiers set fire to it, obliging those who had staid behind to come out also—in consequence of which they all began to plunder it, carrying off the costly utensils, robes, gold plating of the

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 6. ch. 4.

† Ibid. b. 6. ch. 4.



gates, &c. insomuch that there was not one of them who did not enrich himself by it.

A horrid massacre succeeded to this, in which many thousands perished, some by the flames, others falling from the battlements, and a greater number still by the enemy's sword, which spared neither age, sex, nor quality. Among them were upwards of six thousand persons, who had been seduced thither by a false prophet, who had promised them that they should find a miraculous deliverance on that very day. The Romans carried their fury to the burning of all the treasure-houses of the place, though they were full of the richest furniture, vestments, plate, and other valuable articles, there laid up for security; nor did they cease the dreadful work of devastation, till they had destroyed all except two of the temple gates, and that part of the court that was destined for the women. The city was now abandoned to the fury of the soldiers, who proceeded forthwith to plunder it, setting it on fire in every direction, and murdering all that fell into their hands—whilst the factious party among the Jews, that had hitherto escaped, went and fortified themselves in the royal palace, where they killed eight thousand of their own countrymen that had there taken refuge.\*

Preparations were now making for a vigorous attack on the upper city, and particularly on the royal palace, and this occupied Titus from the 20th of August to the 7th of September, during which time great numbers came and made their submission to him, among whom were forty thousand citizens of the inferior classes, including, in all probability, the Christian church, to whom he gave permission to go and settle where they would. On the 8th of September the city was taken and entered by Titus.

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 7. ch. 1.

JUSTUS LIPSIUS has been at the pains to compute the numbers of Jews that are said by Josephus to have perished from the beginning to the conclusion of the war; and, for the reader's satisfaction, I subjoin them.

JEWS KILLED IN, AND OUT OF JUDEA.

|                                                                                        |                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| At Jerusalem, by order of Florus .....                                                 | 3,630                 |
| At Cæsarea, by the inhabitants .....                                                   | 20,000                |
| At Scythopolis in Syria .....                                                          | 30,000                |
| At Ascalon, by the inhabitants .....                                                   | 2,500                 |
| At Ptolemais .....                                                                     | 2,000                 |
| At Alexandria in Egypt, under Tiberius Alexander .....                                 | 50,000                |
| At Damascus .....                                                                      | 10,000                |
| At the taking of Joppa .....                                                           | 8,400                 |
| In the mountain of Cabula .....                                                        | 2,000                 |
| In a battle at Ascalon .....                                                           | 10,000                |
| In an ambush .....                                                                     | 8,000                 |
| At the taking of Apheck .....                                                          | 15,000                |
| Upon Mount Gerizzim .....                                                              | 11,600                |
| Drowned at Joppa, in a sudden storm .....                                              | 4,200                 |
| Killed at Terichea .....                                                               | 6,500                 |
| —— at Gamala .....                                                                     | 9,000                 |
| —— in their flight from Gischala .....                                                 | 2,000                 |
| —— at the siege of Jotapata .....                                                      | 30,000                |
| —— of the Gadarenes, besides many drowned .....                                        | 13,000                |
| —— in the villages of Idumea .....                                                     | 10,000                |
| —— at Gerisum .....                                                                    | 1,000                 |
| —— at Macheron .....                                                                   | 1,700                 |
| —— in the desert of Jarden .....                                                       | 3,000                 |
| Slew themselves at Massala .....                                                       | 960                   |
| In Cyrene, by the governor Catulus .....                                               | 3,000                 |
| Perished at Jerusalem, by the sword, pestilence,<br>famine, and during the siege ..... | 1,100,000             |
|                                                                                        | <hr/> 1,357,490 <hr/> |

According to this account, the whole amounts to 1,357,490, besides a vast multitude that died in the caves, woods, wildernesses, common sewers, in banishments, and various other ways, of whom no computation could be made. To which must also be added, ten thousand slain at Jotapata more than our author has mentioned ; for Josephus expressly mentions forty thousand, but he only thirty thousand. To these if we add ninety thousand taken prisoners, apparently doomed to a captivity worse than death, and eleven thousand, who are said to have perished either through the neglect of their keepers or their own sullen despair, the amount will be scarcely less than A MILLION AND A HALF ! The reader must also keep in view, that a great proportion of these were strangers, who had been invited from remote parts of the world, to come to Jerusalem and assist them in the defence of their religion and liberties, their country, city, and temple ; in doing which, they shared in the common ruin. Thus did the providence of God order it, that those who, by their opposition to the gospel, in all parts of their dispersion, had participated in the guilt of crucifying the Lord Jesus, and persecuting his apostles, should also be involved in their punishment.

It is not a little remarkable that Titus, though a heathen, was frequently obliged, during this war, to acknowledge an overruling providence, not only in the extraordinary success with which he had been favoured against them, but also in the invincible obstinacy through which they, to the last, preferred their total destruction to that of accepting his repeated overtures of mercy. Again and again did he, in the most solemn manner, appeal to heaven, that he was innocent of the blood of these wretched people.\* In almost every chapter, we find

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 5. ch. 12.

Josephus also ascribing these dreadful calamities, and the final ruin of his nation, city, and temple, to an overruling power; to the offended Deity, or to the sins of the people: but no where more pathetically, than in that chapter, in which he sums up a number of dreadful warnings sent before hand, not so much to reduce them to obedience, as to make them discern the almighty hand that was now pouring out the awful vials of his wrath upon them. \*

As soon as the Romans had completed their destructive work of fire and slaughter, Titus set them to demolish the city, with all its noble structures, fortifications, palaces, towers, walls, and other ornaments, down to the level of the ground; as though he had nothing in view but to fulfil the predictions of Christ concerning its destruction, as is contained in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's gospel. He left nothing standing but a piece of the western wall and three towers, which he reserved merely as a monument to future ages of what had been the strength of the city, and the skill and valour of its conqueror. His orders were executed so punctually, that, except what has been just mentioned, nothing remained which could serve as an index that that ground had been once inhabited; insomuch that when Titus himself, some time afterwards, passed through it, in his way from Cæsarea to Alexandria, in order to embark for Rome, he wept profusely at the sight of a devastation so dreadful, cursing the wretches that had compelled him to be the author of it. †

Such was the dreadful issue of this war, terminating in the utter downfall of the Jewish state and nation, from which it has never recovered to this day; it involved in it the destruction of the temple and the discontinuance

\* Joseph. Wars, b. 6. ch. 5. and b. 5. ch. 13.

† Ibid. b. 6. ch. 8, 9.



of the services annexed to it. The desolation of the country itself went on increasing; till, from being, for its size, one of the most fertile and populous countries in the world, it is now become the most barren and desolate, the latest computation of the number of its inhabitants scarcely exceeding fifty thousand.

All these calamities were, no doubt, accomplished by natural causes; and were therefore such as might have been expected from a thorough knowledge of the temper of the inhabitants, their refractory disposition towards the Romans, their factions among themselves, and their presumptuous confidence in supernatural assistance, joined to a knowledge of their weakness when contrasted with the overbearing power of the Romans. But who besides the Supreme Being could have foreseen all these circumstances, or have known that the operation of them would lead to this catastrophe, when the rebellion might have terminated in many other ways, instead of the total ruin of the country and the dispersion of its inhabitants? The divine foresight is conspicuous therefore, in our Saviour's clear prediction of these events, with all their leading circumstances, when it does not appear that any other person entertained the least apprehension of such a thing. The Jews indeed now tell us, that Jesus Christ found all that he predicted concerning the destruction of their city and temple in the prophecies of Daniel; but it is natural to ask, why did not their own Scribes, the professed interpreters of the law and the prophets, and why did not also the leading men of their own nation, discover the same things in that book?

Not only the wisdom, but the justice of God is also conspicuously displayed in this great event. A particular Providence had ever attended that people. They had always been favoured with prosperity while obedient to God and his prophets; and, on the other hand, calamity

of some kind had been the never-failing consequence of their disobedience. But the measure of their iniquities was now filled up; and the wrath of heaven came upon them to the uttermost. Never had the nation in general shewn a more perverse and obstinate disposition towards any of their prophets, than was now evinced towards Christ and his apostles, though none of their prophets had ever been sent to them with such evident marks of a divine mission. Their inveteracy to Christianity continues to this day, and so does their dispersion, though they are still a distinct people, and never mix, so as to be confounded, with any of the nations among whom they have settled.

But I quit this subject with a reflection or two. The reader will perceive, that the history of the Jewish war, as detailed by their own historian, Josephus, in many instances a witness of the facts he attests, forms a commentary upon the prophecies of Christ. Amongst other things, he has given a distinct account of the “fearful sights and great signs from heaven,” which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem; and Tacitus has confirmed the narration of Josephus.\* If Christ had not expressly foretold these things, some might have suspected that Josephus exaggerated, and that Tacitus was misinformed; but as the testimonies of these historians confirm the predictions of Christ, so do the predictions of Christ confirm the wonders recorded by these historians.

We may also remark, that by these terrible events, an end was at length put to the Mosaic economy; for, with the destruction of their city and temple, the whole of the Jewish polity and church state was also subverted. From that time, the remnant of that once highly favoured nation have been dispersed throughout the world; despised and hated by all; subjected, from age to age, to a

\* Tacit. Annal, b. 5.

perpetual succession of persecutions and miseries, yet under all these disadvantages, upheld by divine providence, a distinct people. They have ever since remained “without a king, without a prince, and without a sacrifice: without an altar, without an ephod, and without divine manifestations;” as monuments every where of the truth of Christianity—yet, with this promise, that “the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.”\*

The accession of Vespasian to the imperial dignity, connected with the termination of the Jewish war, by the arms of his son Titus, happily restored tranquillity and peace to the world. He reigned ten years, much to the happiness of his subjects, and was succeeded in the throne by his son, who, though rather unpopular at the commencement of his reign, nevertheless, conducted himself in such a manner as to acquire the greatest reputation of any of the Roman emperors. During all this period the churches enjoyed a state of outward peace, and the gospel was every where crowned with success. To the inexpressible grief of his subjects, however, at the age of forty-one, and after the short reign of two years, two months, and twenty days, Titus was snatched away, having, as was suspected, been poisoned by his own brother Domitian, who succeeded to the throne in the year 81.

DOMITIAN, in his temper and disposition, inherited all the savage cruelty of the monster Nero. Yet he spared the Christians in a considerable degree, until about the year 95, when several were put to death, and others banished, on account of their religion, both in Rome, and throughout all the provinces. Among those put to death was his own cousin and colleague in the consulship,

\* Hosea iii. 4, 5.

Fabius Clemens ; and, among the banished, the wife and niece of the latter, both named Flaviæ Domitiliæ. At this time, the apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos, from whence he wrote his epistles to the seven churches in Asia. He is said to have survived the persecution of Domitian, though it is uncertain how long ; and to have died at Ephesus in the reign of Nerva or Trajan, at which city he was buried. The crime alleged against the Christians at this period, and which drew down upon them the cruel hand of persecution, was that of *Atheism*, by which is to be understood, that they refused to throw a grain of incense on the altars of the heathen deities. The storm, however, was of short duration ; for both Eusebius and Tertullian inform us, that Domitian revoked the edict which he had issued against the Christians, and recalled from banishment those who had been driven away. Having caused the earth to groan under his cruelties and excesses, he was at length assassinated, in the sixteenth year of his reign, and was succeeded in the empire by

NERVA, a prince of a most gentle and humane disposition, under whom the Romans lived as happy as during the former reign they had been miserable. He pardoned all that were imprisoned for treason, called home such as had been banished, restored the sequestered estates, punished informers, redressed grievances to the utmost of his power, and acted with universal beneficence towards all descriptions of his subjects. According to Dio Cassius, he forbade the persecution of any persons either for Judaism, or for *impiety* ; by which is to be understood Christianity ; for so the Heathens termed the latter, on account of its being hostile to their worship ; and because Christians, having neither temples, altars, nor sacrifices, were generally considered by them to be also without religion. After a short but brilliant reign



of sixteen months and eight days, Nerva died, A. D. 98, and was succeeded by Trajan, whom he had previously nominated as his heir, a man well skilled in martial and cabinet affairs. In his deportment courteous, affable, humane, and just; and, perhaps, not undeservedly esteemed one of the best princes with which Rome had ever been favoured.

## CHAPTER II.

HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH FROM THE CLOSE  
OF THE FIRST CENTURY, TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
CHRISTIANITY UNDER CONSTANTINE, A. D. 315.

## SECTION I.

*The state of the Christian profession under the reign  
of Trajan.*

A. D. 98 to 117.

THERE is more truth than would at first strike the mind of a superficial observer, in Dr. Jortin's remark, that Christianity was, at the beginning, more likely to prosper under bad than under good emperors; especially if the latter were tenacious of their religious rites and ceremonies. Accordingly, from the death of Christ to the reign of Vespasian, a period of about thirty-seven years, the Romans paid little regard to the progress of the gospel. They were ruled by weak or frantic and vicious emperors; the magistrates and senators, and every worthy man of any note, stood in continual fear for their own lives, and the empire was a scene of confusion, desolation, and misery.\*

Gibbon, in one short paragraph, has sketched a tolerably correct picture of the state of the Roman government during the times of which we are now treating, and the reader cannot be displeased at my transplanting it into these pages.

\* Jortin's Remarks, vol. i. p. 30.

“The annals of the emperors,” says he, “exhibit a strong and various picture of human nature, which we should vainly seek among the mixed and doubtful characters of modern history. In the conduct of these monarchs, we may trace the utmost lines of vice and virtue; the most exalted perfection, and the meanest degeneracy of our own species. The golden age of Trajan and the Antonines had been preceded by an age of iron. It is almost superfluous to enumerate the unworthy successors of Augustus. Their unparalleled vices, and the splendid theatre on which they were acted, have saved them from oblivion. The dark, unrelenting Tiberius, the furious Caligula, the feeble Claudius, the profligate and cruel Nero, the beastly Vitellius,\* and the timid, inhuman Domitian, are condemned to everlasting infamy. During fourscore years (excepting only the short and doubtful respite of Vespasian’s reign) Rome groaned beneath an unremitting tyranny, which exterminated the ancient families, and was fatal to almost every virtue, and every talent that arose in that unhappy period.”†

We have already traced the progress of Christianity through our author’s age of iron, and are now entering upon what he terms the golden age of Trajan and the Antonines.

“If a man were called to fix,” says the same elegant historian, “the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance

\* Vitellius consumed in mere eating, at least six millions of our money in about seven months. It is not easy to express his vices with dignity or even decency. Tacitus fairly calls him “a hog.”

† Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. i. ch. 3.

of virtue and wisdom. The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors, whose character and authority commanded involuntary respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully governed by Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws.”\* Such a state of things as this, many would imagine could be little inferior to a *millennium*, as it respected Christians—but how far the opinion would be consonant to truth, will appear in the sequel.

Trajan ascended the throne of the Cæsars in the year 98, and soon afterwards conferred the government of the province of Bithynia upon his friend the ingenious and celebrated Pliny. The character of the latter is one of the most amiable in all pagan antiquity. In the exercise of his office as proconsul, the Christians, against whom the severe edicts which had been issued by preceding emperors seem to be still in force, were brought before his tribunal. Having never had occasion to be present at any such examinations before, the multitude of the criminals, and the severity of the laws against them, seem to have greatly struck him, and caused him to hesitate how far it was proper to carry them into execution, without first consulting the emperor upon the subject. The letter which he wrote to Trajan upon this occasion, as well as the answer of the latter, are happily preserved, and are among the most valuable monuments of antiquity, on account of the light which they throw upon the state of the Christian profession at this splendid epoch. The letter of Pliny seems to have been written in the year 106 or 107, and is as follows.

“ C. PLINY, to the EMPEROR TRAJAN, wishes health.

\* Gibbon, vol. i. ch. 3.



SIRE! It is customary with me to consult you upon every doubtful occasion; for where my own judgment hesitates, who is more competent to direct me than yourself, or to instruct me where uninformed? I never had occasion to be present at any examination of the Christians before I came into this province; I am therefore ignorant to what extent it is usual to inflict punishment or urge prosecution. I have also hesitated whether there should not be some distinction made between the young and the old, the tender and the robust; whether pardon should not be offered to penitence, or whether the guilt of an avowed profession of Christianity can be expiated by the most unequivocal retraction—whether the profession itself is to be regarded as a crime, however innocent in other respects the professor may be; or whether the crimes attached to name, must be proved before they are made liable to punishment.

In the mean time, the method I have hitherto observed with the Christians, who have been accused as such, has been as follows. I interrogated them—Are you Christians? If they avowed it, I put the same question a second, and a third time, threatening them with the punishment decreed by the law: if they still persisted, *I ordered them to be immediately executed; for of this I had no doubt, whatever was the nature of their religion, that such perverseness and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved punishment.* Some that were infected with this madness, on account of their privilege as Roman citizens, I reserved to be sent to Rome, to be referred to your tribunal.

In the discussion of this matter, accusations multiplying, a diversity of cases occurred. A schedule of names was sent me by an unknown accuser, but when I cited the persons before me, many denied the fact that they were or ever had been Christians; and they repeated

after me an invocation of the gods, and of your image, which for this purpose I had ordered to be brought with the statues of the other deities. They performed sacred rites with wine and frankincense, and execrated Christ, none of which things, I am assured, a real Christian can ever be compelled to do. These, therefore, I thought proper to discharge. Others, named by an informer, at first acknowledged themselves Christians, and then denied it, declaring that though they had been Christians, they had renounced their profession, some three years ago, others still longer, and some even twenty years ago. All these worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and at the same time execrated Christ.

“And this was the account which they gave me of the nature of the religion they once had professed, whether it deserves the name of crime or error; namely, that they were accustomed on a stated day to assemble before sun-rise, and to join together in singing hymns to Christ as to a deity; binding themselves as with a solemn oath not to commit any kind of wickedness; to be guilty neither of theft, robbery, nor adultery; never to break a promise, or to keep back a deposit when called upon. Their worship being concluded, it was their custom to separate, and meet together again for a repast, promiscuous indeed, and without any distinction of rank or sex, but perfectly harmless; and even from this they desisted, since the publication of my edict, in which agreeably to your orders, I forbade any societies of that sort.

“For further information, I thought it necessary, in order to come at the truth, *to put to the torture* two females who were called deaconesses. But I could extort from them nothing except the acknowledgment of an excessive and depraved superstition; and, therefore,

desisting from further investigation, I determined to consult you, for the number of culprits is so great as to call for the most serious deliberation. Informations are pouring in against multitudes of every age, of all orders, and of both sexes; and more will be impeached; for the contagion of this superstition hath spread not only through cities, but villages also, and even reached the farm houses. I am of opinion, nevertheless, that it may be checked, and the success of my endeavours hitherto forbids despondency; for the temples, once almost desolate, begin to be again frequented—the sacred solemnities which had for some time been intermitted, are now attended afresh; and the sacrificial victims, which once could scarcely find a purchaser, now obtain a brisk sale. Whence I infer, that many might be reclaimed, were the hope of pardon, on their repentance, absolutely confirmed.”

#### TRAJAN TO PLINY.

“ My dear Pliny,

“ You have done perfectly right, in managing as you have, the matters which relate to the impeachment of the Christians. No one general rule can be laid down which will apply to all cases. These people are not to be hunted up by informers; but if accused and convicted, let them be executed; yet with this restriction, that if any renounce the profession of Christianity, and give proof of it by offering supplications to our gods, however suspicious their past conduct may have been, they shall be pardoned on their repentance. But anonymous accusations should never be attended to, since it would be establishing a precedent of the worst kind, and altogether inconsistent with the maxims of my government.”

It is an obvious reflection from these letters, that at this early period, Christianity had made an extraordinary progress in the empire; for Pliny acknowledges that the pagan temples had become “almost desolate.” Nor should we overlook the remarkable proof which they afford us of the state of the Christian profession; and the dreadful persecutions to which the disciples of Christ were then exposed. It is evident from them, that by the existing laws, it was a capital offence, punishable with death, for any one to avow himself a Christian. Nor did the humane Trajan and the philosophic Pliny entertain a doubt of the propriety of the law, or the wisdom and justice of executing it in the fullest extent. Pliny confesses that he had commanded such capital punishments to be inflicted on many, chargeable with no crime, but their profession of Christianity; and Trajan not only confirms the equity of the sentence, but enjoins the continuance of such executions, without any exceptions, unless it be of those who apostatized from their profession, denied their Lord and Saviour, and did homage to the idols of paganism.

These letters also give us a pleasing view of the holy and exemplary lives of the first Christians. For it appears by the confession of apostates themselves, that no man could continue a member of their communion whose deportment in the world did not correspond with his holy profession. Even delicate women are put to the torture, to try if their weakness would not betray them into accusations of their brethren; but not a word nor a charge can be extorted from them, capable of bearing the semblance of deceit or crime. To meet for prayer, praise, and mutual instruction; to worship Christ their God; to exhort one another to abstain from every evil word and work; to unite in commemorating the death of their Lord, by partaking of the symbols of his



broken body and shed blood in the ordinance of the supper—these things constitute what Pliny calls the “depraved superstition,” the “execrable crimes,” which could only be expiated by the blood of the Christians!

We should not overlook the proof which these letters afford, of the peaceableness of the Christians of those days, and of their readiness to submit even to the most unjust requisitions, rather than disturb the peace of society. According to Pliny’s own representation, their numbers were so immense, that, had they considered it lawful, they might have defended themselves by the power of the sword. Persons of all ranks, of every age, and of each sex, had been converted to Christianity; the body was so vast as to leave the pagan temples a desert, and their priests solitary. Scarce a victim was brought to the altar, or a sacred solemnity observed, through the paucity of the worshippers. The defection from paganism must have been conspicuous which could produce such striking effects. But the Christians neither abused their power to resist government, nor acted indecently in their worship. They knew the edicts that were in force against them, and to avoid giving offence, they assembled before break of day, for the worship of their God and Saviour. And when Pliny issued his edict to that effect, they, for a while yielded to the storm, and desisted from the observance of their Agapæ or feasts of charity. This view of things abundantly justifies the encomium of Hegesippus, one of the earliest Christian writers, “that the church continued until these times, as a virgin, pure and uncorrupted.”

Considering the character which both the emperor and the proconsul sustained, for mildness of disposition and gentleness of manners, it has occasioned no small perplexity to many, and even to some of our philosophic historians, how to account for the circumstance, that

such men should be found in the list of persecutors, and at the same time to admit the unoffending deportment of the Christians. Dr. Warburton has given a very satisfactory solution of this difficulty; and, though the passage be rather long, I shall transcribe the substance of it in this place.

“ The pagan world having early imbibed this inveterate prejudice concerning intercommunity of worship, men were but too much accustomed to new revelations, when the Jewish appeared, not to acknowledge its superior pretensions. Accordingly we find, by the history of this people, that it was esteemed by its neighbours a true one; and therefore they proceeded to join it occasionally with their own; as those did whom the king of Assyria sent into the cities of Israel in place of the ten tribes. Whereby it happened, so great was the influence of this principle, that, in the same time and country, the Jews of Jerusalem added the pagan idolatries to their religion, while the pagans of Samaria added the Jewish religion to their idolatries.

“ But when these people of God, in consequence of having their dogmatic theology more carefully inculcated to them, after their return from the captivity, became rigid, in pretending not only that their religion was true, but *the only true one*; then it was that they began to be treated by their neighbours, and afterwards by the Greeks and Romans, with the utmost hatred and contempt, for this their inhumanity and unsociable temper. To this cause alone we are to ascribe all that spleen and rancour which appears in the histories of these later nations concerning them. CELSUS fairly reveals what lay at the bottom, and speaks out for them all. ‘ If the Jews, on these accounts,’ says he, ‘ adhere to their own law, it is not for *that* they are to blame; I rather blame those who forsake their own country religion to embrace the

Jewish. But if these people give themselves airs of sublimer wisdom than the rest of the world, and on that score refuse all communion with it, as not equally pure—I must tell them, that it is not to be believed that they are more dear or agreeable to God than other nations.’—Hence among the pagans, the Jews came to be distinguished from all other people, by the name of *a race of men odious to the gods*, and with good reason. This was the reception the Jews met with in the world.

“ When Christianity arose, though on the foundation of Judaism, it was at first received with great complacency by the pagan world. The gospel was favourably heard, and the superior evidence with which it was enforced, inclined men, long habituated to pretended revelations, to receive it into the number of the established. Accordingly we find one Roman emperor introducing it among his closet religions; and another proposing to the senate to give it a more public entertainment. But when it was found to carry its pretensions higher, and, like the Jewish, to claim the title of *the only true one*, then it was that it began to incur the same hatred and contempt with the Jewish. But when it went still further, and urged the necessity of all men forsaking their own national religions, and embracing the gospel, this so shocked the pagans, that it soon brought upon itself the bloody storm which followed. Thus you have the true origin of persecution for religion; a persecution not committed, but undergone by the Christian church.

“ Hence we see how it happened, that such good emperors as Trajan and Mark Antonine came to be found in the first rank of persecutors; a difficulty that hath very much embarrassed the inquirers into ecclesiastical antiquity, and given a handle to the Deists, who impoison every thing, of pretending to suspect, that there must be something very much amiss in primitive Christianity,

while such wise magistrates could become its persecutors. But the reason is now manifest. The Christian pretensions overthrew a fundamental principle of paganism, which they thought founded in nature, namely, the friendly intercommunity of worship. And thus the famous passage of Pliny the younger becomes intelligible. ‘For I did not in the least hesitate, but that whatever should appear on confession to be their faith, yet that their frowardness and inflexible obstinacy would certainly deserve punishment.’ What was the ‘inflexible obstinacy?’ It could not be in professing a new religion; that was a thing common enough. It was the refusing all communion with paganism,—refusing to throw a grain of incense on their altars. For we must not think, as is commonly imagined, that this was at first enforced by the magistrate to make them renounce their religion; but only to give a test of its hospitality, and sociableness of temper. It was indeed, and rightly too, understood by the Christians to be a renouncing of their religion, and so accordingly abstained from. The misfortune was, that the pagans did not consider the inflexibility as a mere error, but as an immorality likewise. The unsociable, uncommunicable temper, in matters of religious worship, was esteemed by the best of them as a hatred and aversion to mankind. Thus Tacitus, speaking of the burning of Rome, calls the Christians ‘persons convicted of hatred to all mankind.’ But how? The confession of the pagans themselves, concerning the purity of the Christian morals, shews this could be no other than a being ‘convicted’ of rejecting all intercommunity of worship; which, so great was their prejudice, they thought could proceed from nothing but hatred towards mankind. Universal prejudice had made men regard a refusal of this intercommunity as the most brutal of all dissociability. And the emperor JULIAN, who under-



stood this matter the best of any, fairly owns, that the Jews and Christians brought the execration of the world upon them, by their aversion to the gods of paganism, and their refusal of all communication with them.”\* But to proceed.

From what took place in the province of Bithynia, under the government of the mild and amiable Pliny, a tolerably correct judgment may be formed of the state of Christianity during the reign of Trajan, in every other part of the empire.

While Pliny was thus conducting matters in Bithynia, the province of Syria was under the government of Tiberianus. There is still extant a letter which he addressed to Trajan, in which he says, “ I am quite wearied with punishing and destroying the Galilæans, or those of the sect called Christians, *according to your orders*. Yet they never cease to profess voluntarily, what they are, and to offer themselves to death. Wherefore I have laboured by exhortations and threats, to discourage them from daring to confess to me, that they are of that sect. Yet, in spite of all persecution, they continue still to do it. Be pleased therefore to inform me, what your highness thinks proper to be done with them.”†

The stated returns of the public games and festivals were generally attended by calamitous events to the Christians. “ On those occasions, the inhabitants of the great cities of the empire were collected in the great circus of the theatre, where every circumstance of the place, as well as of the ceremony, contributed to kindle their devotion and to extinguish their humanity. Whilst the numerous spectators, crowned with garlands, perfumed with incense, purified with the blood of victims, and surrounded with the altars and statues of their tutelar

\* Divine Legation of Moses, vol. ii. b. ii. § 6. &c.

† Quoted in Dr. Middleton’s Free Inquiry, p. 201. 4to. ed.

deities, resigned themselves to the enjoyment of pleasures, which they considered as an essential part of their religious worship; they recollected, that the Christians alone abhorred the gods of mankind, and by their absence and melancholy on those solemn festivals, seemed to insult or to lament the public felicity. If the empire had been afflicted by any recent calamity, by a plague, a famine, or an unsuccessful war; if the Tyber had, or if the Nile had not, risen beyond its banks; if the earth had shaken, or if the temperate order of the seasons had been interrupted, the superstitious pagans were convinced that the crimes and the impiety of the Christians, who were spared by the excessive lenity of the government, had at length provoked the divine justice.\* It was not among a licentious and exasperated populace, that the forms of legal proceedings could be observed; it was not in an amphitheatre, stained with the blood of wild beasts and gladiators, that the voice of compassion could be heard. The impatient clamours of the multitude denounced the Christians as the enemies of god and men, doomed them to the severest tortures, and venturing to accuse by name, some of the most distinguished of the new sectaries, required, with irresistible vehemence, that they should be instantly apprehended and cast to the lions.†

\* Inveterate as were the prejudices of this classical historian against the Christians, it seems he could condescend occasionally to borrow a striking thought or a brilliant sentence from their writings. The reader may compare the above quotation with the following extract from Tertullian's Apology.

“If the city be besieged, if any thing happen ill in the fields, in the garrisons, in the lands, immediately they (the Pagans) cry out, “*Tis because of the Christians.*” Our enemies thirst after the blood of the innocent, cloaking their hatred with this silly pretence, “*That the Christians are the cause of all public calamities.*” If the Tyber flows up to the walls—if the river Nile do not overflow the fields—if the heavens alter their course—if there be an earthquake, a famine, a plague, immediately the cry is “*Away with the Christians to the lions.*” APOL. cap. 1. Operum, p. 17.

† Gibbon's Decline, vol. 2. ch. 16.

About the time that Pliny wrote his celebrated letter, Trajan, who was then entering upon the Parthian war, arrived at Antioch in Syria. Ignatius was at that time one of the pastors of the church there; a man of exemplary piety, and “in all things like to the apostles.” During the emperor’s stay at Antioch, the city was almost entirely ruined by an earthquake. It was preceded by violent claps of thunder, unusual winds, and a dreadful noise under ground. Then followed so terrible a shock, that the earth trembled, several houses were overturned, and others tossed to and fro, like a ship at sea. The noise of the cracking and bursting of the timber, and of the falling of the houses, drowned the cries of the dismayed populace. Those who happened to be in their houses were, for the most part, buried under their ruins; such as were walking in the streets and in the squares, were, by the violence of the shock, dashed against each other, and most of them killed or dangerously wounded. Trajan himself was much hurt, but escaped through a window out of the house in which he was. When the earthquake ceased, the voice of a woman was heard crying under the ruins, which being removed, she was found with a sucking child in her arms, whom she kept alive, as well as herself, with her milk.

The eminent station of Ignatius, and the popularity which generally attends superior talents, marked him out as the victim of imperial fury on the occasion. He was seized, and by the emperor’s order sent from Antioch to Rome, where he was exposed to the fury of wild beasts in the theatre, and by them devoured. About the same time, Simeon, the son of Cleopas, who had succeeded the apostle James, as pastor of the church originally gathered in Jerusalem, but which, at the time of its destruction, removed to a small town called Pella, was accused, before Atticus, the Roman governor, of being a

Christian. He was then an hundred and twenty years old, but his hoary hairs were no protection to him under the charge of professing Christianity. He endured the punishment of scourging, for many days; but though his hardness astonished, his sufferings failed to excite the pity of his persecutors, and he was, at length, ordered to be crucified.

This state of things, which is commonly termed *the third persecution*, seems to have continued during the whole of Trajan's reign; for it does not appear that his edicts against the Christians were revoked during his life, which, after having swayed the imperial sceptre 19 years, was closed in the year 117, while prosecuting his great military expedition into the east.

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## SECTION II.

### THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

*The state of the Christian profession under the reigns of Adrian and the Antonines. A. D. 117—180.*

The persecuting edicts, which had been issued against the Christians, under the former emperors, continued unrepealed when Adrian was raised to the throne of the Cæsars. The law of Trajan, of which I have taken notice in the foregoing section, and which had been registered among the public edicts of the empire, had in some degree ameliorated the state of matters. "The Christians were not to be officiously sought after;" but still, such as were accused and convicted of an adherence to Christianity were to be put to death as wicked citizens, if they did not return to the religion of their ancestors.

Under the reign of Adrian, the empire flourished in



peace and prosperity. He encouraged the arts, reformed the laws, enforced military discipline, and visited all his provinces in person. His vast and active genius was equally suited to the most enlarged views, and the minute details of civil policy; but the ruling passions of his soul were curiosity and vanity. As they prevailed, and as they were attracted by different objects, Adrian was, by turns, an excellent prince, a ridiculous sophist, or a jealous tyrant. After his death, the senate doubted whether they should pronounce him a god or a tyrant, and the honours decreed to his memory were granted to the prayers of his successor, the pious Antoninus.\*

In the sixth year of his reign, Adrian came to Athens, where he was initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries. Tertullian describes him as a man excessively curious and inquisitive—(*curiositatum omnium explorator*)—his knowledge was various and extensive—he had studied all the arts of magic, and was passionately fond of the pagan institutions. At the time of his visiting Athens, Quadratus was pastor of the Christian church in that city, having succeeded Publius, who suffered martyrdom either in this or the foregoing reign. It seems likely that this church had undergone a severe persecution, for we are informed that when Quadratus took the oversight of them, he found the flock in a dispersed and confused state; their public assemblies were neglected; their zeal was become languid, and they were in danger of being wholly scattered. Quadratus laboured indefatigably to recover them, and he succeeded. Order and discipline were restored, insomuch that at a subsequent period, when Origen wrote his treatise against Celsus, he adduces the church at Athens as a notable pattern of good order, constancy, meekness and quietness.†

\* Gibbon's Rome, vol. i. ch. 3.

† Eusebius, b. 4. ch. 23. and Cave's Life of Quadratus.

Quadratus drew up an apology for the Christian Religion, which he addressed and delivered to the emperor; as did also Aristides, a Christian writer at that time in Athens. Unfortunately these apologies are lost, and it is greatly to be regretted; for had they survived the wreck of time, they would, in all probability, have thrown much light upon the state of the Christian profession at that period. Nor have we any certain information what effect they produced upon the mind of the emperor. "The pagan priests," says Mosheim, "set the populace in motion to demand from the magistrates, with one voice, during the public games, the destruction of the Christians; and the magistrates fearing that a sedition might be the consequence of despising or opposing these popular clamours, were too much disposed to indulge them in their requests." During these commotions, Serenus Granianus, proconsul of Asia, wrote to the emperor that "it seemed to him unreasonable, that the Christians should be put to death, merely to gratify the clamours of the people, without trial, and without being convicted of any crime." This seems the first instance of any Roman governor publicly daring to question the propriety and justice of Trajan's edict, which, independent of any moral guilt, inflicted death on Christians, merely because they were Christians. Serenus, at the time of writing his letter, was probably about to quit his office, but Adrian addressed the following rescript to his successor.

TO MINUTIUS FUNDANUS.

"I have received a letter written to me by the very illustrious Serenus Granianus, whom you have succeeded. To me then the affair seems by no means fit to be slightly passed over, that men may not be disturbed without cause, and that sycophants may not be encouraged in

their odious practices. If the people of the province will appear publicly, and make open charges against the Christians, so as to give them an opportunity of answering for themselves, let them proceed in that manner only, and not by rude demands and mere clamours. For it is much more proper, if any person will accuse them, that *you* should take cognizance of these matters. If therefore any accuse, and shew that they actually break the laws, do you determine according to the nature of the crime. But, by Hercules, if the charge be a mere calumny, do you estimate the enormity of such calumny and punish as it deserves.”\*

This rescript seems to have somewhat abated the fury of the persecution, though not wholly to have put an end to it. Tertullian, in reference to these times, informs us that Arrius Antoninus, then proconsul of Asia, when the Christians came in a body before his tribunal; ordered some of them to be put to death; and said to others, “You wretches! If ye will die, ye have precipices and halters.” He adds, that several other governors of provinces, punished some few Christians, and dismissed the rest, so that the persecution was neither so general nor so severe as it had been under Trajan.

During the reign of Adrian, the Jews once more attempted to free themselves from the Roman yoke. A rebellious chief arose among them, of the name of Barchochebas, who assumed the title “king of the Jews,” and prevailed upon these deluded people, thinned as they were by slaughter, and dispersed throughout the different provinces, to rally round his standard, and contend with the Romans for empire. While the rebellion was in progress, the Christians, refusing to join the standard of this fictitious Messiah, suffered the most atrocious indig-

\* Eusebius, h. 4. c. 9. and Justin Martyr’s first Apology, *ad finem*.

nities, and were massacred without mercy, until the fall of their leader, and the destruction of his adherents put an end to the sedition. The issue of the rebellion was the entire exclusion of the Jews from the territory of Judea.

After a reign of twenty-one years, Adrian was succeeded, in the year 138, by Titus Antoninus Pius, a senator about fifty years of age, whom he declared his successor, only on the condition that he himself should immediately adopt Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, a youth of about seventeen, and by these two Antonines the Roman world was governed forty years. Their united reigns, says Gibbon, are possibly the only period of history, in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government.\*

The elder Antoninus appears to have been a most amiable prince. He diffused order and tranquillity throughout the empire; and, in his own personal character and intentions, was guiltless of Christian blood. The disciples of Jesus were nevertheless cruelly treated in some of the provinces of Asia, and it occasioned Justin Martyr to write his first apology, which was presented to the emperor. The crimes they were accused of by their enemies were impiety and atheism, which are refuted by Justin in his apology. In several of the former edicts, the word *crime* had not been sufficiently determined in its signification. Hence the pagan priests, and even the Roman magistrates, frequently applied this term to the profession of Christianity itself. But Antoninus issued an edict, in which he decided the point on the side of humanity and justice. He addressed a letter to the province of Asia, in favour of the persecuted Christians, which is of too much importance to be here omitted.

\* Decline and Fall, vol. i. ch. 3.



## THE EMPEROR TO THE COMMON COUNCIL OF ASIA.

“ I am clearly of opinion, that the gods will take care to discover such persons (as those to whom you refer). For it much more concerns them to punish those who refuse to worship them, than you, if they be able. But you harass and vex the Christians, and accuse them of atheism and other crimes, which you can by no means prove. To them it appears an advantage to die for their religion, and they gain their point, while they throw away their lives, rather than comply with your injunctions. As to the earthquakes, which have happened in times past or more recently, is it not proper to remind you of your own despondency, when they happen; and to desire you to compare your spirit with theirs, and observe how serenely they confide in God? In such seasons you seem to be ignorant of the gods, and to neglect their worship. You live in the practical ignorance of the supreme God himself, and you harass and persecute to death those who do worship him. Concerning these same men, some others of the provincial governors wrote to our divine father Adrian, to whom he returned for answer, “ That they should not be molested, unless they appeared to attempt something against the Roman government.” Many also have made application to me concerning these men, to whom I have returned an answer agreeable to the maxims of my father. But if any person will still persist in accusing the Christians *merely as such*, let the accused be acquitted, though he appear to be a Christian, and let the accuser be punished.”

*Set up at Ephesus in the Common Assembly of Asia.*

Letters of similar import were also written to the Lariſſeans, the Thessalonians, the Athenians, and all the Greeks, as we are informed by Eusebius; and the hu-

mane emperor took care that his edicts were carried into effect. He reigned three and twenty years, and it seems reasonable to conclude that during the greater part of this time, Christians were permitted to worship God in peace. This must have been a halcyon season to the poor afflicted disciples of Jesus, when they were permitted to sit under their own vine and fig-tree, without fear or molestation; but it terminated with the life of the elder Antoninus, about the year 162, at which time the government of the empire devolved wholly upon his late colleague, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

This prince, at the age of twelve years, embraced the rigid system of the stoical philosophy, which he also laboured to inculcate upon the minds of his subjects. He even condescended to read lectures of philosophy to the Roman people, in a manner, says Gibbon, who nevertheless eulogises his character, more public than was consistent with the modesty of a sage or the dignity of an emperor. Under his reign commenced, what is generally accounted *the fourth persecution* of the Christians. It is not improbable that he had beheld with an anxious eye, the lenity which had been shewn them by his predecessors, and that the occasional interruptions that had been given them, were, at least, with his connivance. Certain it is, that no sooner had he attained to the full exercise of power, than he completely discarded the tolerant principles of Antoninus Pius, and threw open once more the flood-gates of persecution.

The churches of Asia appear to have suffered dreadfully at this period. Polycarp was pastor of the church in Smyrna, an office which he had held for more than eighty years, and which he had filled up with honour to himself, to the edification of his Christian brethren, and the glory of his divine Master. It only remained for him now to seal his testimony with his blood. The eminence

of his station marked him out as the victim of popular fury. The cry of the multitude against Polycarp was, "This is the doctor of Asia, the father of the Christians, the subverter of our gods, who teaches many that they must not perform the sacred rites, nor worship our deities. *Away with these Atheists.*" The philosophy of the emperor could not teach him that this pretended atheism was a real virtue, which deserved to be encouraged and propagated amongst mankind. Here reason and philosophy failed him; and his blind attachment to the gods of his country caused him to shed much blood, and to become the destroyer of the saints of the living God! \*

The friends of Polycarp, anxious for his safety, prevailed on him to withdraw himself from public view, and to retire to a neighbouring village, which he did, continuing with a few of his brethren, day and night, in prayer to God, for the tranquillity of all the churches. The most diligent search was, in the mean time, made for him without effect. But when his enemies proceeded to put some of his brethren to the torture, with the view of compelling them to betray him, he could no longer be prevailed on to remain concealed. "The will of the Lord be done," was his pious ejaculation; on uttering which, he made a voluntary surrender of himself to his persecutors, saluted them with a cheerful countenance, and invited them to refresh themselves at his table, only soliciting from them on his own behalf one hour for prayer. They granted his request, and his devotions were prolonged to double the period, with such sweetness and savour, that all who heard him were struck

\* This is the emperor, whom Pope has panegyrised in the following lines—

"Who noble ends by noble means obtains,  
Or, failing, smiles in exile or in chains;  
Like good *Aurelius*, let him reign; or bleed  
Like *Socrates*, that man is great indeed."

with admiration, several of the soldiers repenting that they were employed against so venerable an old man." His prayer being ended, they set him on an ass, and conveyed him towards the city, being met on the road by Herod the Tetrarch (a kind of justice of the peace) and his father Nicetes, who were chief agents in this persecution.\* Many efforts were tried to shake his constancy, and induce him to abjure his profession; at one time he was threatened by the proconsul with the fury of wild beasts. "Call for them," said Polycarp, "it does not become us to turn from good to evil." "Seeing you make so light of wild beasts," rejoined the magistrate, "I will tame you with the more terrible punishment of fire." But Polycarp bravely replied, "You threaten me with a fire that is quickly extinguished, but are ignorant of the eternal fire of God's judgment, reserved for the wicked in the other world. But why do you delay? order what punishment you please." Thus finding him impenetrable both to the arts of seduction and the dread of punishment, the fire was commanded to be lighted, and the body of this venerable father burnt to ashes, in the year 166.

Melito was, at this period, pastor of the neighbouring church of Sardis. As the rage of persecution grew more violent, he drew up an apology for the Christians, which he presented to the emperor (A.D. 170) about the tenth year of his reign, a fragment of which is still preserved in Eusebius. He complains of it as an almost unheard of thing, that pious men were now persecuted, and greatly distressed by new decrees throughout Asia; that most impudent informers, who were greedy of other people's substance, took occasion, from the imperial edicts, to plunder others who were entirely innocent. He then

\* *Cave's Life of Polycarp*, p. 53.



humbly beseeches the emperor that he would not suffer the Christians to be used in so cruel and unrighteous a manner ; that he would vouchsafe to examine the things charged on the Christians, and stop the persecution, by revoking the edict published against them ; and reminds him that the Christian religion was so far from being destructive to the Roman empire, as its enemies suggested, that the latter was much enlarged since the propagation thereof. \*

In the same year that Polycarp was put to death (166), Justin Martyr drew up a second apology, which he addressed to the emperor Antoninus, and to the senate of Rome. He states the case of his Christian brethren, complains of the unrighteousness and cruelty with which they were every where treated, in being punished merely because they were Christians, without being accused of any crimes ; answers the usual objections against them, and desires no greater favour than that the world might be really acquainted with their case. His appeal seems to have produced no impression upon those to whom it was addressed. Justin and six of his companions were seized and carried before Rusticus, the præfect of the city of Rome, where many attempts were made to persuade them to obey the gods and comply with the emperor's edicts. Their exhortations had no effect. "No man," says Justin, "who is in his right mind can desert truth to embrace error and impiety." And when threatened, that unless they complied they should be tortured without mercy, "Dispatch us as soon as you please," said the disciples, "for we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols." On saying which, the governor pronounced the following sentence, that "for refusing to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, they should be

\* Cave's *Life of Melito and Eusebius*, b. 4. ch. 26.

first scourged and then beheaded *according to law*," which was immediately carried into effect.\*

The history of the reign of this philosophic emperor abounds with similar instances of unrelenting cruelty on the part of the magistracy, and of patient suffering for Christ's sake on that of his disciples. Justin Martyr, in the account he gives of the martyrdom of Ptolemæus assures us, that the only question asked him was, "Are you a Christian?" And upon his confessing that he was one, he was immediately put to death.† Lucius was also put to death for making the same confession, and for asking Urbicus the prefect why he condemned Ptolemy, who was neither convicted of adultery, rape, murder, theft, robbery, nor of any other crime, but merely for owning himself to be a Christian. Hence it is sufficiently manifest that it was the mere name of a Christian that was still made a capital offence, and that while these inhuman proceedings were sanctioned by an emperor who made great pretensions to reason and philosophy; they were carried on for the purpose of supporting a system of superstition and idolatry repugnant to every principle of reason and truth. These cruelties were exercised on persons of the most virtuous characters, for their adherence to the worship of the one true God, the first principle of all true religion.

How precious, in those times especially, must have been the consolatory sayings of Jesus Christ; and what but an unshaken confidence in his almighty power and faithfulness could have supported the hearts of his people in such trying circumstances?‡

Towards the close of the reign of this emperor (A. D. 177.) the flame of persecution reached a country, which had hitherto afforded no materials for ecclesiastical his-

\* Cave's Life of Justin. † Second Apology, ch. 42.

‡ John xiv. 27. xv. 18—23. xvi. 23. xvii. 24.

tory, viz. the kingdom of France, in those days called Gallia. By whom or by what means, the light of the glorious gospel was first conveyed into that country, we have no certain information; for the first intelligence that we have of the fact itself, arises from the account of a dreadful persecution which came upon the churches of Vienne and Lyons, two cities lying contiguous to each other in that province. Vienne was an ancient Roman colony: Lyons was more modern; and of this latter church the presbyters or elders were Pothinus and Iræneus. "Whoever," says Milner, "casts his eye on the map of France, and sees the situation of Lyons, at present the largest and most populous city in the kingdom, except Paris, may observe how favourable the confluence of the Rhine and the Soane, on which it stands, is for the purposes of commerce. The navigation of the Mediterranean, in all probability was conducted by the merchants of Lyons and Smyrna, and hence the easy introduction of the gospel from the latter place, and from the other Asiatic churches, is apparent."\*

That it was in some such way as this Christianity was first planted there, seems probable also from this circumstance, that not only the names of Pothinus and Iræneus, the pastors of the church at Lyons, are Grecian, but that also the names of several other distinguished persons in these churches prove them to have been of Greek extraction. And when we reflect upon the cruel persecutions by which the friends of Jesus had been harassed both in Greece and Asia Minor, it seems not unreasonable to expect that they should seek an asylum from the storm in these cities. The churches, too, though they appear to have been but recently planted, were evidently very numerous, at the time this terrible persecution over-

\* Church Hist. vol. i. p. 223.

took them. When the violence of the storm had in some measure subsided, a pretty copious account of it was drawn up, as is supposed by Iræneus, in the form of an epistle from the churches of Vienne and Lyons to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia. We are indebted to Eusebius for preserving it from oblivion, in his Ecclesiastical History, and I incline to the judgment of Dr. Lardner when he pronounces it “the finest thing of the kind in all antiquity.”\*

Eusebius gives it as a specimen of what was transacted in other places; and that the reader may have some notion of the savage rage with which this persecution was carried on, not only with the connivance, but with the knowledge and approbation of this philosophic emperor, I shall give a copious abridgment of the account. The epistle opens with the following simple address—

“The servants of Christ, sojourning in Vienne and Lyons in France, to the brethren in Asia propria and Phrygia, who have the same faith and hope of redemption with us; peace and grace, and glory, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” They then declare themselves unable to express the greatness of the affliction which the saints in those cities had recently sustained, or the intense animosity of the heathen against them. Christians were absolutely prohibited from appearing in any house, except their own, in baths, in the market, or in any public place whatever. “The first assault came from the people at large—shouts, blows, the dragging of their bodies, the plundering of their goods, casting of

\* *Credibility of the Gospel History, part 2.* But though I bow with great deference to the judgment of Dr. Lardner, I must be allowed to say that the style in which this letter is drawn up does not meet my fancy. It is much too laboured to correspond with the melancholy nature of the subject. It is not the simple, natural, unaffected language of a feeling heart. We must, however, remember that Iræneus was a Greek, and that the Greeks were great admirers of eloquence.



stones, with all the indignities that may be expected from a fierce and outrageous multitude—these were magnanimously sustained. Being then led into the forum by the tribune and the magistrates, they were examined before all the people whether they were Christians; and on pleading guilty, were shut up in prison until the arrival of the governor. Before him they were at length brought, and “he treated us,” say they, “with great savageness of manners.”

Vettius Epigathus, one of their brethren, a young man full of charity both to God and man—of exemplary conduct—a man ever unwearied in acts of beneficence, was roused at beholding such a manifest perversion of justice, and boldly demanded to be heard in behalf of the brethren, pledging himself to prove that there was nothing atheistic or impious among them. “He was a person of quality”—but however equitable his demand was, it only served to excite the clamour of the mob, and to irritate the governor, who merely asked him if he was a Christian, which he confessed in the most open manner, and for which he was immediately executed. Others imitated his confidence and zeal, and suffered with the same alacrity of mind. In process of time ten of their number lapsed, “whose case,” say they, “filled us with great and unmeasurable sorrow.” This appears to have much dejected the churches, and to have spread a general alarm, “not that we dreaded the torment,” say they, “with which we are threatened, but because we looked forward unto the end, and feared the danger of apostacy.” The vilest calumnies were propagated against them at this time—they were accused of eating human flesh, and of various unnatural crimes; “of things,” say they, “not fit even to be mentioned or imagined, and such as ought not to be believed of mankind.” The rabble became incensed against them even to madness—

and the ties of blood, affinity, or friendship, seem to have been wholly disregarded. "Now it was," say they, "that our Lord's word was fulfilled—'the time will come when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.'" The martyrs sustained tortures which exceed the powers of description. "The whole fury of the multitude, the governor, and the soldiers, was spent in a particular manner on Sanctus, a deacon of the church of Vienne, and on Maturus, a late convert indeed, but a magnanimous wrestler in spiritual things; and on Attalus of Pergamus, a man who had been the pillar and support of our church; and on Blandina, a female who was most barbarously tortured from morning to night, with the intent of extorting from her a confession which should criminate her brethren; but "it was an evident refreshment, support, and an annihilation of all her pains to say, 'I am a Christian, and no evil is committed among us.'"

The most barbarous indignities were inflicted upon Sanctus the deacon, to extort from him something injurious to the gospel, which he sustained in a manner more than human; and such was the firmness with which he resisted the most intense sufferings, that to every question which was put to him by his tormentors, he had uniformly one reply, "I am a Christian." This provoked the executioners so much, that they applied red hot plates of iron to the tenderest parts of his body, till he was one wound, and scarcely retained the appearance of the human form. Having left him a few days in this ulcerated condition, they hoped to make him more exquisitely sensible to fresh tortures. But the renewal of these while he was dreadfully swelled, was found to have the effect of reducing him to his former shape, and restoring him to the use of his limbs. Biblias, a female, was one of those who had swerved from her profession at the commencement of the persecution. She was now

pitched upon, as being one that was likely to accuse the Christians; and the more effectually to extort from her that confession which they wished her to make, this weak and timorous creature was put to the torture. The fact which was pressed upon her to acknowledge was, that the Christians ate their children. "In her torture she recovered herself," it is said, "and awoke as out of a sleep, and in answer to their interrogations, thus remonstrated, "How can we eat infants—we, to whom it is not lawful to eat the blood of beasts."\* She now

\* A late ecclesiastical historian (Mr. Milner) has the following remark upon this passage. "Hence it appears that the eating of blood was not practised among the Christians at Lyons; and that they understood not *Christian liberty* in this point." But with all due deference to Mr. Milner, one cannot help wishing that he had shewn us, "Who gave Christians the liberty of eating things strangled and blood." Nothing can be more express than the *prohibition*, Acts xv. 28, 29. Can those who plead their "Christian liberty" in regard to this matter, point us to any part of the word of God, in which this prohibition is subsequently annulled? If not, may we be allowed to ask, "By what authority, except his own, can any of the laws of God be repealed?" Mr. M. held that "the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies, and to settle controversies in matters of faith;" and doubtless that church which has power to make new laws in Christ's kingdom, cannot want authority to abolish old ones; but where they obtained this power and authority, we have yet to learn.

The following remark of a sensible writer shews that he is far from agreeing with Mr. Milner in thinking that *blood eating* is any part of Christian liberty. "This (*i. e.* eating the blood of animals) being forbidden to Noah, appears also to have been forbidden to all mankind; nor ought this prohibition to be treated as belonging to the ceremonies of the Jewish dispensation. It was not only enjoined before that dispensation existed, but was enforced upon the Gentile Christians by the decrees of the apostles, Acts xv. 20. To allege, as some do, our Lord's words, 'that it is not that which goeth into a man which defileth him,' would equally justify the practice of cannibals in eating human flesh.—Blood is the *life*, and God seems to claim it as sacred to himself. Hence, in all the sacrifices, the blood was poured out before the Lord, and in the sacrifice of Christ, he shed his blood, or poured out his soul unto death."

Fuller's *Disc. on Genesis*, ix. 3, 4.

recovered her fortitude, avowed her Christianity, and “was added to the army of martyrs.”

The ten persons who had swerved from their profession in the hour of trial, and denied that they were Christians, not being credited by the magistrates, were refused the benefit of their recantation. They were insulted for their cowardice, and led to punishment along with the rest, as murderers, though not as Christians, on the evidence which had been produced of their eating human flesh. They proceeded with countenances full of shame and dejection, while those who suffered for their attachment to Christianity, appeared cheerful and courageous, so that the difference between them was perceptible to all the by-standers. After this, no Christian who was apprehended, renounced his profession, but persevered in it to the last.

The populace becoming clamorous to have the Christians thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre, that favourite spectacle was at length provided for them, on this occasion, and Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus, were brought out for this purpose. But previous to the wild beasts being produced, Maturus and Sanctus were put to the torture in the amphitheatre, as if it had not been applied to them before; and every thing that an enraged multitude called for having been tried upon them, they were at last roasted in an iron chair, till they sent forth the offensive effluvia of burnt flesh. Upon Sanctus, however, the only effect produced was a declaration of his former confession that he was a Christian; and at length death terminated his sufferings.

Blandina was then produced, and on being fastened to a stake, a wild beast was let loose upon her; but this she bore with the greatest composure; and, by her prayers, encouraged others to bear with fortitude



whatever might befall them : but, as the wild beast did not meddle with her, she was remanded back to prison.

At length Attalus was loudly called for; and he was accordingly led round the amphitheatre, with a board held before him, on which was inscribed, **THIS IS ATTALUS THE CHRISTIAN.** It appearing, however, that he was a Roman citizen, the president remanded him to prison, until the emperor's pleasure should be known concerning him, and others who were in the same predicament. In this respite they so encouraged many who had hitherto declined this glorious combat, as it was justly called, that great numbers voluntarily declared themselves Christians.

The emperor's answer was, that they who confessed themselves to be Christians should be put to death; but that those who denied it should be set at liberty. Upon this, a public assembly was convened, attended by a vast concourse of people, before whom the confessors were produced, when such of them as were found to be Roman citizens were beheaded, and the rest thrown to the wild beasts. But to the astonishment of all present, many who had previously renounced their Christianity, and were now produced only to be set at liberty, revoked their recantation, and, declaring themselves Christians, suffered with the rest. These had been greatly encouraged so to do, by Alexander, a Phrygian, who had shewn himself particularly solicitous for the perseverance of his brethren.

The multitude became greatly enraged at this; and Alexander being called before the tribunal, and confessing himself a Christian, he was sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts; and on the following day he was produced in the amphitheatre for that purpose, together with Attalus, whom the people had insisted upon being brought out once more. Previous to their exposure to

the wild beasts they were subjected to a variety of tortures, and at last run through with a sword. During all this Alexander said nothing, but evinced the greatest firmness of mind. And, when Attalus was placed in the iron chair, he only said, in allusion to the vulgar charge against the Christians of those days, of murdering and eating infants, "This, which is your own practice, is to devour men; we neither eat men, nor practice any other wickedness."

On the last day of the show, Blandina was again produced, together with a young man of the name of Ponticus, about fifteen years of age, who had been brought out daily to be a spectator of the sufferings of others. This youth, being required to acknowledge the heathen deities, and refusing to do so, the multitude had no compassion for either of them, but subjected them to the whole circle of tortures, till Ponticus expired in them; and Blandina, having been scourged, and placed in the hot iron chair, was put into a net, and exposed to a bull; and after being tossed for some time by the furious animal, she was at length despatched with a sword. The spectators acknowledged that they had never known any female bear torture with such fortitude.

When this scene was over, the multitude continued to show their rage by abusing the dead bodies of the Christians. Those who had been suffocated in prison were thrown to the dogs, and watched day and night, lest their friends should bury them. The same was done with the bodies that were left unconsumed by fire; that had been mangled or burned, with the heads only of some, and the trunks of others. Even in this horrid state the heathens insulted them, by asking where was their God, and what their religion had done for them. The mangled carcasses having been exposed in this manner for six days, were then burned; and being reduced to ashes, the latter was

cast into the river, to disappoint them, as was fondly imagined, of their hopes of a resurrection. From what was done in this place, says Eusebius, we may form an estimate of what was transacted in others.\*

The prisons were now glutted with the multitude of the Christians—they were thrust into the darkest and most loathsome cells, and numbers were suffocated; even “young men who had been lately seized, and whose bodies had been unexercised with sufferings, unequal to the severity of the confinement, expired.” Pothinus, one of the elders of the church at Lyons, upwards of ninety years of age, though very infirm and asthmatic, was dragged before the tribunal; “his body,” says the narrative, “worn out indeed with age and disease, yet he retained a soul through which Christ might triumph.” After being grossly ill-treated by the soldiers and the rabble, who unmercifully dragged him about, insulting him in the vilest manner, without the least respect to his age, pelting him with whatever came first to hand, and every one looking upon himself as deficient in zeal if he did not insult him in some way or other; he was thrown into prison, and after languishing two days, expired.

These few instances, which indeed are but little in comparison of the horrid barbarities detailed in this letter, may however give the reader some idea of this dreadful persecution, which, lamentable to tell, received the express sanction of the philosophic emperor, Marcus Aurelius. “He sent orders,” says the letter, “that the confessors of Christ should be put to death; and that the apostates from their divine Master should be dismissed.” Such proceedings, as Mosheim properly remarks, will be an indelible stain upon the memory of the prince by whose order they were carried on. His death, however,

\* Euseb. Hist. b. v. ch. 1.

which took place in the year 180, put a period to this fiery trial, which, with scarcely any intermission, had raged in one quarter or other during a period of eighteen years.

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### SECTION III.

*Sketch of the state of Christianity from the death of  
Marcus Aurelius to the time of Constantine.*

A. D. 180—306.

AURELIUS was succeeded in the government of the empire by his son Commodus, during whose reign of nearly thirteen years, the Christians enjoyed a large portion of external peace, and their numbers were every where multiplied to a vast extent. The character of this young prince formed a contrast to that of his father: he was not only an epicure, but, as Gibbon allows, “he attained the summit of vice and infamy.” Historians attribute the toleration which he granted the Christians, to the influence which Marcia, his favourite concubine, had obtained over his mind. She is said to have had a predilection for their religion, and to have employed her interest with Commodus in their behalf. There is nothing incredible in this, unless indeed the character of that lady should be thought incompatible with it. The Lord, in whose hand are the hearts of all men, and who turns them as the rivers of water, frequently sends his people relief in the most unexpected manner, and by means from which they would least apprehend it—thus impressing upon their minds a conviction of his own dominion and sovereignty, and of their entire dependence upon him.

In the year 192, Commodus was put to death, in consequence of a conspiracy raised against him by his own



domestics; when the choice of a successor fell on Pertinax, præfect of the city, an ancient senator of consular rank, whose conspicuous merit had broke through the obscurity of his birth, and raised him to the first honours of the state. The reign of this amiable prince, however, proved of short duration; for on the 28th March, of the same year, only eighty-six days after the death of Commodus, a general conspiracy broke out in the Roman camp, which the officers wanted either the power or inclination to suppress, and the emperor fell a victim to the rebellious fury of the Prætorian guards.

On the death of Pertinax the sovereign power devolved upon Severus, who, during the persecution of the churches of Lyons and Vienne, had sustained the rank of governor of that province. In the first years of his reign, he permitted the Christians to enjoy a continuance of that toleration which had been extended to them by Commodus and Pertinax. But the scene changed towards the latter end of this century, and about the tenth year of his reign, which falls in with the year 202, his native ferocity of temper broke out afresh, and kindled a very severe persecution against the Christians. He was then recently returned from the east, victorious; and the pride of prosperity induced him to forbid the propagation of the gospel. He passed a law by which every subject of the empire was prohibited to change the religion of his ancestors for that of the Christian or Jewish. Christians, however, still thought it right to obey God rather than man. Severus persisted, and exercised the usual cruelties. At this time Asia, Egypt, and the other provinces were deluged with the blood of the martyrs, as appears from the testimonies of Tertullian, Clemens of Alexandria, and other writers. It was this series of calamities, during which Leonides, the father of Origen, and Irenæus, pastor of the church at Lyons, suffered martyrdom, that

induced Tertullian to write his Apology, and several other books in defence of the Christians.

The mention of Tertullian naturally directs our attention to the progress of Christianity, in a region which we have hitherto had no occasion to notice, viz. the Roman province of Africa. This whole country, once the scene of Carthaginian greatness, abounded with Christians in the second century, though of the manner in which the gospel was introduced, and of the proceedings of its first preachers there, we have no account. A numerous church existed at Carthage in the latter end of the second and beginning of the third century, of which Tertullian was one of the pastors. He may be said to have flourished from the year 194 to 220, though, if we may rely on the correctness of some of our historians, "he exhibited a striking instance, how much wisdom and weakness, learning and ignorance, faith and folly, truth and error, goodness and delusion, may be mixed up in the composition of the same person."\* His works, which were written in Latin, have been handed down to us; and it certainly is matter of regret, that, in general, the subjects on which he wrote, are not more important. Nor can it be denied, that there was much of the ascetic in his composition. He seems to have been deeply impressed with apprehensions that a spirit of lukewarmness and indifference was coming upon the churches, and with the fear of their being infected by the customs of the pagans around them; which he laboured to counteract by enforcing a discipline rigorous in the extreme. It is however due to him to say, that he defended, with great clearness and ability, the doctrine of the revealed distinction in the Godhead, against Praxeas, who had propagated sentiments subversive of the Christian faith. In

\* Hawies's Church History, vol. i. p. 192.

that work he treats of the Trinity in unity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—yet one God;—of the Lord Jesus Christ as both God and man; as at once the Son of man and the Son of God;—and of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter and Sanctifier of believers; and this he describes as the rule of faith which had obtained from the beginning of the gospel.

But his *Apology* for the Christians is an invaluable treatise; it exhibits a most pleasing view of the spirit and behaviour of the disciples of Jesus at that time, and of their adherence to the faith, order, and discipline of the churches planted by the apostles. The reader will not be displeased at my introducing in this place, the following interesting sentences; it is however proper to premise, that I give them rather as an abridgment, than as an exact transcript of my author, though his ideas are carefully preserved.

“ We pray for the safety of the emperors to the eternal God, the true, the living God, whom emperors themselves would desire to be propitious to them, above all others who are called gods. We, looking up to heaven, with outstretched hands, because they are harmless, with naked heads, because we are not ashamed, without a prompter, because we pray from the heart; constantly pray for all emperors and kings, that they may have a long life, a secure empire, a safe palace, strong armies, a faithful senate, a well moralized people, a quiet state of the world; whatever Cæsar would wish for himself in his public or private capacity. I cannot solicit these things from any other than from HIM from whom I know I shall obtain them, if I ask agreeably to his will; because he alone can do these things: and I expect them from him, being his servant, who worship him alone, and am ready to lose my life in his service. Thus then let the claws of wild beasts pierce us, or their feet trample on

us, while our hands are stretched out to God : let crosses suspend us, let fires consume us, let swords pierce our breasts—a praying Christian is in a frame for enduring any thing. How is this, ye generous rulers ? Will ye kill the good subjects who supplicates God for the emperor ? Were we disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to avenge the injuries which we sustain. But God forbid that his people should vindicate themselves by human force ; or be reluctant to endure that by which their sincerity is evinced. Were we disposed to act the part, I will not say of secret assassins, but of open enemies, should we want forces and numbers ? It is true we are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your towns, cities, islands, castles, boroughs, councils, camps, courts, palaces, senate, forum ;\* *we leave you only your temples.* For what war should we not be ready and well prepared, even though unequal in numbers ; we, who die with so much pleasure, were it not that our religion requires us rather to suffer death than to inflict it ? If we were to make a general secession from your dominions, you would be astonished at your solitude. We are dead to all ideas of worldly honour and dignity ; nothing is more foreign to us than political concerns ; the whole world is our republic.

“ We are a body united in one bond of religion, discipline, and hope. We meet in our assemblies for prayer. We are compelled to have recourse to the divine oracles

\* I cannot but think that this language of Tertullian is much too strong, and that the reader who would not be misled, should receive it with some degree of qualification. There can be no doubt that the profession of Christianity had spread extensively at the commencement of the third century ; but paganism was still the religion of the empire, and if any reliance can be placed upon Gibbon's calculation as it respects this matter, “ not more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the Roman empire had enlisted themselves under the banners of the cross before the conversion of Constantine.”



for caution and recollection on all occasions. We nourish our faith by the word of God, we erect our hope, we fix our confidence, we strengthen our discipline, by repeatedly inculcating precepts, exhortations, corrections, and by excommunication when it is needful. This last, as being in the sight of God, is of great weight; and is a serious warning of the future judgment, if any one behave in so scandalous a manner as to be debarred from holy communion. Those who preside among us, are elderly persons, not distinguished for opulence, but worthiness of character. Every one pays something into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and according to his ability and inclination, for there is no compulsion. These gifts are, as it were, the deposit of piety. Hence we relieve and bury the needy, support orphans and decrepit persons; those who have suffered shipwreck, and those who, for the word of God, are condemned to the mines or imprisonment. This very charity of ours has caused us to be noticed by some: *See, say they, how these Christians love one another.*"

"But we Christians look upon ourselves, as one body, informed as it were by one soul; and, being thus incorporated by love, we can never dispute what we are to bestow upon our own members. And is it any great wonder, that such charitable brethren as enjoy all things in common, should have such frequent love-feasts? For this it is you traduce us, and reflect upon our little frugal suppers, not only as infamously wicked, but as scandalously excessive. The nature of this supper you may understand by its name, for it is the Greek word for love. We Christians think we can never be too expensive, because we consider all to be gain that is laid out in doing good. When therefore we are at the charge of an entertainment, it is to refresh the bowels of the needy. We feed the hungry, because we know God takes a peculiar

delight in seeing us do it. If therefore we feast only with such brave and excellent designs, I leave you from thence to guess at the rest of our discipline in matters of pure religion. Nothing earthly, nothing unclean, has ever admittance here. Our souls ascend in prayer to God, before we sit down to meat. We eat only what suffices nature, and drink no more than is strictly becoming chaste and regular persons. We sup as servants that know we must wake in the night to the service of our Master, and discourse as those who remember that they are in the hearing of God. When supper is ended, every one is invited forth to sing praises to God; and by this you may judge of the measure of drinking at a Christian feast. As we begin, so we conclude all with prayer, and depart with the same tenor of temperance and modesty we came; as men who have not so properly been drinking, as imbibing religion.”\*

There is something noble in the following appeal, with which Tertullian closes his apology.

“And now, O worshipful judges, proceed with your shew of justice, and believe me, ye will be still more and more just in the opinion of the people, the oftener you make them a sacrifice of Christians. Crucify, torture, condemn, grind us all to powder if you can; your injustice is an illustrious proof of our innocence, and for the proof of this it is that God permits us to suffer; and by your late condemnation of a Christian woman to the lust of a pander, rather than the rage of a lion, you notoriously confess that such a pollution is more abhorred by a Christian, than all the torments and deaths you can heap upon her. But do your worst, and rack your inventions for tortures for Christians. ’Tis all to no purpose; you do but attract the notice of the world, and make it fall

\* Reeves's *Apologies*, vol. i. p. 302—339.

the more in love with our religion. The more you mow us down, the thicker we spring up—the Christian blood you spill, is like the seed you sow; it springs from the earth again and fructifies the more. That which you reproach in us as stubbornness, has been the most instructive mistress in proselyting the world—for who has not been struck with the sight of what you call stubbornness, and from thence prompted to look into the reality and grounds of it; and whoever looked well into our religion that did not embrace it? and whoever embraced it [on proper grounds] that was not ready to die for it? For this reason it is that we thank you for condemning us, because there is such a happy variance and disagreement between the divine and human judgment, that when you condemn us upon earth, God absolves us in heaven.”

MINUCIUS FELIX was cotemporary with Tertullian, and rather before than after him. He had been a Roman orator, but, being converted to the Christian faith, he wrote an eloquent and learned defence of that religion, which Dr. Lardner thinks was published about the year 210. This work is in the form of dialogue, between Cæcilius, a heathen, and Octavius, a Christian—Minucius sitting as umpire between them. The style of Minucius possesses all the charms of Ciceronian eloquence; nor would it be an easy task for any translator of him to do justice to his original. Cæcilius, the heathen, in a long and declamatory harangue, brings forward all the common-place calumnies of his predecessors, and accuses the Christians as a desperate and unlawful faction, who poured contempt upon their deities, derided their worship, scoffed at their priests, and despised their temples as no better than charnel houses and heaps of dead men’s bones. Octavius, having patiently listened to this severe philippic, addresses himself to Minucius, and tells him, that he shall endeavour to the best of his ability, by stating the

truth, to exonerate his religion from the foul aspersions cast upon it by his opponent. He does not deny the fact, that the Christians poured contempt upon the gods of the heathen. On the contrary, he freely admits it, and proceeds to evince the vanity of the worship of their images. "The mice," says he, "the swallows, and the bats, know, insult, and sit upon your gods; and, unless you drive them away, they build their nests in their mouths; the spiders weave their webs over their faces. You first make them, then clean, wipe, and protect them, that you may fear and worship them. Should we view all your rites, there are many things which justly deserve to be laughed at—others that call for pity and compassion."

He then proceeds to discuss the subject with his opponent in regular order. He shews that man differs from the other creatures on this lower world, chiefly in this, that while the beasts of the field are created prone to the earth, bent downward by nature, and formed to look no further than the good of their bellies—man was created erect and upright, formed for the contemplation of the heavens, susceptible of reason and conscience—calculated to lead him to the knowledge and imitation of God. Hence he infers the absurdity of atheism and the necessity of a great first cause, as one of the clearest dictates of reason and conscience. "When you lift up your eyes to heaven," says he, "and survey the works of creation around you, what is so clear and undeniable, as that there is a God, supremely excellent in understanding, who inspires, moves, supports, and governs all nature. Consider the vast expanse of heaven, and the rapidity of its motion either when studded with stars by night, or enlightened with the sun by day; contemplate the almighty hand which poises them in their orbs, and balances them in their movement. Behold how the sun



regulates the year by its annual circuit, and how the moon measures round a month by its increase, its decay, and its total disappearance. Why need I mention the constant vicissitudes of light and darkness, for the alternate reparation of rest and labour? Does not the standing variety of seasons, proceeding in goodly order, bear witness to its divine author? The spring with her flowers, the summer with her harvest, the ripening autumn with her grateful fruits, and the moist and unctuous winter, are all equally necessary. What an argument for providence is this, which interposes and moderates the extremes of winter and summer with the allays of spring and autumn—thus enabling us to pass the year about with security and comfort, between the extremes of parching heat and of cold? Observe the sea, and you will find it bounded with a shore, a law which it cannot transgress. Look into the vegetable world, and see how all the trees draw their life from the bowels of the earth. View the ocean, in constant ebb and flow; and the fountains, running in full veins; with the rivers, perpetually gliding in their wonted channels. Why should I take up time in shewing how providentially this spot of earth is cantoned into hills, and dales, and plains? What need I speak of the various artillery for the defence of every animal—some armed with horns and hedged about with teeth, or fortified with hoofs and claws, or speared with stings, while others are swift of foot or of wing? But, above all, the beautiful structure of man most plainly speaks a God. Man, of stature straight, and countenance erect, with eyes placed above, like centinels, watching over the other senses within the tower.”

This may furnish a specimen of the elegant style, and powerful reasoning of this early Christian writer, in behalf of the existence of a great first cause and of a providence—in the clearness and force of which it may be

fairly doubted if he has ever been surpassed by any who have come after him.

Adverting to the accusation, that the Christians were in general a poor and despicable race of men, their apologist replies, "That the most of us are poor, is not our dishonour, but our glory. The mind, as it is dissipated by luxury, so it is strengthened by frugality. But how can a man be poor, who wants nothing, who covets not what is another's, who is rich towards God? That man is rather poor, who, when he has much, desires more. No man can be so poor as when he was born. The birds live without any patrimony; the beasts find pasture every day, and we feed upon them. Indeed they are created for our use, which, while we do not covet, we enjoy. That man goes happier to heaven, who is not burdened with an unnecessary load of riches. Did we think estates to be useful to us, we would beg them of God, who, being Lord of all, would afford us what is necessary. But we choose rather to contemn riches than to possess them, preferring innocence and patience to them, and desiring rather to be good than prodigal. Our courage is increased by infirmities, and affliction is often the school of virtue."

ATHENAGORAS lived in the reigns of Adrian and the Antonines. He was, in his younger days, a heathen philosopher, and designing to write against the Christians, sat down to read their scriptures, with the view of making his work more complete. A diligent inquiry into the divine oracles, however, brought him over to that faith which he wished to destroy. He drew up an Apology for the Christians, addressed to Marcus Aurelius, in which he complains, that while the other subjects of the Roman government were freely permitted to worship the deities according to their own voluntary choice, the Christians alone, whose worship was pure, simple, and

worthy of the Deity, were not only denied this privilege, but were most unjustly maligned, slandered, and persecuted. He vindicates them from the charge of atheism, of which they were accused by their heathen adversaries; refutes the calumny of their eating human flesh, and the impure and unnatural connections with which they were charged, by shewing the sanctity of their doctrines, and the purity and innocence of their lives. "Why should you be offended at our very name," says he, "the bare name does not deserve your hatred; it is wickedness alone that deserves punishment. If we are convicted of any crime, less or more, let us be punished, but not merely for the name of a Christian; for no Christian can be a bad man, unless he acts contrary to his profession. We are accused, 'that we do not worship the same gods as your cities, and offer them sacrifices.' But consider, O emperor, that the Maker and Governor of this world stands in no need of blood and sweet-smelling incense; he delights in himself, nothing is wanting in him. The sacrifice he demands is a rational and acceptable service."

Again, "There is an infamous report," says he, "that we are guilty of three great crimes, viz. impiety against the gods, feeding on murdered infants, and of incestuous copulations. If these be true, spare neither age nor sex; punish us, with our wives and children; extirpate us out of the world, if any among us live as beasts (though even the beasts of the field do not these abominable things.) But if any man be baser than a beast, to commit such wickedness, let him be punished for it. If these, however, be false and scandalous calumnies against us, notice them as such. Inquire into our lives, into our opinions, into our obedience to authority, our concern for your person and government; allow us only that common justice and equity you grant your enemies, and

we ask no more, being assured of the victory, and are willing to lay down our lives for the truth." \*

Lastly, in vindication of their manner of life, Athenagoras says, " Among us the meanest day-labourers, and old women, though not able to dispute about their profession, yet can demonstrate its usefulness in their lives and good works. They do not, indeed, critically weigh their words, and recite elegant orations, but they manifest honest and virtuous actions, while, being buffeted they strike not again, nor sue those at law who spoil and plunder them ; they give liberally to those that ask, and love their neighbour as themselves. Thus we do, because we are assured that there is a God who superintends human affairs, who made both us and the whole world, and to whom we must at last give an account of all the actions of our lives." †

These are, unquestionably, triumphant appeals, and reflect the highest honour on the Christians of those days. But, however eloquent and forcible, they appear to have been little regarded by the rulers and magistrates. We have taken a review of the state of things throughout the second century ; and painful as the recital is, we shall find that matters were little, if at all improved, during some parts of the third, on which we are now entering. " That the Christians suffered in this century,"

\* Athenagoras' *Legatio pro Christianis*, c. 4.

† It has been made a question by some, how far it is probable the apologies which were, from time to time, drawn up by the Christians and addressed to the emperors, ever reached the hands of those monarchs. But with all their pomp and mightiness, there is good reason to think that the Roman emperors were more accessible than many of the petty sovereigns of Europe are in the present day. Augustus, for example, suffered all sorts of persons to approach him ; and when a poor man once offered him a petition in a timorous manner, with a hand half extended and half drawn back, the emperor jested with him, and told him he looked as if he was giving an half-penny to an elephant.—*Jortin's Remarks*.



says Mosheim, "calamities and injuries of the most dreadful kind, is a matter that admits of no debate; nor was there, indeed, any period of it in which they were not *exposed* to perpetual dangers. The law which Severus had enacted, forbidding his subjects to change their religion, was, in its effects, most prejudicial to the Christians; for though it did not formally condemn them, and seemed only adapted to put a stop to the further progress of the gospel, yet it induced rapacious and unjust magistrates to persecute, even unto death, the poorer sort among the Christians; that thus the richer might be led, through fear of similar treatment, to purchase their safety at an expensive rate."

It seems to have been during the reign of Severus, that the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, with that of their companions, took place, at Carthage, in Africa, the residence of Tertullian, about the year 202. The account is too interesting to be omitted; and it will serve, in addition to the history already detailed of the transactions at Lyons and Vienne, to give a clear idea of the manner in which these ancient persecutions were wont to be conducted. Augustine refers to the case of Perpetua, in his Works, vol. vii. p. 304; and Fleury has also given a copious account of the subject, vol. i. b. vi.

On this occasion, three young men, whose names were Saturninus, Secundulus, and Revocatus, were apprehended on a charge of being Christians, (probably occasioned by a rumour that they were all of them about to be baptized and added to the church), and along with them, two females of the names of Felicitas and Perpetua; the latter a widow of the age of twenty-two, of a good family, and well educated, having a father and mother living, besides two brothers, and an infant at the breast. The father of Perpetua, who alone of all the family continued a heathen, no sooner heard that his

daughter was informed against, than he had recourse to every method of persuasion and even of compulsion, to induce her to desist from her purpose of suffering martyrdom; so that she rejoiced when he left her; and in this interval she and the rest were baptized. Some days afterward, they were all thrown into prison, where the treatment she met with very much affected her at first, particularly the darkness of the place, the heat occasioned by the number of prisoners, the rudeness of the soldiers, and especially her anxiety about her child. Two of the deacons of the church, however, Tertius and Pomponius, who ministered to their wants, procured by the influence of money the removal of all the Christian prisoners into a more airy part of the prison, where Perpetua had the opportunity of suckling her child, which was ready to die for want thereof. In this situation, she comforted her mother, and encouraged her brother, entrusting to him the care of her infant son; and was, according to her own expression, as happy as if she had been in a palace. At this time she had a remarkable dream, from which she inferred that she should certainly suffer; but by which she was nevertheless greatly encouraged in her resolution.

A few days after this, a report was prevalent, that these Christian prisoners would soon be called before the governor; on which her father, overwhelmed with grief, came to her, entreating her to have compassion on his grey hairs and on her mother, brothers, and child, which he said could not survive her. This he did, kissing her hands, and throwing himself at her feet, evincing stronger affection for her than he had before done. This much increased her concern; add to which, that he was the only relative she had who would not think themselves, in reality, honoured by her conduct. To all his entreaties, however, she uniformly returned this answer,

that she was not at her own disposal, but at that of God.

On the ensuing day, while she and her friends were dining, they were summoned to an audience in the public forum, where a prodigious crowd was assembled. Here all her fellow prisoners confessed that they were Christians; but before Perpetua had an opportunity of doing it in the customary form, her father presented himself, holding her child in his arms, and supplicating her to have compassion upon him. In these entreaties he was joined by Hilarianus, the Procurator, who besought her to think of her aged father and her own child, and to sacrifice for the safety of the emperor. She only answered, that she was a Christian, and could not do it.

After this the father was commanded to desist; but showing a reluctance to retire, one of the lictors struck him with a rod, which affected her, she said, as much as if she had herself been struck. However, having all made their confession, they were sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts; notwithstanding which they returned to the prison filled with joy. Perpetua now sent Pomponius, the deacon, to request that her child might be sent to her, that as heretofore she might have the privilege of suckling it; but that indulgence was denied her. She bore the disappointment, however, with fortitude, even greater than she herself could have expected.

After a few days, Pudeus, the jailor, being favourably inclined towards them, gave permission to their friends to visit them, and when the time of exhibition drew near, the father of Perpetua also renewed his visit. He now threw himself upon the ground, tore his beard, leaving nothing either to be said or done, which he thought could tend to move her; but without any other effect than to excite her pity towards him.

The author of the narrative next proceeds to give an

account of some of the other prisoners; and the case of Felicitas is almost as interesting as that of Perpetua. Being eight months advanced in pregnancy, she was fearful lest her execution should be put off till another time, and that then she should die in the company of ordinary malefactors. Her companions also were affected at the reflection of going without her. Three days before the exhibition, however, she was delivered; and, being in great pain, those who were about her, asked how she would be able to endure the being exposed to wild beasts, when she was so much affected with the pains of childbirth. She replied, that in this case she was left to herself, but that in her other sufferings she should have another to support her, even Him for whom she suffered. Being delivered of a daughter, a sister of her's undertook to bring it up. Secundulus died in prison; but they had been joined by another of their friends called Saturus, who, after they were apprehended, had voluntarily surrendered himself.

The day preceding the exhibition, they all joined in a love-feast with their Christian friends who had permission to visit them, in the presence of many strangers whom curiosity had brought to the place. To those the prisoners expressed great joy in the idea of their approaching sufferings, and endeavoured to engage their attention to the great cause for which they were about to suffer. Saturus bade them observe their countenances, that they might know them all again the next day. From this extraordinary spectacle, the strangers retired with marks of astonishment, and many of them afterwards became converts.

When the day of exhibition arrived, they all went from the prison, with erect and cheerful countenances, trembling, says our author, with joy rather than with fear. In particular, Perpetua walked in such a manner as struck



the spectators with particular respect; and Felicitas rejoiced that, being delivered of her child, she should accompany her friends to this glorious combat. On reaching the gate of the amphitheatre, the officers, according to custom, began to clothe the men in the dresses of the priests of Saturn, and the women in those of the priestesses of Ceres. But when they remonstrated against the injustice of being compelled by force to do that, for refusing which they were willing to lay down their lives, the tribune granted them the privilege of dying in their own habits.

They then entered the amphitheatre; when Perpetua advanced singing hymns, and her three male companions solemnly exhorted the people as they went along. Coming in view of the Proprætor, they said, "You judge us, but God will judge you." This so enraged the populace that, at their request, all the three were scourged; but in this they rejoiced, as having the honour to share in one part of the sufferings of their Saviour.

When the wild beasts were let loose, Saturninus, according to a wish which he had previously expressed, died by the attack of several of them rushing upon him at the same time; and Revocatus was killed by a leopard and a bear. Saturus was first exposed to a wild bear; but while the attending officer was gored by the animal so that he died on the following day, he himself was only dragged about and not materially hurt. A bear too, to which he was next exposed, would not go out of its den to meddle with him. He was, however, thrown in the way of a leopard, towards the end of the exhibition, and so much blood gushed out at one of his bites, that the spectators ridiculed him, as being *baptized with blood*. Not being quite killed, he, when the animal was withdrawn, addressed Pudeus, the jailor, exhorting him to steadfastness in the faith, and not to be disheartened by

his sufferings. He even took a ring from his finger, and dipping it in one of his wounds, gave it to him as a pledge.

Perpetua and Felicitas were first enclosed in a net, and then exposed to a wild cow. But this sight struck the spectators with horror, as the former was a delicate woman, and the breasts of the latter were streaming with milk after her delivery. They were therefore recalled, and exposed in a common loose dress. Perpetua was first tossed by the beast; and, being thrown down, she had the presence of mind to compose her dress as she lay on the ground. Then rising, and seeing Felicitas much more torn than herself, she gave her her hand, and assisted her to rise; and for some time they both stood together, near the gate of the amphitheatre. Thither Perpetua sent for her brother, and exhorted him to continue firm in the faith, to love his fellow Christians, and not to be discouraged by her sufferings.

Being all in a mangled condition, they were now taken to the usual place of execution, to be despatched with a sword; but the populace requesting that they should be removed to another place, where the execution might be seen to more advantage, they got up of their own accord to go thither. Then, having given each other the kiss of charity, they quietly resigned themselves to their fate. In walking, Saturus had supported Perpetua, and he expired the first. She was observed to direct a young and ignorant soldier, who was appointed to be her executioner, in what manner he should perform his office.\*

\* *Opuscula tria veterum auctorum, FASTIDII EPISCOPI Passio S. S. Martyrum PERPETUÆ et FELICITATIS, &c. a Luca Holstenio, 8vo. Rom. 1663.* The editor of this publication, Lucas Holstenius, was Keeper of the Vatican Library, at Rome, a person of great learning, and the friend of our poet Milton. He studied three years at Oxford, and had a great esteem and affection for Milton, who visited him at Rome, and received many civilities from him there. See *Bp. Newton's Life of Milton, prefixed to his edition of Paradise Lost. 8vo. p. 13.*

In the year 211, the tyrant Severus died, after a reign of eighteen years, and the churches found repose and tranquillity under his son and successor Caracalla, though, in other respects, a monster of wickedness, whose life, says Gibbon, disgraced human nature. Yet he neither oppressed the Christians himself, nor permitted any others to treat them with cruelty or injustice. And though few men have ever exceeded him in the ferocious vices, nevertheless, during the six years and two months that he reigned, the disciples found in him friendship and protection.

Macrinus, who from an obscure extraction had been raised to an elevated rank in the Roman army, and who had been accessory to the death of Caracalla, was elected by the army to fill the imperial throne; but he had reigned only one year and two months, when he was succeeded by Heliogabalus, a youth of fifteen, whose follies and vices were infamous; and, although, as Mosheim says, perhaps the most odious of all mortals, yet he shewed no marks of bitterness or aversion to the disciples of Christ. He was slain at the age of eighteen, having reigned three years and nine months, and was succeeded, in the year 222, by his cousin, Alexander Severus, who was then only in the sixteenth year of his age; a prince distinguished by a noble assemblage of illustrious virtues, and esteemed one of the best characters in profane history. He did not indeed abrogate the existing laws against the Christians, which accounts for the mention of a few martyrdoms under his administration. He nevertheless shewed them, in various ways, and on many occasions, unequivocal testimonies of kindness and regard. Some attribute this to the instructions and counsels of his mother Julia Mammæa, for whom he had a high degree of love and veneration; and who was herself favourably disposed towards the Christians. Being

at Antioch with her son, A.D. 229, she sent for the renowned Origen, who resided at Alexandria, to come to her, that she might enjoy the pleasure and advantages of his conversation. It does not appear that either the emperor or his mother, so far understood and believed the Christian doctrine as to make an open profession of it, though their favourable sentiments induced them to tolerate the sect, during their lives, which were prolonged to the year 235, when they were both put to death in a conspiracy raised by Maximin, a man who had risen from the humblest ranks of life to a dignified station in the army, and who now was made emperor.

From the death of Severus, which happened in 211, to the commencement of the reign of Maximin, A.D. 235, a period of about five and twenty years, the condition of the Christians was, in some places prosperous, and in all, tolerable. But with Maximin the aspect of affairs changed. The character of this latter monarch formed a striking contrast to that of his predecessor. The former tyrants, says Gibbon, viz. Caligula and Nero, Commodus and Caracalla, were all dissolute and inexperienced youths, educated in the purple, and corrupted by the pride of empire, the luxury of Rome, and the perfidious voice of flattery. The cruelty of Maximin was derived from a different source—the fear of contempt. Though he depended on the attachment of the soldiers, who loved him for virtues like their own, he was conscious that his mean and barbarous origin, his savage appearance, and his total ignorance of the arts and institutions of civil life, formed a very unfavourable contrast with the amiable manners of Alexander Severus. He remembered, that, in his humbler fortune, he had often waited before the door of the haughty nobles of Rome, and had been denied admittance by the insolence of their slaves. He recollected also, the friendship of a



few who had relieved his poverty and assisted his rising hopes. But those who had spurned, and those who had protected him, were guilty of the same crime, the knowledge of his original obscurity. For this crime many were put to death; and by the execution of several of his benefactors, Maximin published, in characters of blood, the indelible history of his baseness and ingratitude.

The sanguinary soul of the tyrant was open to every suspicion against those among his subjects, who were the most distinguished by their birth or merit. Whenever he was alarmed by the sound of treason, his cruelty was unbounded and unrelenting. A conspiracy against his life was either discovered or imagined, and Magnus, a consular senator, named as the principal author of it. Without a witness, without a trial, and without an opportunity of defence, Magnus, with four thousand of his supposed accomplices, were put to death. Confiscation, exile, or simple death, were, however, esteemed uncommon instances of his lenity. Some of the unfortunate sufferers, he ordered to be sewed up in the hides of slaughtered animals, others to be exposed to wild beasts, others again to be beaten to death with clubs. Throughout the Roman world, a general cry of indignation was heard, imploring vengeance against the common enemy of human kind, and, at length, by an act of private oppression, a peaceful and unarmed province was driven into rebellion against him.\*

The malice of Maximin, against the house of the late emperor, by whom the Christians had been so peculiarly favoured, stimulated him to persecute them bitterly, and he gave orders to put to death the pastors of the churches, whom he knew Alexander had treated as his

\* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, vol. i. ch. 7.

intimate friends. The persecution, however, was not confined to them : others suffered at the same time ; and a letter from Firmilian to Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, preserved in the works of the latter, informs us that the flame extended to Cappadocia and Pontus.\* Ambrose, the friend of Origen, and Protoctetus, pastor of the church in Cæsarea, suffered much in the course of it, and to them Origen dedicated his Book of Martyrs. He himself was obliged to retire ; but the tyrant's reign lasted only three years, in which time it must be confessed that the rest of the world had participated of his cruelties as much as the Christians.† But the name of Origen is too important to be passed over in a history of the Christian church, with only a casual or incidental mention. “ He was a man,” says Dr. Priestley, “ so remarkable for his piety, genius, and application, that he must be considered an honour to Christianity and to human nature.” Even Jerome, his great adversary, admits that he was a great man from his infancy. His history is given in considerable detail by Eusebius, who tells us, that this very eminent man was born at Alexandria, in Egypt, A. D. 185. His father Leonides, from whom he received the first rudiments of his education, bestowed uncommon pains upon it ; and afterwards had him instructed by the ablest masters of the age, among whom were St. Clement and Ammonius Saccas, an eminent philosopher of Alexandria, the founder of the Eclectic sect. His early improvements were such as gave his worthy parent the greatest satisfaction. He was only seventeen years of age when the persecution under Severus began in Alexandria and his father was apprehended and confined ; yet he would, at that early period of life, have fain thrown himself in the way of the

\* Cyprian's Works, Letter 75. p. 256.

† Eusebius, b. 6. ch. 28. Orosius, b. 7. ch. 19. • Origen, tom. 28.

persecutors, if his mother, after her most earnest entreaties had failed, had not hid his clothes in order to prevent him going abroad. He, however, wrote to his father, exhorting him to steadfastness in his profession, and not to be moved by any considerations about his family, though, in the event of his death, there would be a widow and seven children left in great poverty; and, thus encouraged, his father was beheaded, submitting to his destiny with becoming resolution.

A large family being left in this destitute condition, a rich lady of Alexandria, the friend of genius and virtue, took Origen into her family. She, at the same time, entertained in her house a person of distinguished abilities, who held the principles of the *Gnostics*, and her table was the resort of other men of letters. But though Origen could not refrain from associating with this heretic, such was the firmness of his mind and the fixedness of his principles that he would never join with him in prayer. In his eighteenth year he was elected master of the great School of Alexandria, which had been deserted by its late master in the time of persecution; and not chusing to be unnecessarily burthensome to his benefactress, he quitted her mansion, and provided for his own support by giving lessons of instruction in grammar and the principles of religion. So devoted, however, did he become to the study of sacred literature, that he wholly abandoned the teaching of grammar, and sold his library, consisting of the works of the heathen philosophers and poets, for which the purchaser engaged to pay him four *oboli* a day. While he was thus employed, many of his pupils became martyrs; and, being in so conspicuous a station, it was with great difficulty that he himself escaped. Being obliged to instruct women as well as men, and having adopted a plan of great austerity of manners, in a fit of enthusiastic fervor, he made a literal application

to himself of Christ's words, Matt. xix. 12, an action for which he greatly condemned himself, in the subsequent period of his life, when he had reaped the benefit of experience and reflection.

Applying himself with extraordinary assiduity to the duties of his office as a teacher, his reputation rapidly increased, and it was still further augmented by an edition of the Old Testament, with all the different Greek versions then extant accompanying it, ranged in separate columns. These were the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, the Septuagint, that of Theodotion, and two others; with the Hebrew text in Hebrew characters, and the same in Greek letters. This constituted eight columns in the whole, but it was called *Hexapla*, from having the six Greek versions. Finding this work too expensive and unwieldy for general use, he afterwards reduced it in both respects by composing what is called the *Tetrapla*, which contained only the first four of the Greek versions already mentioned.

Some time after, Origen quitted his employment and his studies, for the purpose of making a visit to Rome, for what particular object does not appear; but, returning to Alexandria, many persons of learning from distant places resorted to him; and the bishop of Alexandria being applied to by an Arabian prince for a person to instruct him in the Christian faith, he made choice of Origen in preference to any other.

At the time that Alexandria was ravaged by Caracalla, Origen went to Cæsarea in Palestine, and there the bishop engaged him to expound the scriptures publicly in the church, though he had not then been ordained. This gave umbrage to Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria, who insisted on his returning home again, which he did. He nevertheless visited Cæsarea not long afterwards, where he received ordination, which gave such



offence to Demetrius, that from that time he did every thing in his power to injure him, particularly by exposing the rash action mentioned above; though when it was communicated to him in confidence, he had promised never to divulge it, and at that time did not even blame him for it, but encouraged him to apply with vigour to the duties of his profession.

Demetrius at first got him banished from Alexandria, in a council held A. D. 231, though on what pretence does not distinctly appear. In a second council he was deposed from the priesthood and excommunicated; and the sentence was of course ratified by distant churches. Still, however, he was received at Cæsarea, and by other bishops who became greatly attached to him, and undertook his defence. While he resided at Cæsarea, numbers resorted to him from distant quarters for instruction; and among others Gregory, afterwards bishop of Neocesarea, and his brother Athenodorus, whom he persuaded to abandon profane literature for the study of Theology; and they attended his lectures five years. Firmilian, also bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, a distinguished character in his time, was so attached to Origen that he strove to prevail upon him to remove into his province and reside with him.

In this situation he composed his commentaries on the scriptures, dictating, it is said, to seven notaries and sometimes more; and employing as many scribes to take fair copies, the expence of which was cheerfully defrayed by Ambrosius, whom Origen had brought over from the Valentinians to the catholic church. When he was turned sixty, he permitted scribes to copy after him as he delivered his discourses from the pulpit. It was in this period of his life that he drew up his excellent books against Celsus, in defence of Christianity. This latter was an Epicurean philosopher, who undertook to calum-

niat Christianity, in the most outrageous manner. Origen most ably answered all his objections, and vindicated the truth of his own religion, by the prophecies concerning Christ, by the evidence of miracles, and by an appeal to the holy influence of the gospel evinced in the lives of his disciples. This is considered by the learned to be the most valuable of all his writings, which were certainly very voluminous, for Eusebius says he wrote five and twenty volumes upon the gospel by Matthew! It must be remembered, however, that the ancients gave the title of *volume* to very small tracts.

In the persecution under Maximin, Origen concealed himself by retiring to Athens, where, however, he was not idle, but continued to write commentaries. In the persecution under Decius, he was apprehended, and though then far advanced in life, he shewed an example in his own conduct of that fortitude which he had so early in life, and so often afterwards, recommended to others. He was confined in the interior part of the prison, and there fastened with an iron chain, his feet stretched in the stocks to the fourth hole, a circumstance evidently mentioned by the historian to intimate that it was a posture of extreme pain, and where he was kept for several days. He bore, with invincible fortitude, a great variety of tortures to which his persecutors subjected him, taking care that they should not absolutely deprive him of life; and at length he was threatened to be burned alive. But neither what he felt, nor what he feared, at all moved him. He survived this persecution—and lived to write letters afterwards highly edifying to those of his persecuted brethren who were brought into similar circumstances; and, at the advanced age of seventy, in the year 254, died at Tyre, a natural death.

From the death of Maximin to the reign of Decius, the Christians enjoyed considerable repose, and the gospel

made an extensive progress. Indeed, with the exception of the short reign of Maximin, they suffered but little persecution for nearly half a century, and the effects were but too manifest in the melancholy state of the churches at this time,—in the laxity of their discipline, and the general lukewarmness which had come upon them in their profession. The simplicity and purity of the Christian religion was greatly corrupted, and the usual concomitants of a season of worldly ease and prosperity, viz. ambition, pride, and luxury, too generally prevailed among both pastors and people. In such a state of things, it cannot surprize a reflecting mind, that HE who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holds the stars in his right hand—who has declared that he will make all the churches to know that it is HE who searches the reins and hearts, and will give to every one according to his works—should interpose at this time to vindicate his own cause, and reclaim the wanderings of his people.

No sooner had Decius ascended the throne than a tempest was raised, in which the fury of persecution fell in a dreadful manner upon the Church of Christ. Whether it were from an ill-grounded fear of the Christians, or from a violent zeal for the superstitions of his ancestors, does not appear; but it is certain that he issued edicts of the most sanguinary kind, commanding the prætors, on pain of death, either to extirpate the whole body of Christians, without exception, or to force them by torments of various kinds to return to the pagan worship. Hence in all the provinces of the empire, during a space of two years, multitudes of Christians were put to death by the most horrid punishments which an ingenious barbarity could invent.

This trying state of things was continued, with more or less intermission, during the reigns of Gallus, Valerian,

Diocletian, and others of the Roman emperors ; but the detail is harassing to the feelings, and instead of prosecuting it circumstantially, I shall dismiss the subject by an extract from Dr. Chandler's History of Persecutions, relating to this period. "The most excessive and outrageous barbarities," says he, "were made use of upon all who would not blaspheme Christ and offer incense to the imperial gods. They were publicly whipped,—drawn by the heels through the streets of cities,—racked till every bone of their body was disjoined,—had their teeth beat out,—their noses, hands, and ears cut off,—sharp pointed spears run under their nails,—were tortured with melted lead thrown on their naked bodies,—had their eyes dug out,—their limbs cut off,—were condemned to the mines,—ground between stones,—stoned to death,—burnt alive,—thrown headlong from the high buildings,—beheaded,—smothered in burning lime kilns,—run through the body with sharp spears,—destroyed with hunger, thirst, and cold,—thrown to the wild beasts,—broiled on gridirons with slow fires,—cast by heaps into the sea,—crucified,—scraped to death with sharp shells,—torn in pieces by the boughs of trees,—and, in a word, destroyed by all the various methods that the most diabolical subtlety and malice could devise." \*

When the persecution arose under the emperor Decius, or rather, as it is expressed by a late writer, "when the gates of hell were once more opened, and merciless executioners were let loose upon the defenceless churches, who deluged the earth with blood," (A. D. 249.) Cyprian was presbyter of the church of Carthage, having been ordained the preceding year. He was soon marked out as

\* *Introduction to Limborch's History of the Inquisition*, vol. 1. sect. 1. p. 14. Should any one suspect Dr. Chandler of having overcharged the picture in this dreadful detail, I must entreat him to look into any of the larger histories of this period, and he will soon be undeceived.



a victim to imperial fury, but he prudently fled from Carthage, in consequence of which he was proscribed, and his effects were seized. He has been censured by some persons as a deserter of his flock; but the firmness and Christian piety with which he afterwards (under the reign of Valerian, A. D. 258.) laid down his life, affords a presumption that he had not retired for want of courage. His works, which consist of a collection of his epistles, eighty-three in number, and several tracts, contain much information respecting the state of Christianity at that period, at the same time that they display a benevolent and pious mind, and evince much of the character of the Christian pastor, in the affectionate solicitude with which he watched over his flock. The letters which he wrote during his retirement, give a distressing picture of the effects which had been produced upon the churches by that state of tranquillity and exemption from suffering, which, with little interruption, they had enjoyed from the death of Severus, in 211, to the reign of Decius in 249,—a period of about forty years.

“It must be owned and confessed,” says he, “that the outrageous and heavy calamity, which hath almost devoured our flock, and continues to devour it to this day, hath happened to us because of our sins, since we keep not the way of the Lord, nor observe his heavenly commands, which were designed to lead us to salvation. Christ, our Lord, fulfilled the will of the Father, but we neglect the will of Christ. Our principal study is to get money and estates; we follow after pride; we are at leisure for nothing but emulation and quarrelling, and have neglected the simplicity of the faith. We have renounced this world in words only, and not in deed. Every one studies to please himself, and to displease others.”\* It is impossible for us not to be struck with

\* Cyprian's Works, Epist. xi.

the shocking contrast which this picture presents, from that drawn by Tertullian about fifty years before. It seems even to have staggered the credibility of some writers. Dr. Jortin, for example, remarks, that "Cyprian has described, in very strong terms, the relaxation of discipline and manners which had ensued; which yet may require some abatement. His vehement temper," says he, "his indignation against vice, and his African eloquence, might induce him to make free with a figure called *exaggeration*."\* But, unhappily, Cyprian's account is confirmed by the testimony of Eusebius, who was nearly cotemporary with him; and, which is still worse, it is put beyond all dispute by the immense number of defections from the Christian profession which every where abounded when the persecution, set on foot by Decius, commenced, and which occasioned great commotions in all the churches.

"Through too much liberty," says Eusebius, "they grew negligent and slothful, envying and reproaching one another; waging, as it were, civil wars among themselves, bishops quarreling with bishops, and the people divided into parties. Hypocrisy and deceit were grown to the highest pitch of wickedness. They were become so insensible as not so much as to think of appeasing the divine anger; but, like atheists, they thought the world destitute of any providential government and care, and thus added one crime to another. The bishops themselves had thrown off all concern about religion; were perpetually contending with one another, and did nothing but quarrel with and threaten, and envy, and hate one another;—they were full of ambition, and tyrannically used their power."† Such was the deplorable state of the churches, which God, as Eusebius justly remarks, first

\* Remarks on Eccles. Hist. vol. 1. p. 376.

† Eusebius's Hist. b. 8. ch. 1.

punished with a gentle hand; but when they grew hardened and incurable in their vices, he was pleased to let in the most grievous persecutions upon them, under Diocletian, which exceeded, in severity and length, all that had gone before. It began in the year 302, and lasted ten years.

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#### SECTION IV.

*Reflections on the history of the Christian church during the first three centuries; with a View of the rise of Antichrist.*

IN reviewing the history of the christian church, from the first propagation of the gospel until the reign of Constantine, it can scarcely fail to strike the readers's attention, that the Christian profession is marked, during this period, with a peculiar character, in distinction from what it sustained after the accession of Constantine to the throne, when the Christian religion was taken under his fostering care, and supported by the civil government. The first propagation of the Christian faith was not only unaided but directly opposed in most instances, by the civil government in the different countries in which it spread. The publishers of the gospel were, in general, plain and unlearned men, destitute of all worldly influence and power; their doctrine was in itself obnoxious, and their appearance little calculated to procure it a favourable hearing; nor could they present to the view of men any other inducement to embrace their testimony, than the prospect of life and immortality in the world to come; with the certainty, that through much tribulation believers must enter into the kingdom of God. The success of their doctrine stood in direct opposition to the power of

princes, the wisdom of philosophers, the intrigues of courts, the enmity of the pagan priesthood, with all the weight of an established system of idolatry and superstition; it could, therefore, only make its way by sustaining and overcoming the malice and rage of its enemies.

In the view that we have taken of the Christian history during the preceding period, it appears uniformly in harmony with this representation. The general character of the disciples of Christ is that of a suffering people; and, notwithstanding some intervals of repose occasionally intervening, in general the progress of the gospel is traced in the blood of the saints, and its power and evidence made conspicuous in prevailing against the most formidable opposition. Thus the excellency of its power appeared to be of God, and not of man. While the Christian cause was thus opposed to the world, and made its way by its own divine energy, the general purity of its profession was preserved; for, what could induce men to embrace it, but a conviction of its heavenly origin and importance? So long as the Christian profession was thus circumstanced, its success carried with it its own witness. But the scene is altogether changed, when we view the state of matters after the ascension of Constantine; for then, instead of the teachers of Christianity being called upon to shew their attachment to it by self-denial and suffering for its sake, we see them exalted to worldly honour and dignity; and the holy and heavenly religion of Jesus converted into a system of pride, domination, and hypocrisy, and becoming, at length, the means of gratifying the vilest lusts and passions of the human heart. The consequence of such a change in the state of things may be easily anticipated by those who have any proper views of the corruption of human nature; and it corresponds with matter of fact



For no sooner do we perceive the teachers in the church, who had hitherto been the foremost in sustaining the opposition of the persecuting powers, and animating their flocks to a patient continuance in bearing the cross —no sooner do we see them invested with secular honours, immense wealth, and elevated to dignity, than the first object of their lives seems to have been to maintain their power and pre-eminence, and aspiring at dominion over the bodies and consciences of men. From the days of Constantine, the corruption of the Christian profession proceeded with rapid progress. Many evils, probably, existed before this period, which prepared the way for the events that were to follow; but when the influence of the secular power became an engine of the clergy, to be exercised in their kingdom, it need not be a matter of surprise that the progress became exceedingly rapid in converting the religion of Christ into a system of spiritual tyranny, idolatry, superstition, and hypocrisy, until it arrived at its full height in the Roman hierarchy, when, what is called THE CHURCH became the sink of iniquity.

That such a display of human depravity as we shall have to detail in the succeeding events of church history, should be exhibited under a profession of Christianity, may very reasonably excite our astonishment. Many, indeed, without discriminating between Christianity and its corruptions, have found what they conceive a sufficient justification of their own skepticism, in the many abominations which have been, and still are, committed under the Christian name. And it must be allowed, that it is one of the most plausible and successful arguments in encouraging and supporting a skeptical state of mind, to paint the Christian system as it appears the engine of priestcraft, and the support of spiritual tyranny, idolatry, and superstition. But genuine Christianity is no more accountable for these enormities, than, what is called,

the religion of nature is for all the absurd and superstitious rites of paganism.

It may be proper, therefore, to observe, that the greatest iniquity that has been discovered in what is called the Christian church, admitting the evil in its full extent, is but the accomplishment of what was before predicted in the sacred scriptures; and, considered in this view, it presents us with a most powerful argument in confirmation of the prophetic word. In the establishment of Christianity by Constantine, the obstruction which had hitherto operated against the full manifestation of the antichristian power, being removed, the current of events gradually brought matters to that state, in which “the man of sin” became fully revealed, “sitting in the temple of God, and shewing himself as God.”

The apostles of Jesus Christ gave many intimations in their writings of the corruptions which should arise under the Christian profession at a future period. There were not wanting symptoms of this even in their own days, as appears from the following passages. When the apostle Paul delivered to the elders of the church at Ephesus, a solemn warning to take heed to themselves and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, he adds, as the reason of it, “for I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” Acts xx. 29, 30. The jealousy and fear which he entertained relative to the influence of false teachers, is manifest in the following passage. “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ: For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no wonder, for Satan himself

is transformed into an angel of light, therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed into ministers of righteousness." (2 Cor. xi. 3, 13, 14, 15.) The same general caution against the effects which should proceed from false teachers, is very plainly given by the apostle Peter. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you, whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." 2 Pet. ii. 1—3. To these passages, and many others that might be adduced, as calculated to awaken the attention of Christians to the dangers they should be exposed to from corrupt teachers, we may particularly add the following, as it not only foretells but describes the nature of the apostacy that should take place, and at a period remote from the time when the predictions were delivered. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their consciences seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth." 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. Again, "This know also, that in the last days perilous time shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady,

high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;—having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” 2 Tim. iii. 1—5. But of all the predictions contained in the New Testament, the most particular and express description of the antichristian power that should arise under the Christian name, is the following. “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled; neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” 2 Thess. ii. 1—10.

In this representation of the apostacy from the purity of the Christian faith and its influence, which terminated in the man of sin sitting in the temple of God, we may notice the following particulars:

1. That the apostle describes its origin as taking place in his own day. “The mystery of iniquity doth



already work," ver. 7. The seed was then sown; idolatry was already stealing into the churches. 1 Cor. x. 14. A voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels. Col. ii. 18. Men of corrupt minds, destitute of the truth, supposing that gain was godliness, and teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre-sake. Men of this cast appear to have early abounded, and, as acting not wholly in direct opposition to Christianity, but corrupting it in the way of deceit and hypocrisy. During the whole progress towards the full revelation of the man of sin, there was no direct disavowal of the truth of Christianity; it was "a form of godliness without the power of it."

2. There is an evident intimation in this passage of an obstacle or hindrance in the way of this power being fully revealed. "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, &c." ver. 6, 7. Without going into any minute and critical examination of these verses, it is obvious that the wicked power which is here the subject of the apostle's discourse, and denominated the man of sin, had not then been fully displayed, and that there existed some obstacle to a complete revelation of the mystery of iniquity. The apostle uses a particular caution when hinting at it; but the Thessalonians, he says, knew of it; probably from the explanation he had given them verbally, when he was with them. It can scarcely be questioned, that the hindrance or obstacle, referred to in these words, was the heathen or pagan Roman government, which acted as a restraint upon the pride and domination of the clergy, through whom the man of sin ultimately arrived at his power and authority, as will afterwards appear. The extreme caution which

the apostle manifests in speaking of this restraint, renders it not improbable that it was something relating to the higher powers; for we can easily conceive how improper it would have been to declare in plain terms that the existing government of Rome should come to an end. There is a remarkable passage in Tertullian's Apology, that may serve to justify the sense which Protestants put upon these verses; and since it was written long before the accomplishment of the predictions, it deserves the more attention. "Christians," says he, "are under a particular necessity of praying for the emperors, and for the continued state of the empire; because we know that dreadful power which hangs over the world, and the conclusion of the age, which threatens the most horrible evils, is restrained by the continuance of the time appointed for the Roman empire. This is what we would not experience; and while we pray that it may be deferred, we hereby shew our good will to the perpetuity of the Roman state."\* From this extract it is very manifest that the Christians, even in Tertullian's time, a hundred and twenty years before the pagan government of Rome came to its end, looked forward to that period as pregnant with calamity to the cause of Christ; though it is probable they did not accurately understand the manner in which the evils should be brought on the church. And this indeed the event proved to be the case. For while the long and harassing persecutions, which were carried on by the Pagan Roman emperors, continued, and all secular advantages were on the side of paganism, there was little encouragement for any one to embrace Christianity, who did not discern somewhat of its truth and excellence. Many of the errors, indeed, of several centuries, the fruit of vain philosophy, paved the way for

\* Tertullian's Apology, ch. xxxij.

the events which followed ; but the hindrance was not effectually removed, until Constantine the emperor, on professing himself a Christian, undertook to convert the kingdom of Christ into a kingdom of this world, by exalting the teachers of Christianity to the same state of affluence, grandeur, and influence in the empire as had been enjoyed by pagan priests and secular officers in the state. The professed ministers of Jesus having now a wide field opened to them for gratifying their lust of power, wealth, and dignity, the connection between the Christian faith and the cross was at an end. What followed was the kingdom of the clergy, supplanting the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

3. It is worthy of observation, in what language the apostle describes the revelation of the man of sin, when this hindrance, or let, should be removed. “ And then shall that wicked be revealed,—whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” He had before described this power, and personified him as “ the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself, above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God.”

Every feature in this description corresponds to that of a religious power, in the assumption of divine authority, divine honours, and divine worship ; a power which should arrogate the prerogatives of the MOST HIGH, having its seat in the temple or house of God, and which should be carried on by Satan’s influence, with all deceit, hypocrisy, and tyranny ; and with this corresponds the figurative representation given of the same power, Rev. xiii. 5—8.

As many things in the Christian profession, before the

reign of Constantine, made way for the kingdom of the clergy, so, after they were raised to stations of temporal dignity and power, it was not wholly at one stride that they arrived at the climax here depicted by the inspired apostle. Neither the corruption of Christianity, nor the reformation of its abuses was effected in a day; "evil men and seducers waxed worse and worse." There was a course of mutually deceiving and being deceived. The conscience of man is not blunted all at once against the convictions of guilt; and there is something uncommonly expressive in the apostle's words, when he describes the blessed God as giving men up to strong delusions, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; and this he represents as the necessary consequence of their not receiving the love of the truth that they might be saved.

In the sequel, it will appear, that when the bishops were once exalted to wealth, power, and authority, this exaltation was of itself the prolific source of every corrupt fruit. Learning, eloquence, and influence, were chiefly exerted to maintain their own personal dominion and popularity. Contests for pre-eminence over each other, became the *succedaneum* of the ancient contention for the faith, and its influence over the world. Power was an engine of support to the different factions; and the sword of persecution, which, for three centuries, had been drawn by the Pagans against the followers of Christ, the besotted ecclesiastics employed against each other in defence of what was now called "the holy Catholic church."

The history of this church from the accession of Constantine to the period when the bishop of Rome was elevated to supreme authority, discovers a progressive approximation to that state of things, denoted in scripture, by the revelation of "the man of sin sitting in the temple



of God." All the violent contentions, the assembling of councils, the persecutions alternately carried on by the different parties, were so many means of preparing the way for the assumption of spiritual tyranny, and the idolatry and superstition of the Roman hierarchy. In all these transactions, the substitution of human for divine authority, contentions about words instead of the faith once delivered to the saints; pomp and splendour of worship, for the primitive simplicity; and worldly power and dignity, instead of the self-denied labours of love and bearing the cross;—this baneful change operated in darkening the human mind as to the real nature of true Christianity, until, in process of time, it was lost sight of.

When Jesus Christ was interrogated by the Roman governor concerning his kingdom, he replied, "My kingdom is not of this world." This is a maxim of unspeakable importance in his religion; and almost every corruption that has arisen, and by which this heavenly institution has been debased, from time to time, may be traced, in one way or other, to a departure from that great and fundamental principle of the Christian kingdom. It may, therefore, be of importance to the reader to keep his eye steadily fixed upon it, while perusing the following pages, as that alone can enable him to trace the kingdom of the Son of God, amidst the labyrinths of error and delusion which he will presently have to explore.

## CHAPTER III.

THE STATE OF CHRISTIANITY FROM THE ACCESSION OF  
CONSTANTINE TO THE RISE OF THE WALDENSES.

A. D. 306—800.

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## SECTION I.

*A view of the reign of Constantine, and the establishment  
of Christianity as the religion of the Roman empire.*

A. D. 306 to 337.

AT the commencement of the fourth century of the Christian æra, the Roman empire was under the dominion of four monarchs; of whom two, viz. Diocletian and Maximin Hercules were of superior rank, and each distinguished by the title of AUGUSTUS; while the other two, Constantius Chlorus and Maximinus Galerius, sustained a subordinate dignity, and were honoured with the humbler appellation of CÆSARS.

Diocletian was raised to the throne in the year 284, consequently had swayed the imperial sceptre sixteen years; but, though much addicted to superstition, he entertained no aversion to the Christians; and during this period they had enjoyed a large portion of outward peace. Constantius Chlorus, to whose lot it fell to exercise the sovereign power in Gaul and the western provinces, was a mild and amiable prince, under whose government we find no traces of persecution. He had himself abandoned the absurdities of Polytheism, and

treated the Christians with benevolence and respect. The principal offices of his palace were executed by Christians. He loved their persons, esteemed their fidelity, and entertained no dislike to their religious principles. This alarmed the pagan priests, whose interests were so intimately connected with the continuance of the ancient superstition, and who, apprehending, not without reason, that, to their great detriment, the Christian religion was becoming daily more universal and triumphant throughout the empire, addressed themselves to Diocletian, whom they knew to be of a timorous and credulous disposition, and by fictitious oracles and other perfidious stratagems, endeavoured to engage him to persecute the Christians.\*

The treacherous arts of a selfish and superstitious priesthood failed, however, for some time, to move Diocletian. Their recourse was next had to Maximinus Galerius, one of the Cæsars, who had married the daughter of Diocletian; a prince, whose gross ignorance of every thing but military affairs, was accompanied with a fierce and savage temper, which rendered him a proper instrument for executing their designs. Stimulated by the malicious insinuations of the heathen priests, the suggestions of a superstitious mother, and the ferocity of his own natural temper, he importuned Diocletian in so urgent a manner, for an edict against the Christians, that he, at length, obtained his horrid purpose.†

It seems to have been the practice of the Roman emperors about this time, to take up their residence occasionally at Nicomedia, the capital of the province of Bythinia—the place from whence Pliny addressed his celebrated letter to Trajan.‡ This city, for its beauty

\* Mosheim, Cent. iv. ch. 1.

† Mosheim, *Ubi supra*.

‡ See page 123.

and greatness, has been compared to Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria; but, what is more to our purpose, it abounded with Christians, even from the days of the apostles.\* Diocletian having taken up his abode at Nicomedia, Galerius, his son-in-law, had come to spend the winter with him. In the year 302, the latter prevailed upon his colleague to grant an edict for pulling down all the places of worship belonging to the Christians, to burn all their books and writings, to deprive them of all their civil rights and privileges, and render them incapable of any honours or civil promotion. This first edict, though rigorous and severe, did not extend to the lives of the Christians, for Diocletian was much averse to slaughter and bloodshed. It was, however, merely a prelude to what was to follow; for, not long after the publication of this first edict, a fire broke out at two different times in the palace of Nicomedia, where Galerius lodged with Diocletian. The former, though in all probability the real incendiary, threw all the odium of this upon the Christians, as an act of revenge, and the credulous Diocletian, too easily persuaded of the truth of this charge, caused the most inhuman torments to be inflicted upon multitudes of them at Nicomedia.

Soon after this, a new edict was issued, ordering all the bishops, pastors, and public teachers, throughout the empire, to be apprehended and imprisoned; hoping, probably, that if the leaders could be once effectually silenced, their respective flocks might be easily dispersed. Nor did his inhuman policy stop there; for, a third edict was presently issued, by which it was ordered, that all sorts of torments should be employed, and the most intolerable punishments resorted to, in order to force the disciples of Jesus to renounce their profession and sacrifice to the heathen gods. The consequence was, that an

\* 1 Peter, i. 1.



immense number of persons became the victims of this cruel stratagem throughout every part of the Roman empire, except those who had the felicity to be placed under the mild and equitable government of Constantius Chlorus. The shameful manner in which multitudes of them were punished, it would be difficult to relate without violating the rules of decency; and, in the present day, would scarcely obtain credit; while others were put to death, after having their constancy tried by tedious and inexpressible torments, and not a few sent to the mines, where they were doomed to linger out the remains of a miserable life in poverty and bondage.

In the third year of this horrible persecution (A. D. 304.) a fourth edict was published by Diocletian, at the instigation of Galerius, commissioning the magistrates to force all Christians, without distinction of rank or sex, to sacrifice to the gods, and authorizing them to employ all sorts of torments, with the view of driving them to this act of apostacy. The diligence and zeal of the Roman magistrates in the execution of this inhuman edict, ultimately reduced the Christian profession to a very low ebb; for this horrid persecution lasted ten years.

The rigorous edicts of Diocletian were strictly and cheerfully executed by his associate Maximian, who had long hated the Christians, and who delighted in acts of blood and violence. It is the remark of Gibbon, when speaking of Maximian and Galerius, that the minds of those princes had never been enlightened by science. Education had never softened their temper. They owed their greatness to their swords; and in their most elevated fortune they still retained their superstitious prejudices of soldiers and peasants. Maximian swayed the sceptre over the provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, where he gratified his own inclination by yielding a rigorous obedience to the stern demands of Diocletian.

A learned French writer, Monsieur Godeau, computes that in this *tenth persecution*, as it is commonly termed, there were not less than seventeen thousand Christians *put to death* in the space of one month. And that “during the continuance of it, in the province of Egypt alone, no less than one hundred and fifty thousand persons died by the violence of their persecutors; and five times that number through the fatigues of banishment, or in the public mines to which they were condemned.” \*

Galerius now no longer made a secret of his ambitious designs. He obliged Diocletian and Maximian to resign the imperial dignity, and got himself declared emperor of the east, resigning the west, for the present, to Constantius Chlorus, at that time in Britain, with the ill state of whose health he was well acquainted.

But Divine Providence was now preparing more tranquil times for the church; and, in order to this, it confounded the schemes of Galerius, and brought his counsels to nothing. In the year 306; Constantius Chlorus, finding his end approaching, wrote to Galerius to send him his son Constantine, who had been kept as an hostage at court. The request was refused; but, coming to the ears of young Constantine, and aware of the danger of his situation, he resolved to attempt his escape, and seizing a favourable moment, he made the best of his way for Britain, and, to prevent pursuit, is said to have killed all the post horses on his route. He arrived at York just in time to witness the death of his father Constantius, who had in the mean time nominated his son as his successor; and the army, without waiting to consult Galerius, immediately pronounced Constantine emperor of

\* See a Sermon of Dr. Calamy's, on Matt. xvi. 18. Mr. Gibbon has laboured to diminish the number of martyrs on this trying occasion, and to shew that they were inconsiderable indeed; but even his own account of things, when impartially weighed, will be found to justify all I have said of it.

the west, in the room of his father—a proceeding which must have stung the tyrant to the heart, who was nevertheless obliged to submit, and even to confirm the appointment with the outward marks of his approbation.

Not long after this (A. D. 311.) Galerius himself, the author of all this series of complicated suffering to the Christians, was reduced to the brink of the grave by a dreadful and lingering disease, in which he suffered horrors that no language can express. “The frequent disappointments of his ambitious views,” says Gibbon, “the experience of six years of persecution, and the salutary reflections which a lingering and painful distemper suggested to the mind of Galerius, at length convinced him that the most violent efforts of despotism are insufficient to extirpate a whole people, or to subdue their religious prejudices.” Desirous of repairing the mischief that he had occasioned, he published in his own name, and in those of Licinius and Constantine, a general edict, which, after a pompous recital of the imperial titles, proceeded in the following manner :

“Among the important cares which have occupied our minds for the utility and preservation of the empire, it was our intention to correct and re-establish all things according to the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans. We were particularly desirous of reclaiming, into the way of reason and nature, the deluded Christians who had renounced the religion and ceremonies instituted by their fathers, and presumptuously despising the practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant laws and opinions according to the dictates of their fancy, and had collected a various society from the different provinces of our empire. The edicts which we have published, to enforce the worship of the gods, having exposed many of the Christians to danger and distress, many having suffered death, and many more,

who still persist in their impious folly, being left destitute of *any* public exercise of religion, we are disposed to extend to those unhappy men the effects of our wonted clemency. We permit them, therefore, freely to profess their private opinions, and to assemble in their conventicles without fear of molestation, provided always that they preserve a due respect to the established laws and government. By another rescript, we shall signify our intentions to the judges and magistrates; and *we hope that our indulgence will engage the Christians to offer up their prayers to the Deity whom they adore, for our safety and prosperity, for their own, and for that of the republic.*"\*

This important edict was issued and set up at Nicomedia, on the 13th April, 311; but the wretched Galerius did not long survive its publication; for he died about the beginning of May, under torments the most excruciating, and in the nature of his complaint and manner of his death, very much resembling the case of Herod. After his death, Maximin succeeded him in the government of the provinces of Asia. In the first six months of his new reign he affected to adopt the prudent counsels of his predecessor; and, though he never condescended to secure the tranquillity of the church by a public edict, he caused a circular letter to be addressed to all the governors and magistrates of the provinces, expatiating on the imperial clemency, acknowledging the invincible obstinacy of the Christians, and directing the officers of justice to cease their ineffectual prosecutions, and to connive at the secret assemblies of those *enthusiasts*. In consequence of these orders, says Gibbon, great numbers of Christians were released from prison, or delivered from the mines. "The confessors, singing hymns of triumph, returned into their own countries; and

\* Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, vol. ii. ch. 16.



those who had yielded to the violence of the tempest, solicited with tears of repentance, their re-admission into the bosom of the church.”\*

This treacherous calm, however, was of short duration. Cruelty and superstition were the ruling passions of the soul of Maximin—the former suggested the means, the latter pointed out the objects, of persecution. He was devoted to the worship of the pagan deities, to the study of magic, and to the belief of oracles. Happily, while this bigotted monarch was preparing fresh measures of violence against the Christians with deliberate policy, a civil war broke out between himself and his colleague Licinius, which occupied his whole attention; and his defeat and death taking place soon after, delivered the Christians from this last and most implacable of their enemies.

The government of the Roman world, which, a few years before, had been administered by no less than six emperors at one time, now became divided between Constantine and Licinius, who immediately granted to the Christians permission to live according to their own laws and institutions, a privilege which was still more clearly ascertained by an edict drawn up at Milan, in the year 313. By this edict every subject of the empire was allowed to profess either Christianity or paganism unmolested. It also secured the places of Christian worship, and even directed the restoration of whatever property they had been dispossessed by the late persecution. The rival princes, however, were not long in seeking or finding occasion to turn their arms against each other, in the issue of which Licinius fell, and left his competitor in the undisturbed possession of the empire.

No character has been exhibited to posterity in lights more contradictory and irreconcilable than that of Con-

\* Decline and Fall, vol. ii. ch. 16.

stantine. Christian writers, transported with his profession of their faith, have magnified his abilities and virtues to excess, and thrown an almost celestial splendour over every part of the portrait; while the pagan historians have spread their gloomy shades upon the canvas, and obscured every trait that was great and amiable.

The circumstances attending his conversion to Christianity, are too familiar to most readers, to render any thing like a minute detail of them proper in this place. His father Constantius had shewn himself very favourably disposed towards the Christians, and Constantine gave early indications of a desire to protect and favour its professors. If we may credit his own assertion, he had been an indignant spectator of the savage cruelties which had been inflicted by the hands of the Roman soldiers, on those citizens whose religion was their only crime. In the east and in the west he had seen the different effects of severity and indulgence, and as the former was rendered still more odious by the example of Galerius, his implacable enemy, the latter was recommended to his imitation by the authority and advice of a dying father. These tolerant principles were displayed alike both towards Pagans and Christians, before the emperor had avowed any peculiar attachment towards the latter. It is true, nevertheless, that he did not always maintain this state of indifference; he appears evidently to have been convinced of the folly and impiety of the pagan superstition, which induced him to exhort all his subjects earnestly to embrace the gospel, and at length to employ all the force of his authority to abolish the ancient heathen worship.

According to his own account, he was marching at the head of his army, from France into Italy, against Maxentius, on an expedition, which he was fully aware, involved in it his future destiny. Oppressed with extreme

anxiety, and reflecting that he needed a force superior to arms, for subduing the sorceries and magic of his adversary, he anxiously looked out for the aid of some deity, as that which alone could secure him success. About noon, when the sun began to decline, whilst praying for supernatural aid, a luminous cross was seen by the emperor and his army, in the air, above the sun, inscribed with the words, "BY THIS CONQUER," at the sight of which, amazement overpowered both himself and the soldiery on the expedition with him. He continued to ponder on the event till night, when, in a dream, the author of Christianity appeared to him, to confirm the vision, directing him, at the same time, to make the symbol of the cross his military ensign. \*

\* Few things have occasioned more perplexity to the writers of ecclesiastical history, and set them more at variance, than this vision of Constantine. Mr. Milner, whose credulity upon most occasions is sufficiently apparent, entertains no doubt of the reality of the miracle; and such is his inconsistency with his own theological creed, that he resolves it into an answer to Constantine's importunate prayer. "He prayed, he implored," says he, "with much vehemence and importunity, and God left him not unanswered." (As though the blessed God would listen to any prayer but that of faith! Prov. xv. 8. and Heb. xi. 6.) Dr. Haweis gives up the miracle altogether, and seems to consider the whole as an imposition. The learned Mosheim is evidently perplexed about it, and seems at a loss in what light to consider it—and so also is his translator. "The whole story," says the latter, "is attended with difficulties which render it, both as a miracle and as a fact, extremely dubious, to say no more." If any should think the subject worthy of further investigation, I would recommend to their perusal a very ingenious and learned disquisition upon it, subjoined as an appendix to the first volume of Dr. Gregory's Church History, written by Mr. Henely of Rendlesham. They will there find a compressed account of the opinions of the different writers on the subject, and the following deductions not unfairly drawn from the whole—That Eusebius, who received the account of this extraordinary scene from the mouth of Constantine himself, and who wrote the life of that emperor, does not appear to have given any credit to it, though the latter attested it *by an oath*—that neither the day, the year, the time, nor the place of this vision is recorded—that there is no evidence that any one of the army saw the phe-

Constantine vanquished his adversary ; and no sooner was he made master of Rome, by the destruction of Maxentius, than he *honoured* the cross by putting a spear of that form into the hand of the statue erected for him at Rome. He now built places for Christian worship, and shewed great beneficence to the poor. He encouraged the meeting of bishops in synods—honoured them with his presence, and employed himself continually in aggrandizing the church. He removed the seat of empire to Byzantium, which he embellished, enlarged, and honoured with the name of Constantinople, and prohibited, by a severe edict, the performance of any pagan rites and ceremonies throughout the city. His religious zeal augmented with his years ; and towards the close of his life, several imperial edicts were issued for the demolition of the heathen temples, and the prevention of any sacrifices upon their altars. He was on the other hand, scrupulously attentive to the religious rites and ceremonies which were prescribed by the Christian clergy. He fasted ; observed the feasts in commemoration of the martyrs, and devoutly watched the whole night on the vigils of the saints. And in his last illness, he summoned to the imperial palace at Nicomedia, several Christian bishops, fervently requesting to receive from them the ordinance of baptism, and solemnly protesting his intention of spending the remainder of his life as the disciple

nomenon besides the emperor—that the accounts given of it by the emperor at different times do not quadrate—that the whole story is replete with contradictions—and that there exists a presumption diametrically opposite to the intent of the alleged miracle, in the declaration of Christ to the Roman governor, “ My kingdom is not of this world ; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, &c.”—and that, in a word, the powerful inducements of policy and party, the obvious character of Constantine, and the opinions of the times, when judiciously considered and properly combined, present in themselves an easy solution of the whole contrivance and fraud.



of Christ. He was accordingly baptized by Eusebius, bishop of that city; after which he entirely laid aside his purple and regal robes, and continued to wear a white garment till the day of his death, which, after a short illness, took place on the 22d of May, in the year 337, at the age of sixty-four, having reigned thirty-three years.\*

The extraordinary occurrences of the life of Constantine produced an entire change in the whole of the Christian profession. Its friends were now no longer called to endure patiently the hatred of the world—to take up their cross, and press after a conformity to Christ in his sufferings, and through much tribulation, to enter his kingdom; but they were to bask in the sunshine of worldly prosperity, enjoying the smiles of the great, and connecting with their profession the riches and honours of this present world—the baneful effects of which began speedily to develope themselves. So long as the Christians were persecuted by the heathen on account of their faith and practices, they were driven to the gospel as their only source of consolation and support; and they found it every way sufficient for their utmost need. The animating principles which it imparted, raised their minds superior to the enjoyments of this world, and in the hope of life and immortality, they were happy, even if called to lay down their lives for the sake of their profession. And herein the power of their religion was conspicuous. It was not with them an empty speculation, floating in the mind, destitute of any influence upon the will and the affections. While it induced them to count no sacrifice too costly which they were called to make for the gospel's sake, they were led by it to exercise the most fervent Christian affection one towards

\* Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, b. iv. ch. 62.

another—to sympathize tenderly with each other in all their sorrows and distresses—and, by bearing one another's burdens, they fulfilled their Lord's new command of brotherly love. This was the prominent feature in Christianity during the first three centuries. The writings of the apostles and evangelists all breathe this amiable spirit, and abound with exhortations to cultivate this God-like disposition; and so conspicuous was the exercise of it among the primitive Christians, that it was commonly remarked by their enemies, and recommended by them as worthy of imitation.

Such, however, is the depravity of human nature, that, as they enjoyed any intervals from persecution, they became more profligate in their morals and more litigious in their tempers. But now that the restraint was wholly taken off, by Constantine, the churches endowed, and riches and honours liberally conferred on the clergy; when he authorized them to sit as judges upon the consciences and faith of others, he confirmed them in the spirit of this world—the spirit of pride, avarice, domination, and ambition—the indulgence of which, has, in all ages, proved fatal to the purity, peace, and happiness of the kingdom of Christ. This inconsistent conduct of the leading men among them, in professing a religion, the prominent characteristics of which are humility and self-denial, and at the same time aspiring after the pleasures and the honours of this world, seems to have forcibly struck the very heathens themselves. Hence, an historian of the latter class, who lived shortly after the time of Constantine, remarks concerning the bishops of Rome, “It would be well if, despising the magnificence of the city, they would imitate some of the bishops of provincial towns, whose temperance in eating and drinking, plainness of apparel, and looking above the world,

recommended them to the deity and his true worshippers." \*

Now they began to new-model the Christian church, the government of which was, as far as possible, arranged conformably to the government of the state. The emperor himself assumed the title of bishop—and claimed the power of regulating its external affairs; and he and his successors convened councils, in which they presided, and determined all matters of discipline. The bishops corresponded to those magistrates whose jurisdiction was confined to single cities; the metropolitans to the pro-consuls or presidents of provinces; the primates to the emperor's vicars, each of whom governed one of the imperial provinces. Canons and prebendaries of cathedral churches took their rise from the societies of ecclesiastics, which Eusebius, bishop of Verceil, and after him Augustine, formed in their houses, and in which these prelates were styled their fathers and masters. †

This constitution of things was an entire departure from the order of worship, established under divine direction by the apostles of Christ in the primitive churches. In fact, scarcely any two things could be more dissimilar than was the simplicity of the gospel dispensation from the hierarchy established under Constantine the Great. "Let none," says Dr. Mosheim, alluding to the first and second centuries, "confound the bishops of this primitive and golden period of the church, with those of whom we read in the following ages. For though they were both designated by the same name, yet they differed extremely, in many respects. A bishop, during the first

\* Ammianus Marcellinus, b. xxvii. p. 362.

† Priestley's *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 342.

and second centuries, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which, at that time, was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house. In this assembly, he acted not so much with the authority of a master, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful servant. The churches also, in those early times, were entirely independent; none of them subject to any foreign jurisdiction, but each one governed by its own rulers and its own laws. Nothing is more evident than the perfect equality that reigned among the primitive churches; nor does there ever appear, in the first century, the smallest trace of that association of provincial churches, from which *councils* and *metropolitans* derive their origin.”\* To which we may add, that the first churches acknowledged no earthly potentate as their head. This had been expressly prohibited by their divine Master. “The kings of the Gentiles,” said he, “exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise an authority upon them are termed benefactors. But with you it shall not be so;—let him that is greatest among you be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.”† Again, “Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your father who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant; and, whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, while he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”‡ These divine maxims, which are in perfect unison with the whole tenor of the New Testament, were entirely disregarded by the ecclesiastics who undertook to new-

\* Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 105—107.

† Luke xxii. 25, 26.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 8—12.



model the constitution of the Christian church, under the auspices of Constantine, and whom, as a matter of courtesy, they condescended to make its earthly head. But to proceed.

Thus restored to the full exercise of their liberty, their churches rebuilt, and the imperial edicts every where published in their favour, these new bishops immediately began to discover what spirit they were of. As their several revenues increased, they grew more ambitious, less capable of contradiction, more haughty and arrogant in their behaviour, more quarrelsome in their tempers, and more regardless of the simplicity and gravity of their profession and character. Constantine's letters afford abundant proof of the jealousies and animosities that reigned among them. Adverting to a violent quarrel which had taken place between Miltiades, bishop of Rome, and Cœcilianus, bishop of Carthage, in which the principals had enlisted a host of their colleagues as their respective auxiliaries, he states to them, that it was a very grievous thing to him to see so great a number of persons divided into parties, and the bishops disagreeing among themselves. He earnestly wishes to compose their differences, but in spite of all his efforts, they persisted in their quarrels—which drew from him a pathetic complaint, that those who ought to have been the foremost in maintaining a brotherly affection and peaceable disposition towards each other, were the first to separate from one another in a scandalous and detestable manner, giving occasion to the common enemies of Christianity to scoff and deride them.

To put an end to such factious and disgraceful proceedings, he summoned a council to meet at Arles in France, in order, if it were possible, to bring to a friendly and Christian compromise this long pending altercation. He himself condescended to be present on the occasion,

and exerted all his influence to restore peace and harmony among them, but with little effect. He had unfortunately sown the seeds of strife and contention, by his liberal endowment of churches, and by the riches and honours that he had conferred upon the bishops, and he was now reaping the fruit of his folly.

Had this first of the Christian emperors, rested satisfied with the primary edict which he published in favour of the Christians, he had acted the part of a wise, good, and impartial governor. That decree, without particularising any sects or parties, gave full liberty to all of them, both Christians and Pagans, to follow whatever religious profession seemed to them most eligible. But that liberty was of no long duration, and was soon abridged in reference to both Christians and heathens. For although in that edict he had commanded that the places of worship and other effects should be restored to Christians in general, it was soon followed by another, which restricts this grant to "THE CATHOLIC CHURCH." After this, in a letter to Miltiades, bishop of Rome, complaining of the differences fomented by the African bishops, he tells him, that he had so great a reverence for "the catholic church," that he would not have him suffer, in any place, any schism or difference whatsoever to exist. There are in his letters many things which savour of the same spirit, and which can leave us in no doubt, that, by "the catholic faith and church" we are to understand that which was approved by those bishops who had the greatest interest in his favour.

And with regard to his treatment of the Pagans, it was in flagrant violation of the first principle of Christianity, as well as of the excellent edict which he had formerly issued. He prohibited *by law*\* the worship of idols in cities and country—commanded that no statutes of the

\* Eusebius, b. 10. ch. 5, 6.

gods should be erected, nor any sacrifices offered upon their altars, and sent into all the provinces Christian presidents, forbidding the pagan priests to offer sacrifice, and confirming to the former the honours due to their characters and stations; thus endeavouring to support the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, by means altogether worldly, viz. the prospects and rewards of worldly honour and preferment.

It can excite no surprise, that those persons who could advise the issuing of these edicts, to suppress the ancient religion of the empire, should be against tolerating any sects among themselves that should presume to differ from them on any articles of the Christian faith or discipline. For nothing can be more evident than that, if the civil magistrate is vested with authority to prohibit religious opinions, or punish the abettors of them, merely because *in his view* they are erroneous, it must necessarily follow, that he has an equal right to punish a professing Christian whose sentiments or practices differ from his own, as he would have to punish those of a Pagan or Mahommedan. If the magistrate's jurisdiction extend to his exercising a control over the human mind in one instance, it will be impossible consistently to deny it to him in any other; and as his own judgment is, in all cases, the authorized standard of what is truth and error, in religion, he bears the sword, on this principle, to punish every deviation from that standard which he has erected, whether found in Christian, Jew, or Pagan. Thus, if Constantine and his bishops were justified in abolishing heathenism by the civil power, because they believed it erroneous, Diocletian and Gallienus with their priests, were equally right in prohibiting Christianity by civil laws, because *they* believed it to be not only false and impious, but blasphemy against their gods, and even as bordering upon atheism itself.

It has been well remarked by a sensible writer, that “men have been very long in discovering, and even yet seem scarcely to have discovered, that true religion is of too delicate a nature to be compelled, by the coarse implements of human authority and worldly sanctions. Let the law of the land restrain vice and injustice of every kind, as ruinous to the peace and order of society; for this is its proper province: but let it not tamper with religion, by attempting to enforce its exercises and duties. These, unless they be free-will offerings, are nothing; they are worse [than nothing.] By such an unnatural alliance, and ill-judged aid, hypocrisy and superstition may, indeed, be greatly promoted; but genuine piety never fails to suffer.” \*

The sentiments of the primitive Christians for the first three centuries, in reference to the divinity of the Saviour, were, generally speaking, pretty uniform, nor do there appear to have been any public controversies regarding this leading article of the Christian faith. But a dispute now arose which may be said to have involved all Christendom in a flame. It originated in the church of Alexandria, in Egypt, between Alexander and Arius, two of the pastors of that church, and soon spread itself into other churches, inflaming bishops against bishops, who under the pretext of supporting divine truth, excited tumults, and fomented the most deadly strifes and hatreds towards each other. These divisions of the prelates set the people together by the ears, and the dispute was managed with such violence, that it involved the whole Christian world, and gave occasion to the heathens to ridicule the Christian religion upon their public theatres.†

The occasion of this dispute, which is well-known by the name of “THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY,” seems to

\* Campbell's Lectures on Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 73.

† Socrates's Eccles. Hist. b. i. ch. 6.



have been simply this. Alexander, one of the prelates of that church, speaking upon the subject of the Trinity, had affirmed that there was “an unity in the Trinity, and particularly that the Son was co-eternal, and consubstantial, and of the same dignity with the Father.” Arius objected to this language, and argued that “If the Father begat the Son, he who was begotten must have a beginning of his existence; and from hence, says he, ’tis manifest that there was a time when he (the Son) was not,” &c.

It is wholly incompatible with the object of this history to discuss points of Christian doctrine; but the reader will, probably, excuse a few remarks on this extraordinary controversy. It is scarcely possible for any one who entertains a reverential regard for the great God, not to be struck with the presumption of poor, finite, erring mortals, daring to investigate, in the rash and inconsiderate manner that was now done, a subject of such awful import as the *modus* of the divine existence. We no sooner turn our thoughts to this question than our feeble capacities are overwhelmed with the immensity of the subject. Reason, in its most improved state, can carry us but a little way in our discoveries of God; and, if we are wise, we shall receive in simplicity of mind, every information which the great First Cause hath been pleased to afford us concerning himself in his holy word. There, indeed, we learn with certainty, what may be also inferred from the works of creation and providence, that there is a God, who at first called the universe into being, and who still upholds and governs all things. But the works of creation and providence could never teach us, what the scriptures make abundantly plain,—that there is in this one immense being, a distinction of Father, Word, and Spirit—a distinction which lies at the foundation of the whole economy of our redemption. Men

in the pride of their hearts, may ask, how can these things be? But we are under no obligation to explain that point to them. And, indeed, it will be early enough for them to put the question, when *they* shall have explained how *body, soul, and spirit* constitute one individual human person. Every child may see that this distinction pervades the whole of divine revelation, and especially the New Testament. The FATHER is always represented as sustaining the majesty of the Godhead; as the great moral governor of the world, giving laws to his creatures, enforced by the sanctions of the rewards and punishments of a future state. The WORD is described as becoming incarnate to accomplish the purposes of the Father's love in the redemption of the guilty. And the HOLY SPIRIT as the efficient agent, carrying into effect the purpose of the Father and the grace of the Son, on the hearts of the elect. But then it never leads us to conceive of the SON OF God, abstractedly from his incarnation. THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, or assumed a human body, and thus "that holy thing which was born of the virgin, was THE SON OF God." \* The doctrine of "eternal generation" was unknown to the inspired writers, and, unquestionably, hatched in the school of Alexandria. Happy had it been for the Christian world, could they have rested satisfied with the simple doctrine of divine revelation on this sublime subject; not seeking to be wise beyond what is written. Much as I dislike the character of Athanasius, it is only due to him to say, that he hath in a few words said all that can with propriety be said on this subject. "The Father," says he, "cannot be the Son, nor the Son the Father; and the Holy Ghost is never called by the name of the Son, but is called the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. The

\* Luke i. 31—35. John i. 14.

Holy Trinity is but one divine nature and one God. This is sufficient for the faithful ; human knowledge goes no further. The Cherubims veil the rest with their wings."

But let the reader mark how these ecclesiastical combatants represent each others' opinions. Arius, in a letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, thus states the sentiments of Alexander. "God is always and the Son always—the same time the Father, the same time the Son—the Son co-exists with God unbegottenly, being ever begotten, being unbegottenly begotten—God was not before the Son, no not in conception, or the least point of time, he being ever God, ever a Son—For the Son is out of God himself." Alexander, on the contrary, in a letter to the bishop of Constantinople, gives us the doctrine of Arius in the following words. "There was a time when there was no Son of God, and that he who before was not, afterwards existed, being made, whensoever he was made, just as any man whatsoever ; and that therefore he was of a mutable nature, and equally receptive of vice and virtue, &c."

If these things were publicly taught and avowed, by these men, as each represents the other's sentiments, every sober man will surely think that they both merited severe reprehension, for leaving the plain language of scripture, and introducing terms of their own invention into a doctrine of pure revelation, and at last dividing the whole of Christendom on account of it.

Numerous expedients were tried to bring Alexander and Arius to one mind ; the emperor himself condescending to become a mediator between them ; but all attempts proved fruitless. He wrote letters to them at Alexandria, exhorting them to lay aside their differences and become reconciled to each other. He informs them that he had diligently examined the rise and progress of this dispute, and that he found the occasion of the differ-

ence to be very trifling and not worthy such furious contentions ; and that therefore he promised himself, his mediation for peace would have its desired effect. He reminds Alexander that “ He required from his presbyters a declaration of their sentiments concerning a silly, empty question—and Arius, that he had imprudently uttered what he should not even have thought of, or what at least he should have kept secret in his own bosom ; that questions about such things ought not to have been asked ; if asked, should not have been answered ; that they proceeded from an idle itch of disputation, and were in themselves of so high and difficult a nature, as that they could not be exactly comprehended or suitably explained. And that to insist on such points before the people could produce no other effect than to make some of them talk blasphemy, and others turn schismatics.” \*

This unquestionably was excellent advice, but religious animosities are not so easily removed ; and the ecclesiastical combatants were too warmly engaged to listen to such salutary counsel. Finding all other resources ineffectual, the emperor was at length under the necessity of issuing letters to the bishops of the several provinces of the empire, enjoining them to assemble together at Nice, in Bythinia, which was accordingly done, A. D. 325. This is what goes by the name of “ the first general council.” The number of bishops were three hundred and eighteen, besides a multitude of presbyters, deacons, Acolythists, and others, amounting in the whole to two thousand and forty-eight persons. The ecclesiastical historians inform us, that in this vast collection of the bishops, some were remarkable for their gravity, patience under sufferings, modesty, integrity, and eloquence,

\* Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, b. 1. ch. 63.



yet they all agree that there were others of very opposite characters.\*

On the day appointed for holding the council, the bishops and inferior clergy were assembled in the largest room in the palace, rows of seats being placed on each side of it; and all having taken their places, they waited, standing in respectful silence for the emperor, who, being preceded by several of his friends, at length made his appearance, as Eusebius says, like an angel of God, exceeding all his attendants, in size, gracefulness, and strength; and dazzling all eyes with the splendour of his

\* "The eloquence of Lactantius, and the beauty and purity of his style, raise him superior to every author of the fourth century, and place him upon an equality with some of the most accomplished writers of ancient Rome. Entrusted with the education of Crispus, the unfortunate son of Constantine, whom that monarch afterwards put to death, Lactantius, amidst the splendours of a court, was distinguished only by his talents and his poverty. His principal work consists of a masterly refutation of Paganism, and a learned comparison between it and Christianity. It is to the indelible disgrace of the age, that while a number of fanatic monks and popular declaimers obtained the highest stations in the church, a man who possessed the learning of Aristotle, with the eloquence of Cicero, who united philosophy with religion, and an earnest piety with all the graces of a polished taste and enlightened understanding, should be permitted to languish without distinction or reward. It is, however, but too common a case, that the service which is rendered to a party, is rated higher than that which is rendered to mankind in general. The defence of a single dogma shall raise a man to eminence and fortune; while the enlightening of thousands, the improving of the hearts, the morals, the judgments, and religious sentiments of the nation, shall frequently be passed over, with scarcely the cold return of fruitless praise."—*Gregory's Church History*, vol. i. p. 224.

"Such was the taste of the times and the people, that Lactantius, who was a man of learning and real eloquence, a man of sound sentiments, extensive knowledge, and inoffensive life, the most excellent of the Latin fathers, and justly called the Christian Cicero, was in want of common necessities; while Ambrose, who was not worthy to carry his books, was elected to the rich see of Milan; and this when the people elected their own bishops."—*Robinson's Eccles. Researches*.

dress ; but shewing the greatest humility and modesty in his manner of walking, gesture, and behaviour. Having taken his station in the middle of the upper part of the room, near a low chair that was covered with gold, he did not sit down, till the fathers desired it.

All being now seated, says Eusebius, the bishop whose place was the first on his right hand (Maimbourg informs us it was Eustathius, patriarch of Antioch), rose, and addressing the emperor, gave thanks to God on his account, congratulating the church on its prosperous condition, brought about by his means, and particularly in the destruction of the idolatrous worship of Paganism. Then sitting down, the emperor himself addressed the company in Latin, expressing his happiness at seeing them all met on so glorious an occasion as the amicable settlement of all their differences, which, he said, had given him more concern than all his wars ; but that these being at an end, he had nothing more at heart than to be the means of settling the peace of the church ; and he concluded with expressing his earnest wish that they would, as speedily as possible, remove every cause of dissension, and lay the foundation of a lasting peace. What he said in Latin was interpreted to the fathers in Greek.

Immediately after this speech, this excellent emperor was witness to a scene which must have afforded him a very unpromising prospect as to the success of his project for peace. For before they entered upon the discussion of any thing that related to the great object of their meeting, the bishops began with complaining to the emperor of each other, and vindicating themselves. To every thing that was said, he gave a patient hearing, and by his mildness and great address, speaking to them in Greek (which he was in some measure able to do) he at length prevailed upon them to come to an agreement,

says Eusebius, not only with respect to their private differences, but also with regard to the two great objects of their assembling—the rule of faith as it respected the Arian controversy, and the time of celebrating Easter.

Socrates says, that the bishops having put into the emperor's hands written libels, containing their complaints against each other, he threw them all together into the fire, advising them, according to the doctrine of Christ, to forgive one another as they themselves hoped to be forgiven. Sozomen says, that the bishops having made their complaints in person, the emperor bade them reduce them all into writing, and that on the day which he had appointed to consider them, he said, as he threw all the billets unopened into the fire, that it did not belong to him to decide the differences of Christian bishops, and that the hearing of them must be deferred till the day of judgment.\*

However, the emperor ultimately succeeded in restoring them to some degree of temper; and they consequently proceeded in good earnest to draw up a creed, which they were all required to subscribe, as the only true and orthodox faith, and which, from the place where they were assembled, bears the title of the NICEENE.† The principal persons who appeared on the

\* Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, book iii. ch. 10—14

† As a matter of curiosity, which may gratify some readers, I subjoin this summary of the orthodox faith at this period. The original may be found in the epistle of Eusebius to the Cæsareans.

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten; begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father. God of God; Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made, things in heaven, and things on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate, and became man, suffered and rose again the third day, and ascended into the heavens, and comes to judge the quick and the dead; and in the Holy Ghost. And the

side of Arius, and assisted him in the public disputation, were Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nice, and Maris of Calcedon; and the person who chiefly opposed them and took the part of Alexander, was Athanasius, then only a deacon in the church of Alexandria, but much confided in by the bishop, and of whom more will be said hereafter.

No sooner were the decrees and canons of the council drawn up, than they were sent to Sylvester, then bishop of Rome, who, in the thirteenth council of Rome, at which were present two hundred and seventy-five bishops, confirmed them in these words: "We confirm with our mouth, that which has been decreed at Nice, a city of Bythnia, by the three hundred and eighteen holy bishops, for the good of the catholic and apostolic church, mother of the faithful. We anathematize all those who shall dare to contradict the decrees of the great and holy council, which was assembled at Nice, in the presence of that most pious and venerable prince, the emperor Constantine." And to this all the bishops answered, "We consent to it."\*

The council began their discussions on the 19th of June, and ended them on the 25th of August, of the same year (325.) to the joy of Constantine, the defeat of Arius, and the triumph of the Athanasian party. Eusebius of Nicomedia, and sixteen other bishops, opposed the general sense of the council, and rejected the word *consubstantial*. But finding themselves in so small a minority, and that the emperor was determined to enforce respect to the decisions of the council, they

catholic and apostolic church doth anathematize those persons who say, that there was a time when the Son of God was not; that he was not before he was born; that he was made of nothing, or of another substance or being; or that he is created, or changeable, or convertible."

\* Maimbourg's History of Arianism, vol. i. p. 48.



all, except four, ultimately subscribed the confession of faith. The prevailing party then proceeded to excommunicate Arius and his followers, banishing the former from Alexandria. Letters were also written to all the churches in Egypt, Lybia, and Pentapolis, announcing their decrees, and informing them that the holy synod had condemned the opinions of Arius, and had fully determined the time for the celebration of Easter; exhorting them to rejoice for the good deed they had done, for that they had cut off all manner of heresy. When these things were ended, Constantine splendidly treated the bishops, filled their pockets, and sent them honourably home, exhorting them at parting to maintain peace among themselves, and that none of them should envy another who might excel the rest in wisdom or eloquence—that they should not carry themselves haughtily towards their inferiors, but condescend to, and bear with, their weakness;—a convincing proof that he saw into their tempers, and was no stranger to the haughtiness and pride that influenced some, and the envy and hatred that prevailed in others.\*

It requires not the spirit of prophecy to anticipate the effects which must flow from the disgraceful proceedings of this general council, though Constantine himself wrote letters, enjoining universal conformity to its decrees, and urges as a reason for it, that “what they had decreed was the will of God, and that the agreement of so great a number of such bishops was by inspiration of the Holy Ghost.” It laid the foundation for a system of persecution of a complexion altogether new—professed Christians tyrannising over the consciences of each other, and, as will be seen in the sequel, inflicting torture and cruelties upon each other far greater than they had ever sustained

\* *Ensebius's Life of Constantine*, b. iii. ch. 20. *Socrates*, b. i. ch. 9.

from their heathen persecutors. The emperor's first letters were mild and gentle, but he was soon persuaded into more violent measures; for out of his great zeal to extinguish heresy, he issued edicts against all such as his favourite bishops persuaded him were the authors or abettors of it, and particularly against the Novatians, Valentinians, Marcionists, and others, whom, after reproaching with being "enemies of truth, destructive counsellors," &c. he deprives of the liberty of meeting for worship, either in public or private places; and gives all their oratories to the orthodox church. And with respect to the discomfited party, he banished Arius himself, commanded that all his followers should be called *Porphyrians* (from Porphyrius, a heathen, who wrote against Christianity)\*—ordained that the books written by them should be burnt, that there might remain to posterity no vestiges of their doctrine; and, to complete the climax, enacted that if any should dare to keep in his possession any book written by Arius, and should

\* The following is a copy of the Edict which Constantine issued on that occasion: it was addressed to the Bishops and People throughout the Empire.

"Since Arius hath imitated wicked and ungodly men, it is just that he should undergo the same infamy with them. As therefore, Porphyrius, an enemy of godliness, for his having composed wicked books against Christianity, hath found a suitable recompence, so as to be infamous for the time to come, and to be loaded with great reproach, and to have all his impious writings quite destroyed: so also it is now my pleasure, that Arius, and those of Arius's sentiments, shall be called *Porphyrians*, so that they may have the appellation of those whose manner they have imitated. Moreover, if any book composed by Arius shall be found, it shall be committed to the flames; that not only his evil doctrine may be destroyed, but that there may not be the least remembrance of it left. This also I enjoin, that if any one shall be found to have concealed any writing composed by Arius, and shall not immediately bring it and consume it in the fire, death shall be his punishment; for as soon as he is taken in this crime, he shall suffer a capital punishment.

GOD PRESERVE YOU.

not immediately burn it, he should no sooner be convicted of the crime, than he should suffer death. Such were the acts of the last days of CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.

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## SECTION II.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

*From the death of Constantine the Great, to the close of the fourth century. A. D. 337—400.*

ON the decease of Constantine, the government of the Roman empire was distributed between his three sons. To Constantine the II. were assigned the provinces of Britain, Spain, and Gaul, now called France. To his brother Constans, Illyricum, Italy, and Africa; whilst Constantius inherited the east, comprehending Asia, Syria, and Egypt, with the city of Constantinople, to which his father had transferred the imperial residence, and consequently made it the seat of government.

In the year 340, a quarrel arose between the two first mentioned brothers, which ended in a war, and that war in the death of Constantine. Constans now added the dominions of the deceased prince to his own, and thereby became sole master of all the western provinces. He retained possession of this immense territory until the year

\* Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, b. iii. ch. 65. Sozomen, b. i. ch. 21. Socrates, b. i. ch. 9. The reader will also find a very *amusing* account of the proceedings of this memorable council (provided he can make the necessary allowance for the author's predilection for the Catholic party, it being written *Here Maimbourg* and as Dr. Portin would express it) in Maimbourg's *History of Arianism*, translated by Webster, vol. i. book 1. 4to. edition, 1727.

350, when Magnentius, one of his own officers, with the view of getting himself declared emperor, contrived to procure the assassination of Constans. The usurper, however, did not long enjoy the fruits of his perfidy; for Constantius, justly incensed by his rebellious conduct, marched an army against him, and repulsing him at the outset, Magnentius, transported with rage and despair at his ill success, and apprehending the most terrible and ignominious death from the resentment of the conqueror, put a termination to his own life. Thus Constantius, in the year 353, became sole monarch of the Roman empire, which he governed until the year 361. Marching at the head of his army, in that year, to chastise the presumption of his own kinsman, Julian, whom the forces entrusted to his command in Gaul, had, in an hour of victory saluted with the title of Augustus, he was arrested by the hand of death, and expired at Mopsucrene in Cilicia, leaving the vacant throne to Julian.

None of the sons of Constantine the Great, inherited the spirit and genius of their father. They, nevertheless, so far trode in his steps, as to extend their fostering care to the Catholic religion, to accelerate its progress through the empire, and to continue to undermine and abolish the system of paganism.

But the controversy which had arisen between Arius and Alexander, relative to the sonship of Christ, was far from being put to rest by the decision of the council of Nice. The doctrine of Arius, indeed, had been condemned by a very large majority—he himself was banished to Illyricum, and his followers compelled to assent to the confession of faith composed by the synod—his writings also had been proscribed as heretical, and the punishment of death decreed against all who were convicted of the crime of harbouring them in their houses. But persecuting edicts cannot extend their dominion



over the thoughts, and it is scarcely less difficult to impose an effectual restraint upon the tongue. Persecution has generally been found favourable to whatever cause it has been directed against; it some how enlists the sensibilities of our nature on the side of the persecuted party; and disposes the mind to a more candid and impartial examination of the question in dispute, than we should otherwise possess. It is perhaps too much to affirm with Dr. Middleton, that "truth was never known to be on the persecuting side;"\* an impartial examination, however, of the opinions and proceedings of both Arians and Athanasians on this occasion, serves in some degree to justify the maxim, and convinces me that they were equally remote from the truth, even as they were alike well disposed to persecute each other in proportion as either party obtained the means of doing it. Only it is due to the orthodox party to say, that they took the lead in punishing heretics with death, and persuaded the emperor to destroy those whom they could not convert.

When the undivided government of the empire centered in the hands of Constantius, he evinced a strong predilection for the Arian side of the controversy, and Arianism became fashionable at court. The emperor favoured only the bishops of that party. Paul, the orthodox prelate of the see of Constantinople, was ejected from his office by the emperor's order, and Macedonius substituted in his room. This man adopted a scheme different from either party, and contended that the Son was not *consubstantial*, but of a *like substance* with the Father, openly propagating this new theory, after thrusting himself into the bishoprick of Paul; and thus, by the addition of a single letter, affecting to settle the whole dispute. Frivolous as was this distinction, it enraged

\* Preface to his Free Inquiry, p. 8. 4to. edit.

the orthodox party, who, filled with rage and resentment, rose in a body to oppose Hermogenes, the officer whom Constantius had sent to introduce him unto his episcopal throne, burnt down his house, and drew him round the streets by his heels until they had murdered him.

ATHANASIUS, who had rendered such essential service to Alexander, his bishop, in managing the dispute with Arius at the council of Nice, had, by this time, risen to great popularity, and in reality was become the oracle of the orthodox party. We are supposed to be indebted to him for the creed which bears his name, and which fills so eminent a place in the liturgy of our national church. Even to this day he is extolled by such respectable writers as Milner and Hawies, as a prodigy of evangelical light. But whatever may be said of the soundness of his speculative creed, he was evidently a man of aspiring views and of persecuting principles. In a letter to Epictetus, bishop of Corinth, alluding to some heretical opinions then prevalent, he says, "I wonder that your piety hath borne these things, and that you did not immediately put those heretics under restraint, and propose the true faith to them, that if they would not forbear to contradict they might be declared heretics, for it is not to be endured that these things should be either said or heard amongst Christians." And upon another occasion, "they ought to be held in *universal hatred*," says he, "for opposing the truth,"—comforting himself that the emperor, when duly informed, would put a stop to their wickedness, and that they would not be long-lived. In one of his letters he exhorts those to whom he wrote, to "hold fast the confession of the fathers, and to reject all who should speak *more or less* than was contained in it. And, in his first oration against the Arians, he declares in plain terms, "that the expressing a person's sentiments in the words of scripture, was no

sufficient proof of orthodoxy, because the devil himself used scripture words to cover his wicked designs upon our Saviour, and that heretics were not to be received, though they made use of the very expressions of orthodoxy itself."

The scriptures were now no longer the standard of the Christian faith. What was orthodox, and what heterodox, was, from henceforward, to be determined by the decisions of fathers and councils; and religion propagated not by the apostolic methods of persuasion, accompanied with the meekness and gentleness of Christ, but by imperial edicts and decrees; nor were gainsayers to be brought to conviction by the simple weapons of reason and scripture, but persecuted and destroyed. It cannot surprise us, if after this we find a continual fluctuation of the public faith, just as the prevailing party obtained the imperial authority to support them; or that we should meet with little else in ecclesiastical history than violence and cruelties, committed by men who had wholly departed from the simplicity of the Christian doctrine and profession; men enslaved to avarice and ambition; and carried away with views of temporal grandeur, high preferments, and large revenues.

To dwell upon the disgraceful cabals, the violent invectives, and slanderous recriminations of those ruling factions, would afford little edification to the reader, and certainly no pleasure to the writer. Were we disposed to give credit to the complaints of the orthodox against the Arians, we must certainly regard them as the most execrable set of men that ever lived. They are loaded with all the crimes that can possibly be committed, and represented as bad, if not worse, than infernal spirits. And had the writings of the Arians not been destroyed, we should, no doubt, have found as many and grievous charges laid by them, perhaps with equal justice, against

the Athanasians. Constantius banished Athanasius from his bishoprick at Alexandria, and wrote a letter to the citizens, in which he terms him “an impostor, a corrupter of men’s souls, a disturber of the city, a pernicious fellow, one convicted of the worst crimes, not to be expiated by his suffering death *ten times* ;” and a bishop, named George, was put into his see, whom this eloquent emperor is pleased to style “a most venerable person, and the most capable of all men to instruct them in heavenly things.” Athanasius, however, in his usual style, calls him “an idolator and hangman; and one capable of all kinds of violence, rapine, and murders;” and whom he actually charges with committing the most impious actions and outrageous cruelties.

The truth is, that the clergy of the Catholic church were now become the principal disturbers of the empire; and the pride of the bishops, and the fury of the people on each side had grown to such a height, that the election or restoration of a bishop seldom took place in the larger cities, without being attended with scenes of slaughter. Athanasius was several times banished and restored at the expense of blood. What shall we make of the Christianity of the man who could act thus, or countenance such proceedings? Had Athanasius been influenced by the benign and peaceable spirit of the gospel, he would at once have withdrawn himself from such disgraceful scenes, and preferred to worship God in the society of only a dozen day-labourers in a cellar or a garret, to all the honour and all the emolument which he could derive from being exalted to the dignity of archbishop of Alexandria, on such degrading conditions. One can scarcely forbear contrasting his conduct with the behaviour of Him, whose servant he professed to be. “When Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force, *and make him a king*, he departed again into a mountain



alone." John vi. 15. The fruits of the Spirit are not turbulence and strife; "but love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, and temperance; and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." Gal. v. 22. The orthodox were deposed, and the Arians substituted in their places, with the murder of thousands; and as the controversy was now no longer about the plain doctrines of uncorrupted Christianity, but about secular honours and dignified preferments, so the bishops were introduced into their churches and placed upon their thrones by armed soldiers. And when once in actual possession, they treated those who differed from them without moderation or mercy, turning them out of their churches, denying them the liberty of worship, fulminating anathemas against them, and persecuting them by every species of cruelty, as is evident from the accounts given by the ecclesiastical historians of Athanasius, Macedonius, George, and others. In short, they seem to have treated one another with the same implacable bitterness and severity, as their common enemies, the heathen, had ever exercised towards them, or as though they thought persecution for conscience-sake had been the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian religion, and that they could not more effectually recommend themselves as the disciples of Christ, than by devouring each other. This made Julian, the emperor, say of them, that he found by experience, that even the beasts of the forest are not so cruel as the generality of Christians then were to one another. Such was the wretched state of things in the reign of Constantius, which affords us little more than the history of councils and creeds differing from, and clashing with each other—bishops deposing, censuring, and anathematizing their adversaries, and the people divided into factions under their respective leaders, for

the sake of words, of the meaning of which they understood nothing, and contending for victory even to bloodshed and death. Thus, as Socrates observes, “was the church torn in pieces for the sake of Athanasius and the word *consubstantial*!”

It probably would not be easy to sketch in few words a more striking picture of these times than that which is given us by Ammianus Marcellinus, who, having served in the armies, had the best opportunities of studying the character of Constantius. “The Christian religion, which in itself,” says he, “is plain and simple, *he* confounded by the dotage of superstition. Instead of reconciling the parties by the weight of his authority, he cherished and propagated, by verbal disputes, the differences which his vain curiosity had excited. The highways were covered with troops of bishops, galloping from every side to the assemblies, which they called synods; and while they laboured to reduce the whole sect to their own particular opinions, the public establishment of the posts was almost ruined by their hasty and repeated journeys.”\* It was certainly a very just, though severe censure, which Gregory Nazianzen passed upon the councils that were held about this time. “If I must speak the truth,” says he, “this is my resolution, to avoid all councils of the bishops, for I have not seen any good end answered by any synod whatsoever; for their love of contention, and their lust of power, *are too great even for words to express.*”† The skepticism of Gibbon has subjected him to an unmeasurable effusion of rancour from the clergy of his day; and far be it from me to stand forward the advocate of skepticism in any man; but I most cordially agree with that eminent writer, when he says, “the patient and humble virtues of Jesus should not be con-

\* Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxi. ch. 16.

† Opera, vol. i. Epist. 55.

founded with the intolerant zeal of princes and bishops, *who have disgraced the name of his disciples.*"\*

So fascinating is the influence of worldly pomp and splendour upon the human mind, that it is not to be wondered at, that the see of Rome became at this time a most seducing object of sacerdotal ambition. In the episcopal order, the Bishop of Rome was the first in rank, and distinguished by a sort of pre-eminence over all other prelates. He surpassed all his brethren in the magnificence and splendour of the church over which he presided; in the riches of his revenues and possessions; in the number and variety of his ministers; in his credit with the people; and in his sumptuous and splendid manner of living. Ammianus Marcellinus, a Roman historian, who lived during these times, adverting to this subject, says, "It was no wonder to see those who were ambitious of human greatness, contending with so much heat and animosity for that dignity, because when they had obtained it, they were sure to be enriched by the offerings of the matrons, of appearing abroad in great splendour, of being admired for their costly coaches, sumptuous in their feasts, out-doing sovereign princes in the expences of their table." This led Prætextatus, an heathen, who was præfect of the city, to say, "*Make me Bishop of Rome, and I'll be a Christian too!*"

In the year 366, Liberius, bishop of Rome, died, and a violent contest arose respecting his successor. The city was divided into two factions, one of which elected Damasus to that high dignity, while the other chose Ursicinus, a deacon of the church. The party of Damasus prevailed, and got him ordained. Ursicinus, enraged that Damasus was preferred before him, set up separate meetings, and at length he also obtained ordination

\* Decline and Fall, vol. ix. ch. 50.

from certain obscure bishops. This occasioned great disputes among the citizens, as to which of the two should obtain the episcopal dignity; and the matter was carried to such a height, that great numbers were murdered on either side in the quarrel—no less than one hundred and thirty-seven persons being destroyed in the very church itself!\* But the very detail of such shameful proceedings is sufficient to excite disgust, and enough has been said to convince any unprejudiced mind of the absurdity of looking for the kingdom of the Son of God in the “Catholic church,” as it now began to be denominated. “The mystery of iniquity,” which had been secretly working since the very days of the apostles, (2 Thess. ii. 7.) had nevertheless been subject to considerable control, so long as paganism remained the established religion of the empire, and Christians were consequently compelled to bear their cross, by patiently suffering the hatred of the world, in conformity to the captain of their salvation. But no sooner was this impediment removed, by the establishment of Christianity, under Constantine, than “the Man of Sin”—“the Son of perdition” began to be manifest. Men were now found, professing themselves the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, yet walking after the course of this world, “lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,—traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God”—“having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.”† And, as this state of things continued to increase in progressive enormity, until it ultimately brought forth that monstrous system of iniquity, denominated “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE

\* Socrates' Eccl. Hist. b. xxvii. ch. 3.

† 2 Tim. iii. 3—5.



EARTH"—described by the prophetic pen, as "the habitation of devils,—the hold of every foul spirit,—the cage of every unclean and hateful bird,"\* we may rest fully assured that the sheep of Christ,—those who heard his voice and followed his will,† would see it their indispensable duty to separate themselves from such an impure communion, in obedience to the reiterated commands of God.‡

It may be proper to remark, that long before the times of which we now treat, some Christians had seen it their duty to withdraw from the communion of the church of Rome. The first instance of this that we find on record, if we except that of Tertullian, is the case of NOVATIAN, who in the year 251, was ordained the pastor of a church in the city of Rome, which maintained no fellowship with the catholic party. It is a difficult matter, at this very remote period, to ascertain the real grounds of difference between Novatian and his opponents. Those who are in any tolerable degree conversant with theological controversy, will scarcely need to be apprised how much caution is necessary to guard against being misled by the false representations which different parties give of each other's principles and conduct. Novatian is said to have refused to receive into the communion of the church any of those persons who, in the time of persecution, had been induced through fear of sufferings or death, to apostatize from their profession, and offer sacrifices to the heathen deities; a principle which he founded upon a mistaken view of Heb. vi. 4—6. We may readily conceive how interesting and difficult a subject this must have been to all the churches of Christ in those distressing times, and the danger that must have arisen from laying down any fixed rule of conduct that

\* Rev. xvii. 5. and xviii. 2. † John x. 27.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 14—18. 2 Tim. iii. 5. Rev. xviii. 4.

should apply to all cases that would come before them; or even verging towards an extreme on either side of this question. The following is the account given of Novatian by the late Mr. Robert Robinson, in his *Ecclesiastical Researches*, p. 126; and I the more readily submit it to the reader, because none who knew Mr. Robinson, can, for a moment, suspect him of having any undue predilection for the principles of Novatian. "He was," says he, "an elder in the Church of Rome, a man of extensive learning, holding the same doctrine as the church did, and published several treatises in defence of what he believed. His address was eloquent and insinuating, and his morals irreproachable. He saw with extreme pain the intolerable depravity of the church. Christians within the space of a very few years were caressed by one emperor, and persecuted by another. In seasons of prosperity many persons rushed into the church for base purposes. In times of adversity, they denied the faith, and reverted again to idolatry. When the squall was over, away they came again to the church, with all their vices, to deprave others by their examples. The bishops, fond of proselytes, encouraged all this; and transferred the attention of Christians from the old confederacy for virtue, to vain shows at Easter, and other Jewish ceremonies, adulterated too with paganism. On the death of bishop Fabian, Cornelius, a brother elder, and a violent partizan for taking in the multitude, was put in nomination. Novatian opposed him; but as Cornelius carried his election, and he saw no prospect of reformation, but on the contrary a tide of immorality pouring into the church, he withdrew and a great many with him. Cornelius, irritated by Cyprian, who was just in the same condition, through the remonstrances of virtuous men at Carthage, and who was exasperated beyond measure with one of his own elders,

named Novatus, who had quitted Carthage, and gone to Rome to espouse the cause of Novatian, called a council and got a sentence of excommunication passed against Novatian. In the end Novatian formed a church, and was elected bishop. Great numbers followed his example, and all over the empire *Puritan* churches were constituted and flourished through the succeeding two hundred years. Afterwards, when penal laws obliged them to lurk in corners, and worship God in private, they were distinguished by a variety of names, and *a succession of them continued till the Reformation.*"

The same author, afterwards adverting to the vile calumnies with which the catholic writers have in all ages delighted to asperse the character of Novatian, thus proceeds to vindicate him :

"They say Novatian was the first Antipope; and yet there was at that time no pope, in the modern sense of the word. They call Novatian the author of the heresy of puritanism; and yet they know, that Tertullian had quitted the church near fifty years before, for the same reason, and Privatus, who was an old man in the time of Novatian, had, with several more, repeatedly remonstrated against the alterations taking place; and, as they could get no redress, had dissented and formed separate congregations. They tax Novatian with being the parent of an innumerable multitude of congregations of Puritans all over the empire; and yet he had no other influence over any, than what his good example gave him. People every where saw the same cause of complaint, and groaned for relief; and when one man made a stand for virtue, the crisis had arrived; people saw the propriety of the cure, and applied the same means to their own relief. They blame this man, and all these churches for the severity of their discipline;—yet this

severe discipline, was the only coercion of the primitive churches, and it was the exercise of this that rendered civil coercion unnecessary. Some exclaimed, it is a barbarous discipline to refuse to readmit people into Christian communion, because they have lapsed into idolatry or vice. Others, finding the inconvenience of such a lax discipline, required a repentance of five, ten, or fifteen years; but the Novatians said, you may be admitted among us by baptism—or, if any Catholic has baptized you before, by rebaptism; but if you fall into idolatry, we shall separate you from our communion, and on no account readmit you. God forbid we should injure either your person, your property, or your character, or even judge of the truth of your repentance or your future state; but you can never be readmitted to our community, without our giving up the last and only coercive guardian we have of the purity of our [fellowship.] Whether these persons reasoned justly or not, as virtue was their object, they challenge respect, and he must be a weak man indeed, who is frightened out of it because Cyprian is pleased to say, they are the children of the devil.”

The doctrinal sentiments of the Novatians appear to have been very scriptural, and the discipline of their churches rigid in the extreme. They were the first class of Christians who obtained the name of (*Cathari*) Puritans, an appellation which doth not appear to have been chosen by themselves, but applied to them by their adversaries; from which we may reasonably conclude that their manners were simple and irreproachable. Some of them are said to have disapproved of second marriages, regarding them as sinful; but in this they erred in common with Tertullian and many other eminent persons. A third charge against them was, that they did not pay due reverence to the martyrs, nor allow



that there was any virtue in their reliques!—A plain proof of their good sense.

Novatian appears to have been possessed of considerable talents—Mosheim terms him, “A man of uncommon learning and eloquence;”—and he wrote several works, of which only two are now extant. One of them is upon the subject of the Trinity. It is divided into thirty-one sections: the first eight relate to the FATHER, and treat of his nature, power, goodness, justice, &c. with the worship due to him. The following twenty sections relate to CHRIST—the Old Testament prophecies concerning him—their actual accomplishment—his nature—how the scriptures prove his divinity—confutes the Sabellians—shews that it was Christ who appeared to the patriarchs, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, &c. The twenty-ninth section treats of the HOLY SPIRIT—how promised—given by Christ—his offices, and operations on the souls of men and in the church. The last two sections recapitulate the arguments before adduced. The work appears to have been written in the year 257; six years after his separation from the Catholic church. The other tract is upon the subject of “Jewish Meats,” addressed in the form of a letter to his church, and written either during his banishment, or retreat in the time of persecution. It opens up the typical nature of the law of Moses, and while he proves its abolition, is careful to guard his Christian brethren against supposing that they were therefore at liberty to eat things sacrificed to idols.\*

Dr. Lardner in his *Credibility of the Gospel History*, ch. xlvii. has been at considerable pains in comparing the various and contradictory representations that have been given of Novatian and his followers, and has ex-

\* Dr. A. Clarke's *Succession of Sacred Literature*, vol. 1. p. 209—212.

onerated them from a mass of obloquy, cast upon them by the Catholic party. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, wrote many epistles or treatises respecting the sect of the Novatians, which afford abundant evidence that their rigid discipline was relished by many. Fabius, bishop of Antioch, in particular, was their friend and favourer. Marcian, bishop of Arles, was firm in the same principles in the time of Stephen, bishop of Rome. A church was formed at Carthage for the Novatian party, of which Maximus was the pastor. Socrates, the historian, speaks of their churches at Constantinople, Nice, Nicomedia, and Coticeus in Phrygia, all in the fourth century—these he mentions as their principal places in the East, and he supposes them to have been equally numerous in the West. What were their numbers in these cities does not appear, but he intimates that they had three churches in Constantinople.

Though, therefore, Novatian and his principles were condemned by the Catholic party, at the time that Dionysius wrote the fore-mentioned letters concerning them to the bishop of Rome, he still continued to be supported by a numerous party in various places, separated from the Catholic church. They had among them some persons of considerable note, and of eminent talents. Among these were Agelius, Acesius, Sisinnius, and Marcian, all of Constantinople. Socrates mentions one Mark, bishop of the Novatians in Scythia, who died in the year 439. In fact the pieces written against them by a great variety of authors of the Catholic church—such as Ambrose, Pacian, and others—the notice taken of them by Basil and Gregory Nazianzen—and the accounts given of them by Socrates and Sozomen in their ecclesiastical histories, are proofs of their being numerous, and that churches of this denomination were to be found in most parts of the world, in the fourth and fifth

centuries. "The vast extent of this sect," says Dr. Lardner, "is manifest from the names of the authors who have mentioned them, or written against them, and from the several parts of the Roman empire in which they were found." \*

All the ecclesiastical historians complain loudly of the schism that was made in the Christian church by the Novatians, whose difference from the Catholics respected matters of discipline only. But we should not be too hasty in joining issue with them in these lamentations. On the contrary, it may fairly admit of a doubt, whether this breach in the unity of the Christian church in that age, and other similar breaches that have taken place at different times, have not been productive, upon the whole, of the happiest effects. For besides promoting free enquiry and discussion, without which no subject can be well understood, this multiplication of sects has had a powerful tendency to counteract that overbearing authority which the whole christian church united, could not have failed to possess, and which, if there had been no place of retreat from power, would have been insupportable. What would have been the terror of an excommunication from a church, and how would it have been possible to correct any abuse in such circumstances? That families and friends should be divided, and that those divisions should be the cause of so much animosity as they have often occasioned, is, no doubt to be lamented. But this is an evil that does not necessarily arise from sects in religion, but solely from the unreasonable spirit of bigotry in man, which cannot bear with patience that others should think or act differently from them—that bigotry, which a number of sects, and their necessary consequences, can alone cure. Private

\* Lardner's Works, 4to. ed. vol. ii. p. 57.

animosity was an evil inseparable from the promulgation of Christianity itself, and was distinctly foretold by its divine author. The excellent character of many of the Novatian bishops, was of great use in exciting emulation among those of the Catholic Church, and in checking that abuse of power, which has often disgraced Christianity infinitely more than the divisions that are the subject of complaint. But to proceed.

Constantius, whose death has been already mentioned, was succeeded in the administration of affairs in the year 361, by his nephew Julian. This prince, during his infancy, had been entrusted to the care of Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, to whom he was related on his mother's side. But although considerable pains had been taken to instruct him in the principles of Christianity, the mind of Julian imbibed a partiality for the pagan worship, which, however, he dexterously contrived to conceal until he had assumed the reins of government. Mr. Gibbon, not without probability, resolves this unhappy bias of the young prince's mind, into a disgust which he had taken at the manner in which the Arian controversy was carried on. "He was educated," says he, "in the lesser Asia, amidst the scandals of the Arian controversy. The fierce contests of the Eastern bishops, the incessant alterations of their creeds, and the profane motives which appeared to actuate their conduct, insensibly strengthened the prejudices of Julian, that they neither understood nor believed the religion for which they so fiercely contended."\* There is surely nothing incredible in this—the wonder would have been that, spectator as he was of such detestable squabbles, he should have retained any predilection for the Christians.

The *apostacy* of Julian (as the Catholic clergy delighted to call it) was carefully concealed during his mi-

\* Decline and Fall, vol. iv. ch. 25.



nority; and, when first intimated, it was cautiously done among the adherents of the ancient pagan worship. From the zeal and virtues of their royal proselyte, they fondly hoped the restoration of their temples, sacrifices, and worship, of which they had been in a considerable degree deprived during the reigns of Constantine and his sons. Probably *they* expected that the flames of persecution should again be lighted up against the enemies of their deities; while the Christians beheld with horror and indignation the apostacy of Julian. But the hopes of the former, and the fears of the latter, were disappointed by the prudent conduct of Julian, who, during his short reign, consulted the good of his subjects and the public tranquillity. Actuated by these motives, and apprehensive of disturbing the repose of an unsettled reign, he surprised the world by an edict, extending to all the inhabitants of the empire the benefits of a free and equal toleration—but he had seen enough of the intolerant principles of the Catholic clergy, to deprive them of the power of persecuting their fellow subjects. The pagans were permitted to open all their temples, and were at once delivered from the oppressive laws and arbitrary exactions imposed upon them by Constantine and his sons. At the same time, the bishops and clergy, who had been banished by Constantius, were recalled from exile, and restored to their respective churches. Julian, who had paid considerable attention to their disputes, invited the leaders of the different parties to his palace, that he might enjoy the pleasure of witnessing their furious encounters. The clamour of controversy sometimes provoked him to exclaim, “Hear me! the Franks have heard me, and the Germans;”—but he soon discovered that he was now engaged with more obstinate and implacable enemies; and, though he exerted all the powers of his oratory to persuade them

to live in concord, or at least in peace, he was perfectly satisfied he had nothing to fear from their union and co-operation.

There are two particulars in the reign of Julian which ought not to be passed over without being briefly adverted to. The first is the extraordinary exertions which he made to restore the ancient superstitious worship. No sooner did he ascend the throne, than he assumed the character of supreme Pontiff, and became a perfect devotee to the rites of paganism. He dedicated a domestic chapel to the sun, his favourite deity—his gardens were filled with statues and altars of the gods—and each apartment of his palace displayed the appearance of a magnificent temple. He also endeavoured, by his own zeal, to inflame that of the magistrates and people. “Amidst the sacred but licentious crowd of priests, of inferior ministers, and of female dancers, who were dedicated to the service of the temple, it was the business of the emperor to bring the wood, to blow the fire, to handle the knife, to slaughter the victim, and thrusting his bloody hands into the bowels of the expiring animal, to draw forth the heart or liver, and to read, with the consummate skill of a soothsayer, the imaginary signs of future events.”\* Encouraged by the example of their sovereign, as well as by his exhortations and liberality, the cities and families resumed the practice of their neglected ceremonies. “Every part of the world,” exclaims one of their own writers, with transport, “displayed the triumph of religion—and the grateful prospect of flaming altars, bleeding victims, the smoke of incense, and a solemn train of priests and prophets, without fear, and without danger. The sound of prayer and of music was heard on the tops of the highest mountains; and the same ox

\* Gibbon, vol. iv. ch. 23.

afforded a sacrifice for the gods, and a supper for their joyous votaries." This may give us some notion of what might have ensued had the life of Julian not been cut short.

The other circumstance alluded to, is the project which this emperor entertained of rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem. In a public address to the people of the Jews, dispersed throughout the provinces of his empire, he tells them, that he pities their misfortunes, condemns their oppressors, praises their constancy, declares himself their gracious protector, and expresses a hope, that after his return from the Persian war, he may be permitted to pay his vows to the Almighty in the holy city of Jerusalem. It is probable that the vain and ambitious mind of Julian aspired to the honour of restoring the ancient glory of the temple. He knew the Christians were firmly persuaded that, by the coming of Christ, the typical dispensation had come to an end; and could he succeed, in restoring the Jews to their city and the ritual of their worship, he might convert it into an argument against the faith of prophecy and the truth of revelation. He, therefore, resolved to erect, on mount Moriah, a stately temple; and without waiting for his return from the Persian war, gave instructions to his minister Alypius, to commence without delay, the vast undertaking. At the call of their great deliverer, the Jews, from all the provinces of the empire, repaired to Jerusalem. The desire of rebuilding the temple has, in every age, been a favourite project with them. In this propitious moment, says Gibbon, the men forgot their avarice and the women their delicacy; spades and pick-axes of silver were provided by the vanity of the rich, and the rubbish was transported in mantles of silk and purple. Every purse was opened in liberal contributions, every hand claimed a share in the pious labour; and the commands of a

great monarch were executed by the enthusiasm of a whole people.

The joint efforts of power and enthusiasm were, however, on this occasion unsuccessful. I am aware that the reason of this is differently accounted for. Some resolve it wholly into the early death of Julian, and the additional circumstance of his successor being actuated by different religious principles. I shall, however, transcribe the account which is given of this extraordinary affair, not by a Christian, but by a heathen writer, who lived during the transaction, and wrote his book within twenty years of it—leaving the reader to make his own reflections on the subject.

Ammianus Marcellinus, detailing the history of his own times, says, “Whilst Alypius, assisted by the governor of the province, urged with vigour and diligence the execution of the work, horrible balls of fire, breaking out near the foundations, with frequent and reiterated attacks, rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen; and the victorious element continuing in this manner, obstinately and resolutely bent as it were, to drive them to a distance, the undertaking was abandoned.”\* This “unexceptionable testimony,” as Gibbon candidly admits it to be, is also supported by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, in a letter to the emperor Theodosius—by the eloquent Chrysostom, who at the time was bishop of Antioch—and by Gregory Nazianzen, who published his account of this preternatural event before the expiration of the same year.

There are few of the Roman emperors, whose characters have been exhibited in more discordant lights, than that of Julian. His predilection for paganism, or his prejudice against Christianity, or both, have given such

\* Ammianus Marcellinus, b. xxi. at the beginning.



a partial bias to the pen of Mr. Gibbon when recording the events of his reign, that he uniformly represents him as a virtuous and amiable monarch. But there certainly were traits in his character of a very different nature. Dr. Lardner, whose impartiality has never been called in question, tells us that Julian “had a certain levity of mind; was a great talker; very fond of fame; superstitious rather than properly religious; so addicted to sacrificing, that it was said the race of bulls would be destroyed if he returned victorious from Persia: and such was the multitude of his victims, that his soldiers, who partook of them, were frequently much disordered by excess in eating and drinking. He received the rising sun with blood, and attended him with blood at his setting.—By frequent devotions he engaged the gods to be his auxiliaries in war; worshipping Mercury, Ceres, Mars, Calliope, Apollo, and Jupiter. Libanius, complaining of the deities who had deserted him, says, “Which of them shall we blame? not one, but all, for none were neglected by him, neither gods nor goddesses. And is this the return,” says he, “for all his victims, for all his vows, for all the incense, and all the blood offered up to them, by day and by night? Wherever there was a temple, continues the same writer, whether in the city, or on the hill, or on the tops of the mountains, no place was so rough or so difficult of access but he ran to it, as if the way had been smooth and pleasant.”

“But though Julian was so devout and religious in his way, he could be much displeased when he was disappointed, and even angry with his gods, like other heathens. In the Persian war, having obtained some successes and expecting more, he prepared a grand sacrifice for Mars; but the omen not being favourable, he was greatly incensed; and called Jupiter to witness, that he would never more offer a sacrifice to Mars. This excess

of superstition, it seems to me, is a proof of the want of judgment—a defect which appeared upon divers occasions and in many actions not altogether becoming the dignity of an emperor.” \*

The conduct of Julian towards the Christians does not seem to have been characterized by all that impartiality which his admirers claim for him. Sozomen, the historian, says, he ordered the strictest inquiry to be made after the estates that belonged to Christians, with a view to confiscate the whole of them, not hesitating to employ torture to come at the truth. He subjected the Christian clergy to the lowest services in the army—and threatened that unless the Christians rebuilt the pagan temples, *he would not suffer THE GALILEANS to wear their heads*; and our historian observes that, if it had been in his power, and he had not been prevented by death, he would probably have been as good as his word.†

Though Julian forbore to persecute unto death, he could not, on several occasions, refrain from using insults, which sufficiently shewed what he felt, and what he wished to do. When he was sacrificing in a temple at Constantinople, and Maris, the bishop of Chalcedon, a man respectable for his learning and for the part he had acted in public life, and now venerable for his age, happening to pass by, he abused him as an impious person, and an enemy of the gods. He had even the meanness to reproach him for his blindness, saying, “Will not your Galilean God cure you?” “The old man replied, I thank my God that I am deprived of sight, that I may not see your fall from piety.” On this occasion, Julian had so much command of himself, as to pass on without making any reply.

\* Lardner's Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 25.

† Sozomen's History, book v. ch. iv.

But notwithstanding his affectation of magnanimity, Julian was not always so much master of himself, as he appeared to be on this occasion. While at Antioch, just before he set out on his expedition against Persia, two of the officers who usually attended upon his person, inadvertently complained, that by his orders, every thing in the city was polluted with the rites of heathenism, inso-much that the very fountains that supplied the city, and every thing sold in the market, bread, butchers' meat, herbs, fruits, &c. had been sprinkled with lustral water, by which they were, as it were, consecrated to the heathen gods: such had been his insidious policy, in order to draw the people insensibly into idolatry.

These complaints coming to the ears of Julian, he ordered them to be brought before him; and interrogating them, as was his custom, with great familiarity, they frankly told him, that they *had* made those complaints; and that having been educated in the Christian religion, under his predecessors, Constantine and Constantius, they could not help being disgusted at seeing every thing contaminated with the rites of heathenism; but that this was the only thing in his reign of which they complained. At this he was so provoked, that he ordered them to be put to death with torture; pretending that it was not on account of their religion, but for their petulance in insulting their emperor.

About the same time, a deaconess, of the name of Pythia, who led the female singers, happening, as the emperor was passing by the doors of a place of worship, to be singing a psalm, and having, perhaps imprudently pitched upon one of those in which the heathen gods and their worshippers are spoken of with contempt, he was so provoked that he sent for her; and, though she was very old, one of his guards struck her, by his command and

in his presence, on both the cheeks, with such violence, that the blood gushed out.\*

After a short reign of twenty months, Julian, who perished by the lance of a common soldier, while prosecuting the Persian war upon the banks of the Euphrates, was succeeded in the year 363 by Jovian, one of the officers of his army. He had been educated in the principles of Christianity, and as soon as he ascended the throne, transmitted a circular letter to all the governors of the provinces, securing the legal establishment of the Christian religion. The edicts of Julian were abolished, and ecclesiastical immunities restored and enlarged. The Catholic clergy were unanimous in the loud and sincere applause which they bestowed on Jovian, but they were yet ignorant what creed or what synod he would choose for the standard of orthodoxy. The leaders of the different factions were properly aware, how much depended upon the first impressions made on the mind of an untutored soldier, and they hastened to the imperial court. The public roads were crowded with Athanasian, Arian, Semi-arian, and Eunomian bishops, who struggled to outstrip each other in the race: the apartments of the palace resounded with their clamours, and the ears of the prince were assaulted, and perhaps astonished by the singular mixture of metaphysical argument and personal invective. He wisely recommended to them charity and concord, but referred the disputants to the decision of a future council.

The conduct of Jovian seems to have given the death blow to the prevalence of paganism in the empire. "Under his reign," says the historian of the Roman empire, "Christianity obtained an easy and lasting victory; and as soon as the smile of royal patronage was withdrawn,

\* Theod. Hist. b. iii. ch. xv.



the genius of paganism, which had been fondly raised and cherished by the acts of Julian, *sunk irrecoverably in the dust*. In many cities, the temples were shut or deserted; the philosophers who had abused the transient favour, thought it prudent to shave their beards, and disguise their profession; and the Christians rejoiced, that they were now in a condition to forgive or to revenge the injuries which they had suffered under the preceding reign.\* Jovian, nevertheless, issued a wise and gracious edict, in which he explicitly declares, that though he should severely punish the sacrilegious rites of magic, his subjects might exercise with freedom and safety, the ceremonies of the ancient worship. “I hate contention,” says he, “and love those only that study peace;” declaring that, “he would trouble none on account of their faith, whatever it was; and that such only should obtain his favour and esteem, as should stand forward, in restoring the peace of the church.” The senate of Constantinople deputed an orator, of the name of Themistius, to express their loyal devotion to the new emperor. His oration is preserved, and merits particular attention, for the discovery which it inadvertently makes of the state of the established Catholic church at that period. “In the recent changes,” says he, “both religions have been alternately disgraced, by the seeming acquisition of worthless proselytes, of those votaries of the reigning purple, who could pass, without a reason and without a blush, from the church to the temple, and from the altars of Jupiter to the sacred table of the Christians.”† Could a volume give us a more striking picture of the wretched state to which the Christian profession was reduced in so short a time as half a century after its establishment?

\* Gibbon, vol. iv. ch. lxxxv.

† Quoted by Gibbon, *ubi supra*.

Jovian reigned only one year. He appears to have been addicted to intemperance; for, after indulging himself in the pleasures of the table at supper, he retired to rest, and the next morning was found dead in his bed. The throne of the emperor now remained ten days vacant; but it was at length filled by two brothers, Valentinian and Valens, the former a distinguished officer in the army, who, thirty days after his own elevation, voluntarily associated his brother with him in the government of the empire, A. D. 364. Of both these princes, Mr. Gibbon says, that “they invariably retained in the purple, the chaste and temperate simplicity which had adorned their private life; and under their reign, the pleasures of a court never cost the people a blush or a sigh.” Though in a great measure illiterate themselves, they were great promoters of learning among their subjects. They planned a course of instruction for every city in the empire; and the academies of Rome and Constantinople, but more especially the latter, were considerably extensive.

The two emperors were of very different tempers, and took different courses in regard to religion. The former was of the orthodox party; but though he especially favoured those of his own sentiments, he gave no disturbance to the Arians. Valens, on the contrary, was less liberal in his views, and persecuted all who differed from him. In the beginning of their reign, a synod was convened in Illyricum, which again decreed the consubstantiality of Father, Son, and Spirit. The emperors issued a circular letter, declaring their assent to this, and ordering that this doctrine should be preached—though they published laws for the toleration of all religious denominations, and even of paganism. In the year 375, Valentinian died suddenly in a transport of rage, and Valens being sole emperor, was soon prevailed on by the artifice of Eudoxius, bishop of Constantinople, to

take a decided part with the Arians, and to abandon his moderation, by cruelly persecuting the Orthodox. The first thing that fired his resentment was the conduct of these latter, who had solicited and obtained his permission to hold a synod at Lampsacus, for the amendment and settlement of the faith; when, after two month's consultation, they decreed the doctrine of the Son's being *like the Father as to his essence*, to be the true orthodox faith, and deposed all the bishops of the Arian party. This highly exasperated Valens, who without delay, convened a council of the Arian bishops, and *in his turn*, commanded the bishops who composed the synod of Lampsacus to embrace the sentiments of Eudoxius the Arian: and upon their refusal, sent them into exile, transferring their churches to their opponents. After this, he pursued measures still more violent against them; some were commanded to be whipped, others disgraced, not a few imprisoned, and many fined.

But the most detestable part of his conduct was his treacherous and cruel behaviour towards eighty of them, whom, under the pretence of sending them into banishment—a thing to which they had consented, rather than subscribe what they did not believe—he put on board a ship, and caused the vessel to be set on fire as it sailed out of the harbour, through which they all perished either by fire or water. These kinds of cruelty continued to to the end of his reign, and there is no room to doubt that he was greatly stimulated to them by the bishops of the Arian party. It is a melancholy reflection, that the pity which such merciless treatment as this could not have failed to excite in every feeling mind, the orthodox should have deprived themselves of, by their own imprudence, in commencing the first assault upon the Arians. They ought to have remembered that divine maxim, “whatsoever ye would that men should do unto

you, do ye even so unto them;" for on most of those occasions it was only "the measure they meted that was measured to them again."

But the conduct of Valens was not regulated by the strict rules of equity; for in this persecution he included the Novatians, whose churches he commanded to be shut up, and their pastors banished; although, so far as I can perceive, they took no part whatever in the squabbles that existed between the contending factions. Agelius, the pastor of the church in Constantinople, a man of admirable sanctity and virtue, and remarkable for his perfect contempt of money, was exiled. Yet he was restored not long after, and recovered the churches of his communion. Socrates, the historian, who seems to have been intimately acquainted with the affairs of the Novatians, says, that the toleration which this class of Christians at length obtained, they owed under providence to one Marcian, a presbyter of their church in Constantinople, a man of learning and piety, who tutored two daughters of the emperor. This historian particularly mentions the liberality and kindness which the Novatians exercised towards such of the orthodox party as were the subjects of persecution, while they themselves were tolerated, a trait in their history which even Milner is obliged to admit "reflects an amiable lustre on the character of these Dissenters"\*—and for shewing which benevolence, they actually incurred the displeasure of the reigning party. Agelius presided over that church forty years, and died in the sixth year of the reign of Theodosius. Before his death, some difference of opinion arose in the church relative to a successor. Agelius gave the preference to Sisinnius,† a person of

\* History of the Church, vol. ii. p. 157.

† Socrates, the historian, has given us some interesting particulars of Sisinnius, which, as I do not recollect to have seen them quoted by any



great learning and talents, and consequently ordained him. The church had a great partiality for Marcian, who had been eminently instrumental in enabling them to weather the storm of persecution under Valens.

modern writer, I shall here extract. "He was," says he, "an eloquent person and an excellent philosopher—had diligently cultivated the art of Logic, and was incomparably well versed in the sacred scriptures." He wore a white garment, and regularly bathed himself twice a day in the public baths. He seems to have been remarkable for the readiness of his wit, on all occasions; in illustration of which, Socrates has recorded several anecdotes. Being interrogated by one of his acquaintance, why he, who was a bishop, chose to bathe twice a day, Sisinnius promptly replied, "*Because I cannot bathe thrice!*" His good sense led him to treat with levity the practice of clothing the clergy in black. Calling one day to pay a friendly visit at the house of Arsacius, who had succeeded Chrysostom in the see of Constantinople, he was asked, why he dressed in a manner so unsuitable to his character as a bishop. "Tell me," said he, "where it is written that a bishop should wear a black garment?" You, said he, can never shew that a priest ought to wear black—but I will give you my authority for wearing white. Hath not Solomon expressly said, Let thy garments be always white? Eccles. ix. 8. He then referred them to Luke ix. 29. on which occasion both the Lord Jesus, and Moses, and Elias, appeared to the apostles clothed in white. In the province of Galatia, Leontius, the bishop of Ancyra, commenced a prosecution against the church of the Novatians, in that city, and took from them their place of worship. Happening soon afterwards to come to Constantinople, Sisinnius waited upon him, for the purpose of entreating him to restore to his friends their chapel. Leontius flew into a passion, and said, "You Novatianists ought not to have churches, for you discard all repentance, and exclude the loving kindness of God," &c. Sisinnius listened patiently to this philippic, and then calmly replied, "But no man can repent more than I do!" How, said Leontius, do you repent? "I repent," replied Sisinnius, "*that I have seen you!*" Chrysostom, who was at the head of the Catholic party, and who was a man of excessive arrogance, on one occasion addressed him with great heat, saying, "You are a heretic, and I will make you leave off preaching." "I'll give you a reward," said Sisinnius, "if you will free me from the labour of it." "Oh! if the office is laborious," rejoined Chrysostom, "you may go on with it."

Socrates closes his account of Sisinnius with the following sketch. "He was very eminent for his learning, on which account all the bishops

Distressed that any cause of murmuring should exist among them, Agelius immediately ordained Marcian to the episcopal office, and thereby restored harmony and concord.

After having reigned fourteen years, Valens lost his life in a battle with the Goths, A. D. 378, and was suc-

ceeded, loved and honoured him. Moreover, all the eminent personages of the Senatorian order had a great affection for him and admired him. He wrote many books, but he is too studious about words in them, and intermixes too many poetic terms; he was more admired for his speaking than for his writings. In his countenance and voice, in his dress and aspect, and in the whole of his action and deportment, there was much gracefulness—by reason of which accomplishments, he was beloved by all sects." Upon another occasion, he remarks that, such was the high estimation in which Sisinnius was held by the Novatian people, that "his word was a law."

Sisinnius died in the year 407, and was succeeded by Chrysanthus, a man of signal prudence and modesty, by whose means the churches of the Novatians were not only upheld but increased. *Eccles. Hist.* b. vi. ch. 29. and b. vii. ch. 12.

It is quite amusing to witness Mr. Milner's spleen against the characters of Novatian and Sisinnius. He terms the latter a "facetious gentleman," and only mentions him for the sake of censuring his singularity in not conforming to the catholic clergy and the clerical garb. Indeed he seems to have regarded him in much the same light as that in which Dr. Johnson regarded Milton, when he said, "He was not of the Church of England, he was not of the Church of Rome—to be of no church is dangerous." But of Ærius (concerning whom the reader will meet with some account in the next section) he disdains, so far as I can perceive, even to record his name or his heresy—though on St. Augustine, a part of whose labours were employed in an attempt to refute him, he has bestowed 172 closely printed pages!—that *Augustine*, of whom, after all, he is constrained to acknowledge that he understood not Paul's doctrine of justification—that he perpetually confounds it with sanctification, (vol. ii. p. 462, &c.) and that as to the doctrine of particular redemption, it was unknown to him and *all the ancients*, as he [Mr. Milner] wishes it had remained equally unknown to the moderns." p. 467. This was, indeed, fulfilling the pledge Mr. M. had given the public, of writing an *Ecclesiastical History on a new plan*. See his *Preface to vol. 1. of his History of the Christian Church*.

ceeded in the government of the empire by Gratian, the son of Valentinian. He was of the orthodox party; and after the death of his uncle Valens, he recalled those that had been banished—restored them to their sees, and sent Sapores, one of his captains, to drive the Arians, like wild beasts, out of all their churches. This emperor, soon after his accession to power, united with himself as colleague in the government, “the great Theodosius, a name celebrated in history, and dear to the Catholic church.”

Immediately on his advancement to the throne of the empire, Theodosius betrayed a warm zeal for the orthodox opinions. Hearing that the city of Constantinople was divided into different religious parties, he wrote a letter to them from Thessalonica, wherein he acquaints them, that “*it was his pleasure*, that all his subjects should be of the same religious profession with Damasus, bishop of Rome, and Peter, bishop of Alexandria, and that their church alone should be denominated “Catholic,” who worshipped the divine Trinity as equal in honour, and that those who were of another opinion should be called heretics, become infamous, and be liable to other punishments.”\* And on his arrival in the imperial city, he sent for Demophilus, the Arian bishop, demanding to know whether he would subscribe the Nicene confession of faith, adding, “if you refuse to do it, I will drive you from your churches”—and he kept his word, for he turned him and all the Arians out of the city.

The more effectually to extinguish heresy, he in the year 383, summoned a council of bishops of his own persuasion to meet at Constantinople, in order to *confirm* the Nicene faith; the number of them amounted to an

\* Sozomen, b. vii. ch. 4—6.

hundred and fifty, to which may be added, thirty-six of the Macedonian party. This is commonly termed *the second Oecumenical or general council*. They decreed that the Nicene faith should be the standard of orthodoxy, and that all heresies should be condemned. When the council was ended, the emperor issued two edicts against heretics; the first prohibited them from holding any assemblies; and the second, forbidding them to meet in fields or villages! And as though this were not sufficiently extravagant, he followed up this absurd procedure by a law, in which *he forbade heretics to worship* or to preach, or to ordain bishops or presbyters, commanding some to be banished, others to be rendered infamous and deprived of the common privileges of citizens. In the space of fifteen years he promulgated at least fifteen several edicts against the heretics. It is some apology for him certainly that he did not often put these execrable statutes in force; and one would charitably hope that Sozomen and Socrates, who have recorded the history of these whimsical transactions, are correct in thinking that he only intended by them to terrify others into the same opinions of the Divine Being with himself.

But the zeal of Theodosius was not wholly absorbed in the establishment of uniformity among the professors of Christianity; he was equally anxious to extinguish the expiring embers of Paganism. About the year 390, he issued a law, in which he expressly states that “It is our will and pleasure, that none of our subjects, whether magistrates or private citizens, however exalted, or however humble may be their rank and condition, shall presume, in any city or in any place, to worship an inanimate idol, by the sacrifice of a guiltless victim.”\* The act of sacrificing, and the practice of divination by the entrails of the

\* Theod. I. xvi. tit. 10. leg. 12.



victim, are declared a crime of high treason against the state which can be expiated only by the death of the guilty. The rites of pagan superstition are abolished, as highly injurious to the truth and honour of religion; and luminaries, garlands, frankincense, and libations of wine are enumerated and condemned.

\* Such were the persecuting edicts of Theodosius against the pagans, which were rigidly executed; and they were attended with the desired effect, “for so rapid and yet so gentle was the fall of Paganism, that only twenty-eight years after the death of Theodosius, the faint and minute vestiges were no longer visible to the eye of the legislator \*.” †

\* Gibbon's Rome, vol. v. ch. xx.

† The increase of the Christian profession in the world, must always be an interesting topic with those who rightly estimate the importance of the gospel to human happiness; but every one must be aware of the difficulty there is in arriving at certain calculations on the subject. The reader, however, will require no apology from me for subjoining, in this place, a short extract from Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. “Under the reign Theodosius,” says he, “after Christianity had enjoyed, more than sixty years, the sunshine of imperial favour, the ancient and illustrious church of Antioch (in Syria) consisted of one hundred thousand persons; three thousand of whom were supported out of the public oblations. The splendour and dignity of the Queen of the East, [the name then given to Antioch] the acknowledged populousness of Cæsarea, Se-lencia, and Alexandria, and the destruction of two hundred and fifty thousand souls in the earthquake which afflicted Antioch under the elder Justin, are so many convincing proofs that the whole number of its inhabitants was not less than half a million.” Vol. ii. ch. xv.

Now according to this calculation, the reader will see that at the time Theodosius attempted to enforce an uniformity of worship throughout the empire, the proportion which the *nominal* Christians in Antioch bore to the rest of the citizens, was as one to five. Taking this as a fair average, there must have been in Rome two hundred and fifty thousand *professed* Christians at that time, and at Alexandria, in Egypt, which was the second city in the empire, probably one hundred and fifty thousand. Thus in those three cities alone there were half a million of *nominal* Christians. The number of inhabitants included in the whole of the Roman Empire at that period, was one hundred and twenty millions; and if we extend the com-

## SECTION III.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

*From the commencement of the fifth century to the establishment of the dominion of the popes.*

A. D. 401—606.

THE fall of paganism, which may be considered as having begun to take place in the reign of Constantine, and as nearly consummated in that of Theodosius, is probably one of the most extraordinary revolutions that ever took place on the theatre of this world. Their own writers have described it as “a dreadful and amazing prodigy, which covered the earth with darkness, and restored the ancient dominion of chaos and of night.”\* But the pen of inspiration has depicted the awful catastrophe in strains of much higher sublimity and grandeur, and doubtless upon very different principles—“I beheld,” says the writer of the Apocalypse, “when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll, when it is rolled together :

\* See Gibbon’s Rome, vol. v. ch. xxviii.

putation to that multitude, we should be led to conclude that there were among them twenty-four millions that professed the Christian religion. We must, however, keep this consideration always in view, that Christianity had, at this time, been sixty years established by law as the religion of the empire, and consequently was not a little corrupted from its original purity.

and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains—and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" \* The same thing seems to be intended, when the writer says, "There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven; and the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." † In this highly-wrought figurative language we are taught to conceive of the dreadful conflict which subsisted between the Christian and heathen professions, the persecutions which for three centuries had been inflicted upon the former, with the issue of the whole, in the ultimate overthrow of the pagan persecuting powers, and the subversion of that idolatrous system in the empire.

From the time of the establishment of Christianity under Constantine to the end of the fourth century, a period of more than seventy years, the disciples of Jesus were highly privileged. They were in general permitted to sit under their own vine and fig-tree, exempt from the dread of molestation. The clergy of the Catholic church, indeed, persisted in waging a sanguinary and disgraceful contest with each other, about church preferments, and similar objects of human ambition; but, notwithstanding

\* Rev. vi. 12—17.

† Chap. xii. 7--9.

the squabbles of those men of corrupt minds, it must have been a season of precious repose and tranquillity to the real churches of Christ, which stood aloof from such scandalous proceedings, and kept their garments unspotted from the world.

There are few things more gratifying to the friend of TRUTH, than to have an opportunity of recording the disinterested labours of such as, under circumstances of discouragement, and frequently at the expense of all that men in general account valuable, have stood forth the champions of her noble cause, against a prevailing torrent of error. We have already adverted to the rise of the Novatianist churches, which stood firmly attached to the simple doctrine and order of the first Christian churches, and maintained a public testimony against the corrupt state of the Catholic party. Towards the close of the fourth century arose Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari, in the island of Sardinia, a man remarkable for his prudence, the austerity of his character, and the firmness of his mind in all his resolutions. Though he wrote in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity against the Arians, he refused all religious fellowship with both parties, on account of the corruption of their doctrine and the laxity of their discipline; while he and his followers were content to suffer the persecution of either party.\*

About the same time rose up ÆRIUS, the founder of a new sect, who propagated opinions different from those that were commonly received, and collected various societies throughout Armenia, Pontus, and Cappadocia. We are indebted to Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, who died early in the fifth century, for recording the discriminating tenets of this denomination of Christians. Ærius was an elder of the church of Sebastia in Pontus; and, as

\* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 386.



Epiphanius, who undertook to confute him and all other heretics, informs us, obstinately defended four great errors. These were, 1. That bishops were not distinguished from presbyters or elders, by any divine right, for that, according to the New Testament, their office and authority were absolutely the same. 2. That it was wrong to offer up any prayers for the dead, which it seems was become customary in those days. 3. That there was no authority in the word of God for the celebration of Easter, as a religious solemnity; and 4. That fasts ought not to be prefixed to the annual return of days, as the time of Lent and the week preceding Easter. Such seems to have been the *heresy* of Ærius, and his writings in defence of which, we are told, met with the most cordial reception from his cotemporaries. “We know with the utmost certainty,” says Mosheim, “that it was highly agreeable to many good Christians, who were no longer able to bear the tyranny and arrogance of the bishops of this century.”

The reader, it is hoped, will excuse a remark or two upon this subject before we proceed. The learned historian, whom I have just quoted, informs us that—“The great purpose of Ærius seems to have been that of reducing Christianity to its primitive simplicity;” he then adds, “a purpose indeed *laudable* and *noble*, when considered in itself; though the principles from whence it springs, and the means by which it is executed, are *generally, in many respects*, worthy of censure, and *may* have been so in the case of this reformer.”\* I cannot forbear subjoining the comment of his erudite translator, Dr. Maclaine, upon the text of this historian. “The desire,” says he, “of reducing religious worship to the greatest possible simplicity, however rational it may

\* Mosheim, vol. i. cent. iv. part ii. ch. iii.

appear in itself, and, abstractedly considered, will be considerably moderated in such as bestow a moment's attention upon the imperfection and infirmities of human nature in its present state. Mankind, generally speaking, have too little elevation of mind to be much affected by those forms and methods of worship in which there is nothing striking to the outward senses. The great difficulty here lies in determining the lengths which it is prudent to go in the accommodation of religious ceremonies to human infirmity; and the grand point is to fix a medium, in which a due regard may be shewn to the senses and imagination, without violating the dictates of right reason, or tarnishing the purity of true religion. It has been said, that the church of Rome has gone too far in its condescension to the infirmities of mankind—and this is what the ablest defenders of its motley worship have alleged in its behalf. But this observation is not just; the church of Rome has not so much accommodated itself to human weakness, as it has abused that weakness, by taking occasion from it to establish an endless variety of ridiculous ceremonies, destructive of true religion, and only adapted to promote the riches and despotism of the clergy, and to keep the multitude still hoodwinked in their ignorance and superstition.\*

Now according to Dr. Mosheim's manner of expressing himself on this subject, the reader will readily perceive, that, however much some of the friends of truth might labour to stem the torrent of corruption, and restore Christianity to its original simplicity, such attempts were almost certain to be condemned by both this eminent historian and his translator. With them nothing is more common than to extol the simplicity of gospel worship during the apostolic age, and in a few pages afterwards

\* *Ubi Supra*, p. 388.

to censure the efforts of those who have laboured to retrieve it from the corruptions to which the folly and wickedness of men have subjected it. Hence we invariably find persons of this description ranked in the class of "heretics," and reprobated as troublers of "the church!" The design of Ærius, it is admitted, was laudable and noble in itself, nor is it affirmed that the means which he made use of were *actually* worthy of censure; but *they may have been* so. But surely a cordial attachment to the simplicity of primitive Christianity would have prompted the historian to evince some few grains of allowance for the conduct of Ærius, even though in the prosecution of a "laudable and noble design," he had been betrayed into some little indiscretion in regard to the means of effecting it, which, after all, in the present instance, is not pretended. This is only what might have been reasonably expected; since to impute, without evidence, the worst motives that can be assigned to the actions of men, is not the immediate operation of that charity which thinketh no evil. The learned translator, however, takes up the subject in a somewhat different point of view; for upon his principle, the simplicity of gospel-worship, as established in the apostolic churches, **must** be considered as altogether unsuitable to the exigencies of human nature; for, that the constitution and worship of the first churches were remarkable for a divine simplicity, none will deny. Now if it be lawful for men to depart from this simplicity, and to accommodate the forms of Christian worship to the ignorance, infirmities, or prejudices of men, according as these may happen to prevail in different ages, then, indeed, a power to decree rites and ceremonies in matters of religion, is quite necessary to adapt the Christian profession to the incessant fluctuations of the state of this world, though it will not be very easy, when this

right is once admitted, to shew, on what principle the church of Rome can be condemned for going to an extreme in this matter; since, in *that* case, it is no divine rule that is to regulate our conduct, but the different fancies of men, as these respect human infirmities.

It is happy for simple Christians that their rule of duty is plain, though, unfortunately, not sanctioned by either the catholic or the reformed church. It is “not to admit into the worship of God, any thing which is either not expressly commanded, or plainly exemplified in the New Testament.” This was evidently the principle upon which *Ærius* proceeded in opposing the superstitions of his time, and for which he deserves to be held in perpetual remembrance—it is the only principle which evinces a becoming deference to the wisdom and authority of God in the institution of his worship—and, it may be added, which secures the uniform regard of his people to the institutions of his kingdom, to the end of time.

The distinction between bishop and presbyter or elder, which *Ærius* so strongly opposed, seems to have prevailed early in the Christian church; yet it is demonstrably without any solid foundation in the New Testament. “That the terms, *bishop* and *elder* are sometimes used promiscuously in the New Testament,” says Dr. Campbell, “there is no critic of any name who now pretends to dispute. The passage, Acts xx. 17, &c. is well known. Paul, from Miletus sent to Ephesus, and called *the elders* of the church, saying, “Take heed to yourselves, and to all the church over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (literally *ἐπισκοπος* *bishops*.)” Similar to this is a passage in Titus, chap. i. 5. “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain *elders* (*πρεσβυτερος*) in every city.” Ver. 7 “For a *bishop*



(ἐπισκοπον) must be blameless." In like manner the apostle Peter, 1 Epist. v. 1. "The *elders* (πρεσβυτερος) which are among you, I exhort, &c." Ver. 2. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, *taking the oversight thereof*, (ἐπισκοπῶντες) discharging the office of *bishops*."\* So much for the heresy of Ærius as it respected the denial of any distinction between the office of bishop and presbyter. On the other three particulars of his heresy, it is, at this time of day, quite unnecessary for us to bestow a word in the way of apology.

Amongst the innumerable corruptions of Christianity which have prevailed in the Catholic church, there is none that makes a more conspicuous figure than the institution of monachism or monkery; and, if traced to its origin, it will be found strikingly to exemplify the truth of the maxim that, as some of the largest and loftiest trees spring from very small seeds, so the most extensive and wonderful effects sometimes arise from very inconsiderable causes. In times of persecution, during the first ages of the church, whilst "the heathen raged, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed," many pious Christians, male and female, married and unmarried, justly accounting that no human felicity ought to come in competition with their fidelity to Christ, and diffident of their own ability to persevere in resisting the temptations wherewith they were incessantly harassed by their persecutors, took the resolution to abandon their possessions and worldly prospects, and, whilst the storm lasted, to retire to unfrequented places, far from the haunts of men, the married with, or without, their wives, as agreed between them, that they might enjoy in quietness their faith and hope, and, exempt from temptations to apos-

\* Campbell's *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i. p. 125, 126.

tacy, employ themselves principally in the worship and service of their Maker. The cause was reasonable, and the motive praise-worthy ; but the reasonableness arose solely from the circumstances. When the latter were changed, the former vanished, and the motive could no longer be the same. When there was not the same danger in society, there was not the same occasion to seek security in solitude. Accordingly, when persecution ceased, and the profession of Christianity rendered perfectly safe, many returned without blame from their retirement, and resumed their stations in society. Some, indeed, familiarized by time to a solitary life, at length preferred through habit, what they had originally adopted through necessity. They did not, however, waste their time in idleness ; they supported themselves by their labour, and gave the surplus in alms. But they never thought of fettering themselves by vows and engagements, because, by so doing, they must have exposed their souls to new temptations, and perhaps greater dangers. It was, therefore, a very different thing from that system of monksy which afterwards became so prevalent, though, in all probability it suggested the idea of it, and may be considered as the first step towards it.\*

Such signal sacrifices, not only of property, but of all secular pursuits, have a lustre in them, which dazzles the eyes of the weak, and powerfully engages imitation. Blind imitators, regardless of the circumstances which alone can render the conduct laudable, are often, by a strong perversion of intellect, led to consider it as the more meritorious the less it is rational, and the more eligible the less it is useful. The spirit of the measure comes in time to be reversed. What at first, through humble diffidence, appeared necessary for avoiding the

\* Essay on Christian Temperance and Self-denial, by Dr. George Campbell.

most imminent danger, is, through presumption, voluntarily adopted, though in itself a source of perpetual peril. Such was the operation of the principle in the case referred to. Multitudes came in process of time to impose upon themselves vows of abstinence, poverty, celibacy, and virginity, solemnly engaging in an uninterrupted observance of those virtues, as they accounted them, to the end of their lives.

Every attentive reader of the scriptures must see that they are far from countenancing this piece of superstition. Both Christ and his apostles kept up a free and open intercourse with the world, and their writings abound with instructions to Christians, not to withdraw themselves from society, and shut themselves up in cloistered cells in a state of seclusion, but to fill up their respective stations usefully in civil society, performing all the social and relative duties of life in the most exemplary manner. Man was made for action; powers were given him for exertion, and various talents have been conferred upon him by Providence, as instruments not of doing nothing, but of doing good, by promoting the happiness both of the individual and of society.

Egypt, the fruitful parent of superstition, afforded the first example, strictly speaking, of the monastic life. Anthony, an illiterate youth of that country, in the times of Athanasius, distributed his patrimony, deserted his family and house, took up his residence among the tombs and in a ruined tower, and after a long and painful noviciate, at length advanced three days journey into the desert, to the eastward of the Nile, where discovering a lonely spot which possessed the advantages of shade and water, he fixed his last abode. His example and his lessons infected others, whose curiosity pursued him to the desert; and before he quitted life, which was prolonged to the term of a hundred and five years, he

beheld a numerous progeny imitating his original. The prolific colonies of monks multiplied with rapid increase on the sands of Lybia, upon the rocks of Thebais, and the cities of the Nile. Even to the present day, the traveller may explore the ruins of fifty monasteries, which were planted to the south of Alexandria, by the disciples of Anthony.

Inflamed by the example of Anthony, a Syrian youth, whose name was Hilarion, fixed his dreary abode on a sandy beach, between the sea and a morass, about seven miles from Gaza. The austere penance in which he persisted forty-eight years, diffused a similar enthusiasm, and innumerable monasteries were soon distributed over all Palestine. In the west, Martin of Tours, "a soldier, a hermit, a bishop, and a saint," founded a monastery near Poitiers, and thus introduced monastic institutions into France. His monks were mostly of noble families, and submitted to the greatest austerities both in food and raiment; and, such was the rapidity of their increase, that two thousand of them attended his funeral! In other countries, they appear to have increased in a similar proportion, and the progress of monkery is said not to have been less rapid or less universal than that of Christianity itself. Every province, and, at last, every city of the empire, was filled with their increasing multitudes. The disciples of Anthony spread themselves beyond the tropic, over the christian empire of Ethiopia. The monastery of Bangor, in Flintshire, a few miles south of Wrexham, contained above two thousand monks, and from thence a numerous colony was dispersed among the Barbarians of Ireland; and Iona, one of the western isles of Scotland, which was planted by the Irish Monks, diffused over the northern regions a ray of science and superstition.

The monastic institution was not confined to the male



sex. Females began about the same time to retire from the world, and dedicate themselves to solitude and devotion. The practice is alluded to in the earlier councils; but it is expressly ordained by the council of Carthage, A. D. 397, that orphan virgins shall be placed in a nunnery—and that the superior of the nunnery shall be approved by the bishop of the diocese. Widows, and children above six years of age, were admitted after a year's probation. They were strictly shut up in the monastery, and secluded from all worldly intercourse. They were neither allowed to go out, nor was any person permitted to come in unto them, nor even to enter the church whither they went to worship, except the clergy of approved reputation, who were necessary to conduct the religious services. None was allowed to possess property, for among them all things were common. They served themselves or helped one another. They made their own clothes, which were white and plain woollen—the height of the cap or head-dress was restricted to an inch and two lines—they were tasked daily, but forbidden to work embroidery, or to bleach their garments, assume any ornaments, or accommodate themselves to any fashion which they might happen to see or hear of in the world. The means of correction and discipline were reproof and excommunication; but the latter consisted only in separation from public prayers, and from the common table at meals, and if these failed to reclaim the delinquent, recourse was had to flagellation.\*

These unhappy exiles from social life, were impelled by the dark genius of superstition, to persuade themselves that every proselyte who entered the gates of a monastery, trod the steep and thorny path of eternal happiness. The popular monks, whose reputation was

\* Fleury's Eccles. Hist. tom. vii.

connected with the fame and success of the order, assiduously laboured to multiply the number of their fellow captives. They insinuated themselves into noble and opulent families, and the specious arts of flattery and seduction were employed to secure those proselytes, who might bestow wealth or dignity on the monastic profession. The lives of the monks were consumed in penance and solitude, undisturbed by the various occupations which fill the time and exercise the faculties of reasonable, active, and social beings. They passed their lives without personal attachments, among a crowd which had been formed by accident, and was detained in the same prison by force or prejudice. Their days were *professedly* employed in vocal or mental prayer: they assembled in the evening, and were awakened in the night for the public worship of the monastery; and to such a pitch was absurdity at length carried, that one class of them came ultimately to sink under the painful weight of crosses and chains, and their emaciated limbs were confined by collars, bracelets, gauntlets, and greaves of massy iron.\*

The times of martyrdom were now passed, and of course that sort of courage and constancy could not be exerted; a method was therefore contrived of *voluntary* martyrdom, and persons of fanatical dispositions inflicted upon themselves as many pains and penalties as pagan cruelty had invented. They left parents, wives, children, friends, families, and fortunes; they retired from the world, obliged themselves to a single and solitary life, and allowed themselves no more food, raiment, and sleep, than would barely support life.

The ethics of monks is a mere caricature of virtue, in which every feature is exaggerated, distorted, or out of

\* Gibbon's Rome, vol. vi. ch. xxvii.

place; and, as hath often happened in other matters, though the likeness is preserved, what is beautiful in the original is hideous in the copy. The doctrines of Christianity are divinely adapted to the state of man in this world, considered as a fallen and corrupted being. They exhibit a remedy for his moral depravity in the grand and interesting truths which the gospel proclaims as the objects of his faith, the ground of his hope, and the motives of his love and joy. But he is called to the exercise of self-denial, the mortification of his fleshly appetites, disconformity to the course of this world, patience under sufferings of various kinds, and in the way of well-doing to seek for glory, honour, and immortality in the world to come. In the system of monkery all these Christian virtues are carried to the most ridiculous extreme. About the middle of the fourth century, Gregory Nazianzen wrote an eulogy in praise of the monastic life, wherein he describes the manner in which it was practised at Nazianzum. "There are some," says he, "who loaded themselves with iron chains in order to bear down their bodies—who shut themselves up in cabins, and appeared to nobody—who continued twenty days and twenty nights without eating, practising often the half of Jesus Christ's fast—another abstained entirely from speaking, not praising God except in thought—another passed whole years in a church, his hands extended, without sleeping, like an animated statue." \*

Now admitting the possibility of these things, how grossly must men's notions of truth and rectitude be perverted, who can think that the all-wise Creator gave hands to any man to be kept in a position which unfitted them for being of use to himself or others—that he gave the faculty of speech, but not to be employed in commu-

† Fleury's *Eccles. Hist.* b. xvi. ch. li.

nicating knowledge? Yet these things are the subject of panegyric even from the pen of Gregory Nazianzen, a person of unquestionable talents and virtue. "To go into a convent," said Dr. Johnson, "for fear of being immoral, is, as if a man should cut off his hands for fear he should steal."\* To suffer with patience and fortitude, when called to it, for the cause of truth, is both virtuous and heroical; but the self inflicted penances of the miserable hermit serve as a testimony of nothing so much as the idiocy or insanity of the sufferer; for with regard to God, they are derogatory from his perfections—they exhibit him as an object rather of terror than of love, as a tyrant rather than the parent of the universe.

One of the most renowned examples of monkish penance that is upon record, is that of St. Symeon, a Syrian monk, who lived about the middle of the fifth century, and who is thought to have outstripped all those that preceded him. He is said to have lived thirty-six years on a pillar erected on the summit of a high mountain in Syria, whence he got the name of "Symeon Stylites." From his pillar, it is said, he never descended, unless to take possession of another; which he did four times, having in all occupied five of them. On his last pillar, which was loftier than any of the former, being sixty feet high and only three broad, he remained, according to report, fifteen years without intermission, summer and winter, day and night, exposed to all the inclemencies of the seasons, in a climate liable to great and sudden changes, from the most sultry heat to the most piercing cold. We are informed, that he always stood—the breadth of his pillar not permitting him to lie down. He spent the day till three in the afternoon in meditation and prayer; from that time till sun-set, he harangued the people, who

\* Boswell Life of Johnson, vol. ii.



flocked to him from all countries—they were then dismissed with his benediction. He would on no account permit females to come within his precincts, not even his own mother, who is said, through grief and mortification, in being refused admittance, to have died the third day after her arrival. In order to shew how indefatigable he was in every thing that conduced to the glory of God and the good of mankind, he spent much time daily in the exemplary exercise of bowing so low as to make his forehead strike his toes, and so frequently, that one who went with Theodoret to see him, counted no fewer than twelve hundred and forty-four times, when being more wearied in numbering than the saint was in performing, he gave over counting. He is said to have taken no food except on Sundays, and that all the last year of his life he stood upon one leg only, the other having been rendered useless by an ulcer.\*

Instances of similar fanaticism abound in the pages of ecclesiastical history. Baradatus, in the same century, and, in all probability from similar motives, betook himself to a wooden coffer, or rather cage, in which he was so confined by its dimensions and form, that he was always bowed down in it, and could not stand upright. This mansion was placed on the top of a rock, where he was exposed to the sun, the rain, and all kinds of weather. Theodatus, the bishop of the diocese, unable to comprehend either the dignity or the utility of such sublimated virtue, cruelly obliged him to quit his cage, that he might

\* The reader whose curiosity may prompt him to look further into the history of this champion of monkish austerity, may consult Dr. Middleton's *Free Inquiry*, 4to. p. 164—168. It may justly excite one's astonishment, that only half a century ago there were to be found learned doctors of the established Church of England, defending the fame of this wretched fanatic, and advocating, with all their might, the truth and reality of the miracles reported to have been wrought by him! See *Middleton, ut supra*.

live like other men. He complied ; but to make compensation for one restraint that was taken off, he made choice of another, and devoutly abjured the use of his hands, in any way in which they could be serviceable either to himself or others. This he did, by devoting them to remain always in one posture, extended towards heaven, probably in commemoration of the crucifixion. In this situation, it is said, that he lived in the open air, disdaining to take shelter in any house, or building, from the inclemencies of the weather.

Extravagancies the most marvellous, and the most frantic, such as dishonoured the name of religion, and rendered men worse than useless, were considered as the most sublime attainments in the Christian life. And thus the dæmon of superstition, under the mask of superior piety, led men to counteract the designs of Providence in the application of their natural powers. The Christian religion is disgraced by such fooleries, which assimilate it to the very worst of heathen superstitions.

Yet all the principal fathers of the Catholic church, both Greek and Latin, employed their authority and eloquence in extolling the perfection of monkery, and recommending its practice. This they did by writing the lives of particular monks, celebrating their wonderful sanctity and miraculous gifts, and founding monasteries wherever they travelled. “There was a certain shadow of it,” says Bellarmine, its great advocate, “in the law of nature before the flood ; a plainer expression of it under the Mosaic dispensation ; but in the time of the apostles it came to perfection.” Athanasius was one of the first, who, from the pattern of the Egyptian monasteries, introduced them into Italy and Rome, where they had previously been held in utter contempt. It is amazing to read the flights of fancy in which the great oracles of the

Catholic church, at that time, indulged, when recommending this stupid practice. Basil terms it “an angelical institution, a blessed and evangelic life, leading to the mansions of the Lord.” Jerome declares the societies of monks and nuns to be “the very flower and most precious stone among all the ornaments of the church.” Chrysostom calls it, “a way of life worthy of heaven; not at all inferior to that of angels.” And Augustine styles them upon every occasion “the servants of God.” By the influence of these renowned fathers, all of whom flourished in the fourth and following century; and by the many lies and forged miracles which they diligently propagated in honour of the monks, innumerable monasteries, as they themselves tell us, were founded over the western world, but especially in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, whose deserts were covered with them; and some of them in the fifth century, are said to have contained each five thousand monks at a time.

We find Chrysostom frequently haranguing also on the great blessings which the church reaped from the relics of the martyrs, and the daily miracles which were wrought by them; and he concludes one of his homilies on two female martyrs in the following manner: “With this ardour, therefore, let us fall down before their relics: let us embrace their coffins, for these may have some power, since their bones have so great an one; and not only on the day of their festival, but on other days also, let us fix ourselves as it were to them, and entreat them to be our patrons”—and on other occasions he exhorts his hearers “to dwell in their sepulchres, to fix themselves to their coffins; that not only their bones, but their tombs and their urns also overflowed with blessings.” Basil informs us, that “all who were pressed with any difficulty or distress, were wont

to fly for relief to the tombs of the martyrs; and whosoever did but touch their relics acquired some share of their sanctity.\*

In the beginning of the fifth century, Vigilantius, a learned and eminent presbyter of a Christian church, took up his pen to oppose these growing superstitions. His book, which unfortunately is now lost, was directed against the institution of monks—the celibacy of the clergy,—praying for the dead and to the martyrs—adoring their relics—celebrating their vigils—and lighting up candles to them after the manner of the Pagans. Jerome, esteemed a great luminary of the Catholic church, who was a most zealous advocate for all these superstitious rites, undertook the task of refuting Vigilantius, whom he politely styles “a most blasphemous heretic,” comparing him to the Hydra, to Cerberus, the Centaurs, &c. and considers him only as the organ of the dæmon. He, however, furnishes us with all the particular articles of his heresy, in the words of Vigilantius himself, which are as follows:

“That the honours paid to the rotten bones and dust of the saints and martyrs, by adoring, kissing, wrapping them up in silk and vessels of gold, lodging them in their churches, and lighting up wax candles before them, after the manner of the heathens, were the ensigns of idolatry. That the celibacy of the clergy was a heresy, and their vows of chastity the seminary of lewdness. That to

\* Introductory Discourse to Dr. Middleton's *Free Inquiry*, p. 52—56. where the reader will find the authorities quoted. Of these, and a thousand other legendary tales, with which the writings of the fathers of this period are so prolific, we may say, as Voltaire has said upon a similar occasion; “They have been related by many historians, and cannot be denied without overturning the very foundations of history; but it is certain we cannot give credit to them without overturning the very foundation of reason!”



pray to the dead, or to desire the prayers of the dead, was superstitious; for that the souls of the departed saints and martyrs were at rest in some particular place, whence they could not remove themselves at pleasure, so as to be present every where to the prayers of their votaries. That the sepulchres of the martyrs ought not to be worshipped, nor their fasts and vigils to be observed; and lastly, That the signs and wonders said to be wrought by their relics and at their sepulchres, served to no good end or purpose of religion."

These were the sacrilegious tenets, as Jerome calls them, which he could not hear with patience, or without the utmost grief, and for which he declares Vigilantius to be a detestable heretic, venting his foul-mouthed blasphemies against the relics of the martyrs, which were working daily signs and wonders. He tells him to go into the churches of those martyrs, and he would be cleansed from the evil spirit which possessed him, and feel himself burnt, not by those wax candles which so much offended him, but by invisible flames which would force that dæmon who talked within him, to confess himself to be the same who had personated a Mercury, perhaps, or a Bacchus, or some other of their gods among the heathen." Such is the wild rate, as Dr. Middleton well observes, at which this renowned father raves on through several pages.\*

It may probably gratify the reader to see how Jerome refutes the arguments of Vigilantius; and he may take as a specimen the following passage. "If it were such a sacrilege or impiety," says he, "to pay those honours to the relics of the saints, as Vigilantius contends, then the emperor Constantius must needs be a sacrilegious person, who translated the holy relics of Andrew,

\* Postscript to *Free Inquiry*, p. 131—134.

Luke, and Timothy to Constantinople; then Arcadius Augustus also must be held sacrilegious, who translated the bones of the blessed Samuel from Judea, where they had lain so many ages, into Thrace; then all the bishops were not only sacrilegious but stupid too, who submitted to carry a thing the most contemptible, and nothing but mere dust, in silk and vessels of gold; and lastly, then the people of all the churches must needs be fools, who went out to meet those holy relics, and received them with as much joy, as if they had seen the prophet himself, living and present among them, for the procession was attended by swarms of people from Palestine even unto Chalcedon, singing with one voice the praises of Christ, who were yet adoring Samuel perhaps, and not Christ, whose prophet and Levite Samuel was \*."†

\* *Ubi Supra*, p. 137.

† I subjoin Mr. Gibbon's account of this singular matter;—even as a specimen of the splendid magnificence of that writer's style, it deserves regard.

"The grateful respect of the Christians for the martyrs of the faith, was exalted, by time and victory, into religious adoration; and the most illustrious of the saints and prophets were deservedly associated to the honours of the martyrs. One hundred and fifty years after the glorious deaths of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Vatican and the Ostian road were distinguished by the tombs, or rather by the trophies of those spiritual heroes. In the age which followed the conversion of Constantine, the emperors, the consuls, and the generals of armies, devoutly visited the sepulchres of a tent-maker and a fisherman; and their venerable bones were deposited under the altars of Christ, on which the bishops of the royal city continually offered the unbloody sacrifice. The new capital of the eastern world, unable to produce any ancient and domestic trophies, was enriched by the spoils of dependant provinces. The bodies of St. Andrew, St. Luke, and St. Timothy, had reposed, near three hundred years, in the obscure graves, from whence they were transported, in solemn pomp, to the church of the apostles, which the magnificence of Constantine had founded on the banks of the Thracian Bosphorus. About fifty years afterwards, the same banks were honoured by the

Some readers may think the reasoning of Jerome not very conclusive on the question of relics; it is nevertheless certain that his voice prevailed over that of Vigilantius, and that this superstitious practice not only continued, but became more and more prevalent and popular. When the tombs of the holy land were exhausted, other tombs and countries supplied the increasing demand. Saints and martyrs were invented for the sake of their bones, and dreams and miracles were employed in the discovery of obscure names and of sacred graves till then unknown to some. To write the life of a saint, to make a pilgrimage to his tomb, to bring home fragments of his bones, of his coffin, or of his clothes, or to erect a church to his memory, were acts not only honourable and meritorious, but frequently extremely lucrative. Scarcely any one deemed himself safe, especially on a journey or in times of danger, without some

presence of Samuel, the judge and prophet of the people of Israel. His ashes, deposited in a golden vase, and covered with a silken veil, were delivered by the bishops into each other's hands. The relics of Samuel were received by the people, with the same joy and reverence which they would have shewn to the living prophet; the highways, from Palestine to the gates of Constantinople, were filled with an uninterrupted procession; and the emperor Arcadius himself, at the head of the most illustrious members of the clergy and senate, advanced to meet his extraordinary guest, who had always deserved and claimed the homage of kings. The example of Rome and Constantinople confirmed the faith and discipline of the catholic world. The honours of the saints and martyrs, after a feeble and ineffectual murmur of profane reason, were universally established; and in the age of Ambrose and Jerome, something was still deemed wanting to the sanctity of a Christian church, till it had been consecrated by some portion of holy relics, which fixed and inflamed the devotion of the faithful.

“ In the long period of twelve hundred years, which elapsed between the reign of Constantine and the reformation of Luther, the worship of saints and relics corrupted the pure and perfect simplicity of the Christian model; and some symptoms of degeneracy may be observed even in the first generations which adopted and cherished this pernicious innovation.

scrap of a relic in his possession. It was necessary to the security of every habitation, and to the comfort of every family, and neither church nor monastery was considered as duly consecrated, till it became the repository of the relics of some reputed saint; and, if his name were renowned, the church was crowded with supplicants for health, children, or prosperity: his priests were loaded with presents, and his treasury stored with donations of money and land.

Towards the close of the sixth century, the Greek Empress made a pressing application to Pope Gregory I. for the body of the apostle Paul, to be placed in the church at Constantinople which had then recently been erected in honour of that apostle. Gregory wrote to her in reply, that she had solicited what he durst not grant; for, said he, “the bodies of the apostles Paul and Peter are so terrible by their miracles, that there is reason to apprehend danger, even in approaching to pray to them. My predecessor wanted to make some alteration on a silver ornament on the body of St. Peter, at the distance of fifteen feet, when an awful vision appeared to him, which was followed by his death. I myself wished to repair somewhat about the body of St. Paul, and with a view to that had occasion to dig a little near his sepulchre; when in digging, the superior of the place raising some bones apparently unconnected with the sacred tomb, had a dismal vision after it, and suddenly died. In like manner, the workmen and the monks, not knowing precisely the grave of St. Lawrence, accidentally opened it; and having seen the body, though they did not touch it, died in ten days. Wherefore, Madam, the Romans in granting relics, do not touch the saints bodies: they only put a little linen in a box, which they place near them: after some time they withdraw it, and deposit the box and linen solemnly in the church which



they mean to dedicate. This linen performs as many miracles, as if they had transported the real body! In the time of Pope Leo, some Greeks, doubting the virtue of such relics, he took a pair of scissars, as we are assured, and cutting the linen, forthwith the blood flowed from it. He, however, tells the Empress, that he would endeavour to send her a few grains of the chain, which had been on Paul's neck and hands, and which had been found peculiarly efficacious, provided they succeeded, which was not always the case, in filing them off.\*

This may suffice for giving the reader some idea of the deplorable state to which the "holy catholic church" was reduced in the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian æra—and I therefore quit the subject, to pass on to affairs of a different description.

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#### SECTION IV.

*Gothic invasion of the Roman empire—the city of Rome besieged and plundered—Settlement of the Barbarians in the empire—Establishment of the dominion of the popes.*

A. D. 408—606.

ON the death of the emperor Theodosius, the government of the Roman world devolved upon his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, who, by the unanimous consent of their subjects, were saluted as the lawful emperors of the East, and of the West. Arcadius was then about eighteen years of age, and took up his residence at Constantinople, from whence he swayed the sceptre over the

\* Fleury's Eccles. Hist. tom. viii. p. 91—93.

provinces of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt—comprising what was termed the Eastern Empire. His brother Honorius assumed, in the eleventh year of his age, the government of Italy, Africa, Gaul, Spain, and Britain, under the denomination of the Western. Their father died in the month of January, 395, and before the end of the winter in the same year, the Gothic nation was in arms; and, from the forests of Scythia, the savage warriors “rolled their ponderous waggons,” says one of their Roman poets, “over the broad and icy bank of the indignant river”—the Danube. But the genius of Rome expired with Theodosius. He was the last of the successors of Augustus and Constantine, who appeared in the field at the head of their armies, and whose authority was universally acknowledged throughout the whole extent of the empire.

Nothing could form a more striking contrast than the character of those Gothic tribes and that of the Romans at the period of which we speak. The Barbarians, as they were called, breathed nothing but war—their martial spirit was yet in its vigour—their sword was their right, and they exercised it without remorse as the right of nature. Simple and severe in their manners, they were unacquainted with the name of luxury; any thing was sufficient for their extreme frugality. Inured to exercise and toil, their bodies seemed impervious to disease or pain; they sported with danger, and met death with expressions of joy. The Roman character was then reduced to the reverse of all this. Accustomed to repose and luxury, they had degenerated into a dastardly and effeminate race, overwhelmed with fear and folly, or, what was still more ignominious, with treachery. That enormous fabric, the Roman empire, had, for a succession of ages, groaned under its own unwieldy bulk, and every method had been resorted to, that human

wisdom could devise, for the purpose of preventing the superstructure from crumbling into ruins. Theodosius had attempted to appease the invaders by voluntary contributions of money. Tributes were multiplied upon tributes, until the empire was drained of its treasure. Another expedient was then adopted; large bodies of the Barbarians were taken into pay and opposed to other Barbarians. This mode of defence answered for the moment; but it terminated in the subversion of the empire. Already acquainted with the luxuries, the wealth, and the weakness of the Romans, they turned their arms against their masters, inviting their countrymen to come and share with them in the spoils of a people that were unworthy of so many accommodations.\*

Immense hordes of these savage tribes poured into every part of the empire. Wherever they marched, their route was marked with blood. The most fertile and populous provinces were converted into deserts. The wretched inhabitants of those countries to the south of the Danube, submitted to the calamities, which, in the course of twenty years, were almost grown familiar to their imagination, and the various troops of Barbarians, who gloried in the Gothic name, were irregularly spread from the woody shores of Dalmatia to the walls of Constantinople. Under the bold and enterprising genius of Alaric, their renowned leader, they traversed without resistance the plains of Macedonia and Thessaly, stretching from east to west, to the edge of the sea shore. "The fertile fields of Phocis and Bœotia," says Gibbon, "were instantly covered by a deluge of Barbarians, who massacred the males of an age to bear arms, and drove away the beautiful females, with the spoil and cattle to the flaming villages. Corinth, Argos, Sparta, yielded without resistance to the arms of the Goths, and the most

\* Robertson's Hist. Charles V. vol. 1. sect. 1.

fortunate of their inhabitants were saved, by death, from beholding the slavery of their families and the conflagration of their cities. This invasion, instead of vindicating the honour, contributed, at least accidentally, to extirpate the last remains of Paganism—and a system which had then subsisted eighteen hundred years, did not survive the calamities of Greece.”\*

Having completely ravaged the entire territory of Greece, Alaric proceeded to invade Italy, and the citizens of Rome were thrown into the utmost consternation at his approach. The emperor had taken up his residence in his palace at Milan, where he thought himself secured by the rivers of Italy, which lay between him and the Gothic chief. But the season happened to be remarkably dry, which enabled the Goths to traverse, without impediment, the wide and stony beds, whose centre was faintly marked by the course of a shallow stream; and as Alaric approached the walls, or rather the suburbs of Milan, he enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the emperor of the Romans flying before him. The danger to which the latter had been exposed, now urged him to seek a retreat in some inaccessible fortress of Italy, where he might securely remain, while the open country was covered by a deluge of Barbarians; and in the twentieth year of his age, anxious only for his personal safety, Honorius retired to the perpetual confinement of the walls and morasses of RAVENNA. His example was imitated by his feeble successors, the Gothic kings, and afterwards the Exarchs, who occupied the throne and palace of the emperors; and, till the middle of the eighth century, Ravenna was considered as the seat of government and the capital of Italy.

During a period of six hundred and nineteen years, the city of Rome, the seat of government, had never been

\* Decline and Fall, vol. v. ch. 30.



violated by the presence of a foreign enemy; but in the year 408, Alaric commenced the blockade of this proud metropolis.\* By a skilful disposition of his numerous forces, he encompassed the walls, commanded the twelve principal gates, intercepted all communication with the adjacent country, and vigilantly guarded the navigation of the river Tyber, from which the Romans derived the surest and most plentiful supply of provisions. The first emotions of the nobles, and of the people, were those of surprise and indignation, that a vile Barbarian should dare to insult the capital of the world; but their arrogance was soon humbled by misfortune. The unfortunate city gradually experienced the distress of scarcity,

\* We seem in general to entertain a very inadequate idea in the present day of what was the extent and magnificence of the city of Rome, at the period of which we are now treating. The subject is somewhat foreign to the object of this work; yet I flatter myself a few hints may be pardoned by the reader, were it merely on the score of exciting attention to a subject of considerable curiosity. When the capital of the empire was besieged by the Goths, the circuit of the walls was accurately measured by Ammonius, the mathematician, who found it equal to twenty-one miles. The form of the city was almost that of a circle. It probably covered a less space of ground than the metropolis of Great Britain; but it contained about one-fifth more inhabitants; for "we may fairly estimate the number of inhabitants," says Mr. Gibbon, referring to this period, "at twelve hundred thousand." The total number of houses, in the fourteen regions of the city, amounted to forty-eight thousand, three hundred, and eighty-two—a number inferior to those of the British capital; but that is accounted for from the loftiness of the buildings, which were carried to such an enormous elevation, that it was repeatedly enacted, by Augustus, as well as by Nero, in consequence of the frequent and fatal accidents which happened through the hastiness of their erection, and the insufficiency of their materials, that the height of *private edifices*, within the walls of Rome, should not exceed the measure of SEVENTY FEET from the ground! House rent was immoderately dear—the rich acquired, at an enormous expense, the ground which they covered with palaces and gardens; but the bulk of the common people was crowded into a narrow space, and the different floors and apartments of the same house were divided among several families. There were seventeen hundred and eighty superb mansions, the residence of

and at length the horrid calamities of famine. The daily allowance of three pounds of bread, was reduced to one half—to one third—to nothing; and the price of corn still continued to rise in a rapid and extravagant proportion. The poorer citizens, unable to procure the necessities of life, solicited the precarious charity of the rich; but private and occasional donations were insufficient to appease the hunger of a numerous people. The food the most repugnant to sense or imagination, the aliments the most unwholesome and pernicious to the constitution, were eagerly dévoured, and fiercely disputed by the rage of hunger. A dark suspicion was entertained that some wretches fed on the bodies of their fellow creatures, whom they had secretly murdered, and even mothers are said to have tasted the flesh of their slaughtered infants! Many thousands of the inhabitants of Rome expired in their own houses, or in the streets, for want of sustenance; and as the public sepulchres without the walls were in the power of the enemy, the stench which arose from so many putrid and unburied carcases, infected the air; and the miseries of famine were succeeded and augmented by the contagion of a pestilential disease, and

wealthy and honourable citizens. No doubt the language of one of their own poets (Claudius Rutilius), who lived at the time of the Gothic invasion, is to be understood as indulging in poetic licence, when it describes “each palace as equal to a city, since it included within its own precincts, every thing which could be subservient either to use or luxury; markets, race-courses, temples, fountains, baths, porticoes, shady groves, and artificial aviaries.” Of the riches and luxury of these nobles, we may form an estimate from this circumstance, that several examples are recorded in the age of Honorius, of persons who celebrated the year of their prætorship by a festival which lasted seven days, and cost above one hundred thousand pounds sterling. Before the Dioclesian persecution, which commenced A. D. 303. the places of Christian worship in Rome were augmented to more than forty in number; and the pastors and teachers to upwards of an hundred and fifty.—*Gibbon's Rome*, vol. viii. ch. 31. and *Optatus de Schism. Donat.* lib. ii. p. 40.

the proud and insolent Romans were at length compelled to seek relief in the clemency, or at least in the moderation of the king of the Goths.

The senate appointed two ambassadors to negotiate with the enemy. When introduced into his presence, they declared, perhaps in a more lofty style than became their abject condition, that *the Romans were resolved, to maintain their dignity either in peace or war*; and that if Alaric refused them a fair and honourable capitulation, he might sound his trumpets and prepare for battle with an innumerable people, exercised in arms and animated by despair. "The thicker the hay, the easier it is mowed," was the concise reply of the Barbarian, accompanied by a loud and insulting laugh, expressive of his contempt for the threats of an unwarlike populace, enervated by luxury before they were emaciated by famine. He then condescended to fix the ransom which he would receive as the price of his retreat from the walls of Rome. It was ALL the gold and silver in the city, whether it were the property of the state or of individuals; ALL the rich and precious moveables; and ALL the slaves that could prove their title to the name of *Barbarians*. "If such, O king, are your demands," said they, "what do you intend to leave us?" "Your lives," replied the haughty conqueror? They trembled and retired.

The stern features of Alaric, however, became insensibly relaxed, and he abated much of the rigour of his terms; for he at length consented to raise the siege on the immediate payment of five thousand pounds of gold—of thirty thousand pounds of silver—of ten thousand robes of silk—of three thousand pieces of fine scarlet cloth—and of three thousand pounds weight of pepper. But the public treasury was exhausted; the annual rents of the nobles were intercepted by the calamities of war;

the gold and gems had been exchanged, during the famine, for the vilest sustenance. Recourse was, therefore, obliged to be had to the hordes of secret wealth which had been concealed by the obstinacy of avarice, and some remains of consecrated spoils, which afforded the only means of averting the impending ruin of the city. As soon as the Romans had satisfied the rapacious demands of Alaric, they were restored, in some measure, to the enjoyment of peace and plenty.\*

Before he withdrew his army from the gates of Rome, Alaric had stipulated for the payment of an annual subsidy of corn and money, which the treacherous Romans now sought to evade, and in the following year (409) the Gothic chief, resolving to punish their perfidy, a second time laid siege to their city. On this occasion, however, instead of assaulting the capital, he directed his efforts against the port of Ostia, one of the boldest and most stupendous works of Roman magnificence. This port or harbour, which was undertaken by Julius Cæsar, and finished in the reign of Claudian, where the corn of Africa was deposited in spacious granaries for the use of the capital, had, by this time, insensibly swelled to the size of an episcopal city. As soon as Alaric was in possession of that important place, he summoned the city to surrender, declaring that a refusal, or even a delay, should be instantly followed by the destruction of the magazines, in which the lives of the Roman people depended. The clamours of the people, and the terror of famine, subdued the pride of the senate—they listened without reluctance to the proposal, which Alaric made them, of placing a new emperor on throne of the Cæsars in place of the unworthy Honorius, and the suffrage of the Gothic conqueror bestowed the purple on Attalus, præfect of the city.

\* Gibbon's *Rome*, vol. v. ch. xxiii.



Attalus, however, was not long in evincing his incompetency for the duties of the high station to which he had been raised; and in the following year Alaric publicly despoiled him of the ensigns of royalty, and sent them, as the pledge of peace and friendship, to Honorius at Ravenna. Some favourable occurrence, however, happening to turn up in the fortunes of this latter prince, just at that moment, the insolence of his ministers returned with it; and, instead of accepting the friendly overture of Alaric, a body of three hundred soldiers were ordered to sally out of the gates of Ravenna, who surprised and cut in pieces a considerable party of Goths, after which they re-entered the city in triumph. The crime and folly of the court of Ravenna was expiated a third time by the calamities of Rome. Alaric, who now no longer dissembled his appetite for plunder and revenge, appeared in arms under the walls of the capital, and the trembling senate, without any hopes of relief, prepared, by a desperate resistance, to delay the ruin of their country. But they were unable to guard against the secret conspiracy of their slaves and domestics, who, either from birth or interest, were attached to the cause of the enemy. At the hour of midnight, the Salarian gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet.\* In the year 410, eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the imperial city, which had subdued and

\* There is a very eloquent passage referring to this particular subject, in a letter written by PELAGIUS, the author of the Pelagian heresy, to a Roman lady of the name of DEMETRIAS, and it deserves insertion in this place, were it only to exhibit to the reader a specimen of the superior talents which were possessed by that apostate from the doctrines of grace.

PELAGIUS, whose original name was Morgan, was a native of Wales, and by profession a monk. He was far advanced in life before he began publicly to propagate his heretical sentiments, and until that period it

civilized so considerable a part of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia, who, during six days, pillaged the city of all its gold and jewels, stripped the palaces of their splendid furniture—the sideboards of their massy plate, and the wardrobes of their silk and purple, which were loaded on waggons to follow the march of the Gothic army—the most cruel slaughter was made of the Romans—the streets of the city were filled with dead bodies—the females were delivered up to the brutal lust of the soldiers—and many of the noblest edifices of the city destroyed by fire.

seems that he sustained a blameless reputation; for Augustine, who was cotemporary with him, and combated all his errors, does him the justice to own that “he had the esteem of being a very pious man, and a Christian of no vulgar rank.” Pelagius happened to be at Rome when that city was besieged by the Goths, and was probably a spectator of all that passed during the sacking of that metropolis. Soon after it was taken he set sail for Africa, and from thence wrote to the Lady Demetrias the letter, of which the following is an extract, referring to the Gothic invasion.

“This dismal calamity is but just over, and you yourself are a witness how Rome that commanded the world was astonished at the alarm of the Gothic trumpet, when that barbarous and victorious nation stormed her walls, and made her way through the breach. Where were then the privileges of birth, and the distinctions of quality? Were not all ranks and degrees levelled at that time, and promiscuously huddled together? Every house was then a scene of misery, and equally filled with grief and confusion. The slave and the man of quality were in the same circumstances, and every where the terror of death and slaughter was the same, unless we may say the fright made the greater impression on those who got the most by living. Now, if flesh and blood has such power over our fears, and mortal men can terrify us to this degree, what will become of us when the trumpet sounds from the sky, and the Arch-angel summons us to judgment; when we are not attacked by sword, or lance, or any thing so feeble as a human enemy: but when all the terrors of nature, the artillery of Heaven, and the Militia, if I may so speak, of Almighty God, are let loose upon us?”—*In the Letters of Augustine, No. 142.*

I have been induced to go more into detail on this subject, than I should otherwise have done, for the sake of giving the uninformed reader some general notion of the misery which resulted from the irruption of these Barbarian hordes into the Roman empire; and, because it ultimately proved the means of its subversion; but it is incompatible with my plan to pursue the matter further than just to add, that new invaders, from regions more remote and barbarous, drove out or exterminated the former colonists, and Europe was successively ravaged, till the countries which had poured forth their myriads, were drained of people, and the sword of slaughter weary of destroying. "If a man were called," says Dr. Robertson, "to fix upon the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most calamitous and afflicted, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Theodosius the Great (A. D. 395) to the establishment of the Lombards in Italy, (A. D. 571). The contemporaneous authors, who beheld that scene of desolation, labour, and are at a loss for expression, to describe the horror of it. *The scourge of God, The destroyer of nations*, are the dreadful epithets by which they distinguish the most noted of the barbarous leaders; and they compare the ruin which they had brought on the world, to the havoc occasioned by earthquakes, conflagrations, or deluges—the most formidable and fatal calamities which the imagination of man can conceive."\*

The overwhelming progress of the Barbarians soon diffused its powerful effects throughout every part of Europe. In the course of the fifth century, the Visigoths

\* *History of Charles V.* vol. i. sect. 1. The intelligent reader will not need to be reminded, how well this account of things corresponds with the striking language of the book of Revelation quoted at the beginning of the last Section, see p. 361.

took possession of Spain ; the Franks of Gaul ; the Saxons of England ; the Huns of Pannonia ; the Ostrogoths of Italy, and the adjacent provinces. New governments, laws, languages ; new manners, customs, dresses ; new names of men and countries prevailed, and an almost total change took place in the state of Europe. It is, no doubt, much to be lamented, that this revolution was the work of nations so little enlightened by science, or polished by civilization ; for the Roman laws, though imperfect, were in general the best that human wisdom had then framed, and its arts and literature infinitely surpassed any thing found among rude nations, or which those who despised them produced for many ages.

Many of the Gothic chiefs were men of great talents, and some of them not wholly ignorant of the policy and literature of the Romans ; but they were afraid of the contagious influence of Roman example, and they therefore studied to avoid every thing allied to that name, whether hurtful or beneficial. They erected a cottage in the vicinity of a palace, breaking down the stately building, and burying in its ruins the finest works of human ingenuity. They ate out of vessels of wood, and made their captives be served in vessels of silver. They prohibited their children from acquiring a knowledge of literature and of the elegant arts, because they concluded from the dastardly behaviour of the Romans, that learning tends to enervate the mind, and that he who has trembled under the rod of a schoolmaster, will never dare to meet a sword with an undaunted eye. Upon the same principle they rejected the Roman code of laws ; it reserved nothing to the vengeance of man—they therefore inferred that it would rob him of his active powers. Nor could they conceive how the person who received an injury could rest satisfied, but by pouring out his fury



upon the author of the injustice. Hence arose all those judicial combats, and private wars which, for many ages, desolated Europe.

In one particular only did these barbarian tribes condescend to conform to the institutions of those different nations among whom they settled, viz. in RELIGION. The conquerors submitted to the religion of the conquered, which at this period, indeed, in its established form, approximated closely to the superstition and idolatry of the ancient heathen. But whatever shades of difference there might be found among the numerous kingdoms into which the Roman Western Empire was at this time divided, whether in the forms of their government, or their civil and political institutions; they unanimously agreed to support the hierarchy of the church of Rome, and to defend and maintain it as the established religion of their respective states. Nor is the circumstance altogether unworthy of notice, that when Alaric forced his entrance into Rome, he issued a proclamation which discovered some regard for the laws of humanity and religion. He encouraged his troops boldly to seize the rewards of valour, and to enrich themselves with the spoils of the citizens, but he exhorted them to spare the lives of the *unresisting*, and to respect the churches of the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, as holy and inviolable sanctuaries.\*

\* This is the circumstance which gave rise to that ponderous folio volume of St. Augustine, intitled, "THE CITY OF GOD." The writer's object is to justify the ways of Providence in the destruction of the Roman greatness; and he celebrates with peculiar satisfaction, this memorable occurrence, while he insultingly challenges his adversaries to produce one similar example of a town taken by storm, in which the fabulous gods of antiquity had been able to protect either themselves or their deluded votaries—appealing particularly to the examples of Troy, Syracuse, and Tarentum. Had the life of this great luminary been prolonged about half a century beyond this time, he might have been instructed, by facts and experience, how fallacious his vaunting was. In

“In ages of ignorance and credulity,” says Dr. Robertson, “the ministers of religion are the objects of superstitious veneration. When the Barbarians who overran the Roman empire first embraced the Christian faith, they found the clergy in possession of considerable power; and they naturally transferred to those new guides the profound submission and reverence, which they were accustomed to yield to the priests of that religion which they had forsaken. They deemed their persons to be equally sacred with their function, and would have considered it as impious to subject them to the profane jurisdiction of the laity. The clergy were not blind to these advantages which the weakness of mankind afforded them. They established courts, in which every question relating to their own character, their function, and their property, was tried. They pleaded, and obtained an almost total exemption from the authority of civil judges. Upon different pretexts, and by a multiplicity of artifices, they communicated the privilege to so many persons, and extended their jurisdiction to such a variety of cases, that the greater part of those affairs which gave rise to contest and litigation, was drawn under the cognizance of the spiritual courts.” \*

The claims to supremacy, which, during the preceding centuries, had been asserted by the bishops of Rome, were at first faintly urged, and promoted by artful and

the year 455, Genseric, a Vandal warrior, invaded Italy, and once more sacked the city of Rome. “The pillage lasted fourteen days and nights, and all that yet remained of public or private wealth, of *sacred* or profane treasure, was diligently transported to the vessels of Genseric.” Among the spoils were the holy instruments of the Jewish worship,—the golden table, the golden candlesticks with seven branches, &c. which four hundred years before Titus had brought from Jerusalem, and which had been since deposited in the Temple of Peace. He also stripped the Christian churches of every article of plate and grandeur that was moveable.

\* History of Charles V. vol. i. sect. 1.

almost imperceptible means. They now, however, began to insist upon superiority as a divine right attached to their see, which, they contended, had been founded by the apostle Peter; and this arrogant claim, which had appeared conspicuously enough in the conduct of the bishops of Rome of the preceding century, was now no longer concealed, or cautiously promulgated. But, however violent their claims, or extensive their authority in affairs both ecclesiastical and civil, they still remained subject, first to the jurisdiction of the Gothic kings, and, upon the retaking of Rome, to the emperors of Constantinople. Such, however, was the extensive influence of the papal intrigues, that there were few among the princes of the Western Empire, that were not virtually brought into a state of subjection to the authority of the bishops of Rome, before the close of the fifth century.

A station so elevated, which lay open to the ambition of numbers, was eagerly contested, and often obtained by fraud, chicanery, or the practice of whatever was most opposite to the spirit of the gospel. During the sixth century, the peace of the catholic church was thrice disturbed by the contests and squabbles of the rival pontiffs. Symmachus and Laurentius, who had been elevated to the vacant see by different parties, continued, for several years, to assert their discordant claims. After repeated struggles, the former, at length, prevailed. In this contest he was materially assisted by the pen of Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, who employed the most abject flattery in behalf of Symmachus, whom he blasphemously styles "Judge in the place of God, and Vicegerent of the Most High." The church was again divided by the reciprocal claims of Boniface and Dioscorus; the premature death of the latter, however, terminated this clerical war. But the century did not close without a scene alike disgraceful. A prelate of the name

of Vigilius, intrigued at court to procure the deposition of the *reigning* bishop Silverus. The latter was, in consequence, deprived of his dignities and banished. He appealed to the emperor Justinian, who interfered in his behalf, and encouraged him to return to Rome, with the delusive expectation of regaining his rights; but the artifices of Vigilius prevailed—his antagonist was resigned to his power, and immediately confined by him in the islands of Pontus and Pandatara, where, in penury and affliction, he terminated his wretched existence.

The advantages attendant upon the acquisition of such enormous power, induced the bishops of Constantinople, who were scarcely less arrogant and ambitious than their brethren at Rome, to refuse acknowledging their pre-eminence, and prompted them to lay claim to similar authority. The arrogant pretensions of these rival sees involved them in continual dissensions; which were prodigiously increased by the conduct of John, the faster, a prelate distinguished for his authority; who, in a council held at Constantinople in the year 588, assumed the title of *Universal Bishop*, which was confirmed to him by the council. This appellation, which implied a pre-eminence difficult to be endured by those who were as ambitious as himself, was opposed vehemently by Pelagius II. then bishop of Rome, who called it an execrable, profane, and diabolical procedure, but his invectives were disregarded, and he died soon after. In the year 560 he was succeeded by Gregory the great, as he is usually termed; a voluminous writer, and, though superstitious in the extreme, not altogether destitute of talents. His works are still extant, and in high reputation with the Catholics. The following letter written by him to the Emperor Maurice, at Constantinople, in consequence of John, the Patriarch of that city, assuming the name of “*Universal Bishop*,” casts so much light upon the history of that



age, that it cannot, without injury to the subject, be omitted.

“ Our most religious Lord, whom God hath placed over us, among other weighty cares belonging to the empire, labours, according to the just rule of the sacred writings, to preserve peace and charity among the clergy. He truly and piously considers, that no man can well govern temporal matters, unless he manages with propriety things divine also; and that the peace and tranquillity of the commonwealth depend upon the quiet of the universal church. For, most gracious Sovereign, what human power or strength would presume to lift up irreligious hands against your most Christian majesty, if the clergy, being at unity amongst themselves, would seriously pray to our Saviour Christ to preserve you who have merited so highly from us? Or what nation is there so barbarous as to exercise such cruelty against the faithful, unless the lives of us who are called Priests, but in truth are not such, were most wicked and depraved? But whilst we leave those things which more immediately concern us, and embrace those things for which we are wholly unfit, we excite the Barbarians against us, and our offences sharpen the swords of our enemies, by which means the commonwealth is weakened. For what can we say for ourselves, if the people of God, over whom, however unworthily we are placed, be oppressed through the multitude of our offences; if our example destroys that which our preaching should build; and our actions, as it were, give the lie to our doctrine? Our bones are worn with fasting, but our minds are puffed up! Our bodies are covered with mean attire, but in our hearts we are quite elated! We lie grovelling in the ashes, yet we aim at things exceedingly high! We are teachers of humility, but patterns of pride, hiding the teeth of wolves under a sheep's countenance! The end of all is, to make

a fair appearance before men, but God knoweth the truth! Therefore our most pious Sovereign hath been prudently careful to place the church at unity, that he might the better compose the tumults of war and join their hearts together. This verily is my wish also, and for my own part I yield due obedience to your Sovereign commands. However, since it is not my cause, but God's, it is not myself only but the whole church that is troubled, because religious laws, venerable synods, and the very precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ, are disobeyed by the invention of a proud and pompous speech. My desire is, that our most religious Sovereign would lance this sore, and that he would bind with the cords of his imperial authority the party affected, in case he makes any resistance. By restraining him the commonwealth will be eased; and by the paring away of such excrescences the empire is enlarged. Every man that has read the gospel knows that, even by the very words of our Lord, the care of the whole church is committed to St. Peter, the apostle—the Prince of all the apostles. For to him it is said, “Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep.” “Behold, Satan hath desired to winnow thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith should not fail.” And, “thou being at the last converted, confirm thy brethren.” To him it is said, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou bindest on earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.” Behold! he hath the keys of the kingdom, and the power of binding and loosing is committed to him. The care and the principality of the whole church is committed to him; and yet he is not called “Universal Apostle”—though this holy man, John, my

fellow priest, labours to be called “ Universal Bishop !” I am compelled to cry out, “ O the corruption of times and manners !” Behold the Barbarians are become lords of all Europe : cities are destroyed—castles are beaten down—provinces depopulated—there is no husbandman to till the ground \*—Idolators rage and domineer over Christians ; and yet Priests, who ought to lie weeping upon the pavement, in sack-cloth and ashes, covet names of vanity, and glory in new and profane titles. Do I, most religious Sovereign, in this plead my own cause ? Do I vindicate a wrong done to myself, and not maintain the cause of Almighty God, and of the church universal ? Who is he that presumes to usurp this new name against both the law of the gospel and of the Canons ? I would to God there might be one called *universal* without doing injustice to others. We know, that many priests of the church of Constantinople have been not only heretics, but even the chief leaders of them. Out of that school proceeded Nestorius, who, thinking it impossible that God should be made man, believed that Jesus Christ, the mediator between God and man, was two persons, and went as far in infidelity as the Jews themselves. Thence came Macedonius, who denied the Holy Ghost, consubstantial to the Father and the Son, to be God. If then every one in that church assumes the name by which he makes himself the head of all good men, the Catholic church, which God forbid should ever be the case, must needs be overthrown when he falls who is called **UNIVERSAL**. But, far from Christians be this blasphemous name, by which all honour is taken from all other priests, while it is foolishly arrogated by one. It was offered to the bishop of Rome by the reverend council of Chalcedon, in honour of St. Peter, prince of the apostles ; but

\* Gregory here seems to refer to the irruption of the Goths into the Roman empire, and its total subversion by those Barbarians.—*Author*.

none of them either assumed or consented to use it, lest, while this privilege should be given to one, all others should be deprived of that honour which is due unto them. Why should WE refuse this title when it was offered, and another assume it without any offer at all? This man (John) contemning obedience to the Canons, should be humbled by the commands of our most pious Sovereign. He should be chastised who does an injury to the holy Catholic church! whose heart is puffed up, who seeks to please himself by a name of singularity, by which he would elevate himself above the emperor! We are all scandalized at this. Let the author of this scandal reform himself, and all differences in the church will cease. I am the servant of all priests, so long as they live like themselves—but if any shall vainly set up his bristles, contrary to God Almighty, and to the Canons of the Fathers, I hope in God that he will never succeed in bringing my neck under his yoke—not even by force of arms. The things that have happened in this city, in consequence of this new title, I have particularly declared to Sabinianus, the deacon, my agent. Let therefore my religious sovereigns think of me their servant, whom they have always cherished and upheld more than others, as one who desired to yield them obedience, and yet am afraid to be found guilty of negligence in my duty at the last awful day of judgment. Let our most pious Sovereign either vouchsafe to determine the affair, according to the petition of the aforesaid Sabinianus, the deacon, or cause the man, so after mentioned to renounce his claim. In case he submits to your most just sentence, or your favourable admonitions, we will give thanks to Almighty God, and rejoice for the peace of the church, procured by your clemency. But if he persist in this contention, we shall hold the saying to be most true, “Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased.”



And again it is written, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." In obedience to my Sovereign, I have written to my brother priest both gently and humbly, urging him to desist from this vain glory. If he gives ear unto me, he hath a brother devoted unto him, but if he continue in his pride, I foresee what will befall him—he will make himself *His* enemy of whom it is written, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."\*

It is difficult to determine whether the *finesse* of the politician, or the envy of the priest, be most prevalent in this artful letter. It does not, however, appear to have produced any good effect. John, indeed, was soon afterwards removed by death from his Archiepiscopal dignity; but Cynacus, who succeeded him as bishop of Constantinople, adopted the same pompous title as his predecessor. Having had occasion to dispatch some agents to Rome, in the letter which he wrote to the Roman Pontiff Gregory, he so much displeased him by assuming the appellation of "Universal Bishop," that the latter withheld from the agents somewhat of the courtesy to which they considered themselves entitled, and, of course, complaint was made to the emperor Maurice of the neglect which had been shewn them. This circumstance extorted a letter from the Emperor at Constantinople to the Bishop of Rome, in which he advises him to treat them, in future, in a more friendly manner, and not to insist so far on *punctilios of style*, as to create a scandal about a title, and fall out about a few syllables. To this Gregory replies, "that the innovation in the style did not consist much in the quantity and alphabet; but the bulk of the iniquity was weighty enough to sink and destroy all. And therefore I am bold to say," says he,

\* Epist. Greg. Mag. Ep. xxxii.

“ that whoever adopts, or affects the title of “ **UNIVERSAL BISHOP**,” has the pride and character of Antichrist, and is in some manner his fore-runner in this haughty quality of elevating himself above the rest of his order. And indeed both the one and the other seem to split upon the same rock ; for, as pride makes Antichrist strain his pretensions up to Godhead, so whoever is ambitious to be called the only or Universal Prelate, arrogates to himself a distinguished superiority, and rises, as it were, upon the ruins of the rest.” \*

But though Gregory artfully disclaimed for himself, and refused to his aspiring brother the title of Universal Bishop, he exercised an authority, says Bishop Hurd, † that can only belong to that exalted character. Gregory died in the year 604, and was succeeded by Pope Boniface III. who had no scruples about adopting this proud title. He readily accepted, or rather importunately begged it from the emperor Phocas, with the privilege also of transmitting it to all his successors. The profligate emperor, to gratify the inordinate ambition of this court sycophant, deprived the bishop of Constantinople of the title which he had hitherto borne, and conferred it upon Boniface, at the same time declaring the church of Rome to be the head of all other churches.

\* Epist. Greg. l. 6. Ep. 30.

† Introductory Sermons to the Study of Prophecy. Vol. ii. Sermon 7.

## APPENDIX TO CHAP. III. SECT. IV.

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A RESPECTABLE writer in one of our Monthly Journals, and, as I am informed, a Classical Tutor in one of our Dissenting Academies, appears to think that, in animadverting on the characters of some of the luminaries of the Catholic church, I have not made sufficient allowance for the darkness of the period in which they lived. His words are, “ We apprehend, that Mr. Jones has not quite enough attended to the infelicity of times, the want of a free communication of knowledge, the power of educational prejudices, and the effect of usages venerated as apostolic. Under circumstances so disadvantageous, it is not, we hope, unreasonable to believe that many who in their hearts loved the Redeemer, and in their lives served him, according to the light they had, were found dragged in the train of those who wandered after the beast. Painful and humbling fact! That such men as Athanasius and *Gregory*, Anselm and Bernard, should have defiled their garments with the blood of persecution, and bowed their knees before relics and wafers.”

The Gregory referred to in this quotation, I understand to be “ Gregory the Great,” as he is commonly termed; the first of the Roman pontiffs of that name; the man to whose exploits the preceding pages refer. He is the only prelate of the Roman church, of that appellation, who, so far as I know, has ever been considered by Protestants to have had any pretensions to the character of a Christian; and his history, certainly, well assorts with that of Athanasius and Bernard, which confirms me in the supposition that he is the person referred to. Now

granting the correctness of this conjecture, I beg leave, with all becoming deference to my critical supervisor, to offer a few remarks by way of apology.

I feel not the smallest disposition to dispute the truth of this very respectable writer's remark, that I have "not sufficiently studied that humiliating part of the philosophy of man, his strange inconsistencies." And I am ready to admit that I may not have made the proper allowances for the infelicity of times, &c. Yea, further; that in the darkest periods of the church, there were individuals dragged in the train of those who wandered after the beast, who, nevertheless, in their hearts loved the Redeemer, and in their lives served him, according to the light they had, is a sentiment to which I cheerfully subscribe, but am not aware that I have said any thing that militates against it in this work. The only disputable point between us, is, how far the character of Gregory entitles him to this favourable judgment.

The reader has already seen the fulsome and adulatory strains in which this pontiff addressed the emperor Maurice, in consequence of the Patriarch of Constantinople arrogating to himself the title of "Universal Bishop." He stiles the emperor his "most religious Lord"—his "most gracious Sovereign"—his "most Christian Majesty"—his "most religious Sovereign," against whom it would be the height of impiety to lift a finger, &c. Let us now mark what followed. Gregory with all his flattery was unable to prevail on the emperor Maurice to second his views; and the former, as might be expected, became not a little dissatisfied with his "most religious Lord." Soon after this the emperor was dethroned by one of his centurions, who first murdered him, and then usurped his crown. This wretch, whose name was Phocas, was one of the vilest of the human race—a monster, stained with those vices that serve most to blacken hu-



man nature. Other tyrants have been cruel from policy; the cruelties of Phocas are not to be accounted for, but on the hypothesis of the most diabolical and disinterested malice. He caused five of the children of the emperor Maurice to be massacred before the eyes of their unhappy father, whom he reserved to the last, that he might be a spectator of the destruction of his children before his own death. There still remained, however, a brother and son of the emperor's, both of whom he caused to be put to death, together with all the patricians who adhered to the interest of the unhappy monarch. The empress Constantine and her three daughters had taken refuge in one of the churches of the city, under sanction of the patriarch of Constantinople, who defended them for a time with great spirit and resolution, not permitting them to be dragged by force from their asylum. The tyrant, one of the most vindictive and inexorable of mankind, not wishing to alarm the church at the outset of his reign, now had recourse to dissimulation; and by means of the most solemn oaths and promises of safety, at length prevailed on the females to quit their asylum. The consequence was, that they instantly became the helpless victims of his fury, and suffered on the same spot on which the late emperor and five of his sons had been recently murdered. So much for the character of Phocas: now what should we expect would be the reception which the accounts of all this series of horrid cruelty would meet with at Rome, from a man so renowned for piety, equity, and mildness of disposition as Pope Gregory was? If we look into his letters of congratulation, we find them stuffed with the vilest and most venal flattery; insomuch that were we to learn the character of Phocas only from this pontiff's letters, we should certainly conclude him to have been rather an angel than a man. He recites the murder of "his most religious Lord" with

as much coolness as though religion and morality could be nowise affected by such enormities. Mark how the sanctity of a Gregory congratulates the blood-thirsty rebellious regicide and usurper. Thus he begins—"Glory to God in the highest; who, according as it is written, changes times and transfers kingdoms. And because he would have that made known to all men, which he hath vouchsafed to speak by his own prophets, saying, that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men, and to whom he will he gives it." He then goes on to observe, that God in his incomprehensible providence, sometimes sends kings to afflict his people and punish them for their sins. This, says he, we have known of late to our woful experience. Sometimes, on the other hand, God, in his mercy, raises good men to the throne, for the relief and exultation of his servants. Then applying this remark to existing circumstances, he adds: "In the abundance of our exultation, on which account, we think ourselves the more speedily confirmed, rejoicing to find the gentleness of your piety equal to your imperial dignity." Then breaking out into a rapture, no longer to be restrained, he exclaims, "Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad; and, for your illustrious deeds, let the people of every realm, hitherto so vehemently afflicted, now be filled with gladness. May the necks of your enemies be subjected to the yoke of your supreme rule; and the hearts of your subjects, hitherto broken and depressed, be relieved by your clemency." Proceeding to paint their former miseries, he concludes, with wishing that the commonwealth may long enjoy its present happiness. Thus, in language evidently borrowed from the inspired writers, and in which they anticipate the joy and gladness that should pervade universal nature at the birth of the Messiah, does this pope celebrate the march of the tyrant and usurper through seas of blood to the imperial

throne. "As a subject and a Christian," says Gibbon, "it was the duty of Gregory to acquiesce in the established government; but the joyful applause with which he salutes the fortune of the assassin, has sullied, with indelible disgrace, the character of the saint. The successor of the apostles might have inculcated with decent firmness the guilt of blood, and the necessity of repentance: he is content to celebrate the deliverance of the people, and the fall of the oppressor; to rejoice that the piety and benignity of Phocas have been raised by Providence to the imperial throne; to pray that his hands may be strengthened against all his enemies; and to express a wish, that, after a long triumphant reign, he may be transferred from a temporal to an everlasting kingdom."—"I have traced," says the same writer, "the steps of a revolution, so pleasing in Gregory's opinion both to heaven and earth, and Phocas does not appear less hateful in the exercise than in the acquisition of power. The pencil of an impartial historian has delineated the portrait of a monster; his diminutive and deformed person, &c. Ignorant of letters, of laws, and even of arms, he indulged, even in the supreme rank, a more ample privilege of lust and drunkenness; and his brutal pleasures were either injurious to his subjects, or disgraceful to himself. Without assuming the office of a prince, he renounced the profession of a soldier; and the reign of Phocas afflicted Europe with ignominious peace, and Asia with desolating war. His savage temper was inflamed by passion, hardened by fear, and exasperated by resistance or reproach. The flight of Theodosius, the only surviving son of the emperor Maurice, to the Persian court, had been intercepted by a rapid pursuit, or a deceitful message: he was beheaded at Nice; and the last hours of the young prince were soothed by the comforts of religion and the consciousness of inno-

cence.”\* Now, if there be any thing of either truth or justice in these remarks on the character of Phocas, what are we to think of that of Gregory, who could stoop to the vile practice of panegyrising such a monster; and, with all due deference, I humbly submit it to the consideration of my discreet monitor, “What valuable end can possibly be answered, by shutting our eyes against such flagrant enormities, and eulogising the men who have perpetrated them?” “To me,” says a late candid writer, “Gregory appears to have been a man, whose understanding, though rather above the middle rate, was much warped by the errors and prejudices of the times in which he lived. His piety was deeply tinged with superstition, and his morals with monkery. His zeal was not pure, in regard to either its nature or its object. In the former respect, it was often intolerant; and in regard to the latter, he evinced an attachment more to the form than to the power of religion, to the name than to the thing. His zeal was exactly that of the Pharisees, who compassed sea and land to make a proselyte, which, when they had accomplished, they rendered him two fold more a child of hell than before. He was ever holding forth the prerogatives of St. Peter, nor did he make any ceremony of signifying, that this prime minister of Jesus Christ, like all other prime ministers, would be most liberal of his favours to those who were most assiduous in making court to him, especially to them who were most liberal to his foundation at Rome, and that most advanced its dignity and power. So much for St. Gregory, and for the nature and extent of Roman Papal virtue.”†

\* Decline and Fall, ch. xlv.

† Campbell's Lectures on Eccles. History, vol. ii. p. 79.



## SECTION V.

FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DOMINION OF THE  
POPE TO THE RISE OF THE WALDENSES.

*Retrospect of the Donatists—Introduction of the worship of images—Rise of the Mahometan imposture—Ignorance of the Catholic clergy—Origin of the sect of the Paulicians.*

A. D. 606—800.

HAVING hitherto taken no notice in this history of the sect of the Donatists, it seems almost necessary, before we proceed farther with the affairs of the Christian church, to introduce a concise account of them, which I shall here do from the writings of Dr. Lardner, who has collected into a few pages almost every thing that is now interesting, relative to this denomination of Christians.

The Donatists appear to have resembled the followers of Novatian more than any other class of professors in that period of the church, of whom we have any authentic records; but their origin was at least half a century later, and the churches in this connexion appear to have been almost entirely confined to Africa. They agreed with the Novatians in censuring the lax state of discipline in the Catholic church, and though they did not, like the former, refuse to readmit penitents into their communion, nor like them condemn all second marriages, they denied the validity of baptism as administered by the church of Rome, and rebaptized all who left its communion to unite with them. In doctrinal

sentiments they were agreed with both the Catholics and the Novatians ; while the regard they paid to the purity of their communion, occasioned their being stigmatized with the title of Puritans, and uniformly treated as schismatics by Optatus and Augustine, the two principal writers against them, in the Catholic church.

The Donatists are said to have derived their distinguishing appellation from Donatus, a native of Numidia, in Africa, who was elected bishop of Carthage about the year 306. He was a man of learning and eloquence, very exemplary in his morals, and, as would appear from several circumstances, studiously set himself to oppose the growing corruptions of the Catholic church. The Donatists were consequently a separate body of Christians for nearly three centuries, and in almost every city in Africa, there was one bishop of this sect and another of the Catholics. The Donatists were very numerous, for we learn that in the year 411, there was a famous conference held at Carthage, between the Catholics and the Donatists, at which were present 286 Catholic bishops, and of the Donatists 279, which, when we consider the superior strictness of their discipline, must give us a favourable opinion of their numbers, and especially as they were frequently the subjects of severe and sanguinary persecutions from the dominant party. The emperor Constans, who reigned over Africa, actuated by the zeal of his family for the peace of the church, sent two persons of rank, Paul and Macarius, in the year 348, to endeavour to conciliate the Donatists, and if possible to restore them to the communion of the Catholic church. But the Donatists were not to be reconciled to such an impure communion ! to all their overtures for peace, they replied, *Quid est imperatori cum ecclesia?* that is, “ What has the Emperor to do with the church ? ” an excellent saying certainly, and happy had it been for

both the church and the world, could all Christians have adopted and acted upon it. Optatus relates another maxim of theirs, which is worthy of being recorded. It was usual with them to say, “*Quid Christianis cum regibus, aut quid episcopis cum palatio?*” *What have Christians to do with kings, or what have bishops to do at court?* These hints are strikingly illustrative of the principles and conduct of the Donatists, who had among them men of great learning and talents, and who distinguished themselves greatly by their writings.\* But I pass on from this brief mention of them to notice the state of things during this period in the Catholic church.

The introduction of images into places of Christian worship, and the idolatrous practices to which, in process of time, it gave rise, is an evil that dates its origin soon after the times of Constantine the Great; but, like many other superstitious practices, it made its way by slow and imperceptible degrees. The earlier Christians reprobated every species of image worship in the strongest language; and some of them employed the force of ridicule to great advantage, in order to expose its absurdity. When the empress Constantia desired Eusebius to send her the image of Jesus Christ, he expostulated with her on the impropriety and absurdity of her requisition in the following striking words—“What kind of image of Christ does your imperial Majesty wish to have conveyed to you? Is it the image of his real and immutable nature; or is it that which he assumed for our sakes, when he was veiled in the form of a servant? With respect to the former, I presume you are not to learn, that “no man hath known the Son but the Father, neither hath any man known the Father but the Son,

\* See Lardner's Works, 4to. ed. Vol. II. p. 295—301, and Long's History of the Donatists.

and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." But you ask for the image of Christ when he appeared in human form, clothed in a body similar to our own. Let me inform you, that the body is now blended with the glory of the Deity, and all that was mortal in it is absorbed in life." \*

Paulinus, who died bishop of Nola, in the year 431, caused the walls of a place of worship to be painted with stories taken out of the Old Testament, that the people might thence receive instruction; the consequence of which was, that the written word was neglected for these miserable substitutes. But about the commencement of the seventh century, during the pontificate of the first Gregory, a circumstance turned up which tends to throw additional light upon this subject. Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, in France, observing some of his congregation paying worship to the images that had been placed in the churches of that city, in his zeal, commanded them to be broken and destroyed, which gave so much disgust, that many withdrew from his communion, and complaints against him were made to the bishop of Rome. Gregory wrote to him in consequence of these complaints; and the following is an extract of his letter. "I am lately informed," says he, "that upon your taking notice that some people worshipped images, you ordered the church pictures to be broken and thrown away. Now though I commend you for your zeal, in preventing the adoration of any thing *made with hands*, yet, in my opinion, those pictures should not have been broken in pieces. For, the design of pictures in churches, is to instruct the illiterate, that people may read that in the *paint*, which they have not education enough to do in the *book*. In my judgment, therefore, brother, you

\* White's Bampton Lectures, Notes, p. 8.



are obliged to find out a temper to let the pictures stand in the church, and likewise to forbid the congregation the worship of them. That by this provision, those who are not bred to letters, may be acquainted with the scripture history; and the people, on the other hand, preserved from the criminal excess of worshipping images.”\* Hence it appears, that the worship of images was not a very general thing in Gregory’s time, and that he disapproved of the practice.

But this imprudent concession, sanctioned by the authority and influence of Gregory, was productive of the worst consequences that can be imagined, and tended to accelerate the growing superstition with amazing velocity throughout the countries subject to his pontificate. For as the knowledge of God’s true character is only to be fully learned from the revelation which is made of it by means of the gospel of Christ, in proportion as the hearts of men become fortified against that which alone dispels the clouds of ignorance and error from the human mind, their propensity to every kind of superstition and idolatry naturally succeeds. This evil, therefore, made a most rapid progress, during the seventh century, and arrived at its zenith in the next. It did not, however, succeed without a struggle; and as the conflict ultimately issued in bringing about two important events, viz. the schism between the Greek and Roman churches, and the establishment of the pope as a temporal potentate, I shall endeavour, as concisely as possible, to sketch the leading particulars of this article of ecclesiastical history.

About the beginning of the eighth century, Leo, the Greek emperor, who reigned at Constantinople, began openly to oppose the worship of images. One Besor, a

\* Ep. Greg. I. l. 7. Epist. 109.

Syrian, who appears to have been an officer of his court, and in great favor with the emperor, is said to have convinced him by his arguments that the adoration of images was idolatrous, and in this he was ably seconded by Constantine, bishop of Nacolia, in Phrygia. Leo, anxious to propagate truth and preserve his subjects from idolatry, assembled the people, and with all the frankness and sincerity which mark his character, publicly avowed his conviction of the idolatrous nature of the prevailing practice, and protested against the erection of images. Hitherto no councils had sanctioned the evil, and precedents of antiquity were against it. But the scriptures, which ought to have had infinitely more weight upon the minds of men than either councils or precedents, had expressly and pointedly condemned it; yet, such deep root had the error at this time taken, so pleasing was it with men to commute for the indulgence of their crimes by a routine of idolatrous ceremonies, and, above all, so little ear had they to bestow on what the word of God taught, that the subjects of Leo murmured against him as a tyrant and a persecutor. And in this they were encouraged by Germanus, the bishop of Constantinople, who, with equal zeal and ignorance, asserted that images had always been used in the church, and declared his determination to oppose the emperor; which, the more effectually to do, he wrote to Gregory the second, then bishop of Rome, respecting the subject, who, by similar reasonings, warmly supported the same cause.

Two original epistles from Gregory the second to the emperor Leo, are still extant, and they merit attention on account of the portrait they exhibit of the founder of the papal monarchy. "During ten pure and fortunate years," says Gregory to the emperor, "we have tasted the annual comfort of your royal letters, subscribed in purple ink, with your own hand, the sacred pledges of

your attachment to the orthodox creed of our fathers. How deplorable is the change! How tremendous the scandal! You now accuse the Catholics of idolatry; and by the accusation, you betray your own impiety and ignorance. To this ignorance we are compelled to adapt the grossness of our style and arguments; the first elements of holy letters are sufficient for your confusion, and were you to enter a grammar-school, and avow yourself the enemy of our worship, the simple and pious children would be provoked to cast their horn-books at your head." After this decent salutation, the pope explains to him the distinction between the idols of antiquity and the Christian images. The former were the fanciful representations of phantoms or dæmons, at a time when the true God had not manifested his person in any visible likeness—the latter are the genuine forms of Christ, his mother, and his saints. To the impudent and inhuman Leo, more guilty than a heretic, he recommends peace, silence, and implicit obedience to his spiritual guides of Constantinople and Rome. "You assault us, O tyrant," thus he proceeds, "with a carnal and military hand; unarmed and naked we can only implore the Christ, the prince of the heavenly host, that he will send unto you a devil, for the destruction of your body, and the salvation of your soul. You declare, with foolish arrogance, 'I will dispatch my orders to Rome; I will break in pieces the images of St. Peter; and Gregory, like his predecessor Martin, shall be transported in chains, and in exile to the foot of the imperial throne.' Would to God, that I might be permitted to tread in the footsteps of the holy Martin; but may the fate of Constantians serve as a warning to the persecutors of the church. After his just condemnation by the bishops of Sicily, the tyrant was cut off, in the fulness of his sins, by a domestic servant; the saint is still adored by the nations of

Scythia, among whom he ended his banishment and his life. But it is our duty to live for the edification and support of the faithful people, nor are we reduced to risk our safety on the event of a combat. Incapable as you are of defending your Roman subjects, the maritime situation of the city may perhaps expose it to your depredation; but we can remove to the distance of four and twenty stadia, to the first fortress of the Lombards, and then—you may pursue the winds. Are you ignorant that the popes are the bond of union between the East and the West? The eyes of the nations are fixed on our humility; and they revere as a God upon earth, the apostle Saint Peter, whose image you threaten to destroy. The remote and interior kingdoms of the West present their homage to Christ and his vicegerent, and we now prepare to visit one of the most powerful monarchs, who desires to receive from our hands the sacrament of baptism. The Barbarians have submitted to the yoke of the gospel, while you alone are deaf to the voice of the shepherd. These pious Barbarians are kindled into rage; they thirst to avenge the persecution of the East. Abandon your rash and fatal enterprise; reflect, tremble, and repent. If you persist, we are innocent of the blood that will be spilt in the contest; may it fall on your own head!”\*

The character of Leo has been so blackened by the writers of the Catholic party, that it is difficult to form a just estimate of it; but when we consider that he not only condemned the worshipping of images, but also rejected relics, and protested against the intercession of saints, we cannot doubt of his possessing considerable strength of mind, while it may help us to account for much of the obloquy that was cast upon him.

\* Acts of the Nicene Council, tom. viii.



In the year 730 he issued an edict against images, and having in vain laboured to bring over Germanus, the bishop of Constantinople, to his views, he deposed him from his see, and put Anastasius in his place, who took part with the emperor. There was, in the palace of Constantinople, a porch which contained an image of the Saviour on the cross. Leo, perceiving that it was made an instrument of idolatry, sent an officer to remove it. Some females, who were then present, entreated that it might remain, but without effect. The officer mounted a ladder, and with an axe struck three blows on the face of the figure, when the women threw him down, by pulling away the ladder, and murdered him on the spot. The image, however, was removed, and burnt, and a plain cross set up in its room. The women then proceeded to insult Anastasius for encouraging the profanation of holy things. An insurrection ensued—and in order to quell it, the emperor was obliged to put several persons to death.

The news of this flew rapidly to Rome, where the same rage for idolatry prevailed, and such was the indignation excited by it, that the emperor's statues were immediately pulled down, and trodden under foot. All Italy was thrown into confusion; attempts were made to elect another emperor, in the room of Leo, and the pope encouraged these attempts. The Greek writers affirm that he prohibited the Italians from paying tribute any longer to Leo; but, in the midst of these broils, while defending idolatry and exciting rebellion with all his might, he was stopped short in his wicked career. "He was extremely insolent," says an impartial writer, "though he died with the character of a saint." \*

He was succeeded in his office by Gregory the III.

\* Walch's *Compend. Hist. of the Popes*, p. 101.

A. D. 731, who entered with great spirit and energy into the measures of his predecessor. The reader cannot but be amused with the following letter which he addressed to the emperor, immediately on his elevation.

“ Because you are unlearned and ignorant, we are obliged to write to you rude discourses, but full of sense and the word of God. We conjure you to quit your pride, and to hear us with humility. You say that we adore stones, walls, and boards. It is not so, my lord ; but these symbols make us recollect the persons whose names they bear, and exalt our grovelling minds. We do not look upon them as gods ; but, if it be the image of Jesus, we say, “ Lord help us.” If it be the image of his mother, we say, “ Pray to your Son to save us.” If it be of a martyr, we say, “ St. Stephen pray for us.” We might, as having the power of St. Peter, pronounce punishments against you ; but as you have pronounced the curse upon yourself, *let it stick to you*. You write to us to assemble a general council, of which there is no need. Do you cease to persecute images, and all will be quiet ; we fear not your threats.”

Few readers will think the style of this letter much calculated to conciliate the emperor ; and though it certainly does not equal the arrogance and blasphemy which are to be found among the pretensions of this wretched race of mortals in the subsequent period of their history, it may strike some as exhibiting a tolerable advance towards it. It seems to have shut the door against all further intercourse between the parties ; for in 732, Gregory, in a council, excommunicated all who should remove or speak contemptuously of images ; and Italy, being now in a state of rebellion, Leo fitted out a fleet with the view of quashing the refractory conduct of his subjects, but it was wrecked in the Adriatic, and the object of the expedition frustrated.

The Roman pontiff now acted in all respects like a temporal prince. He intrigued with the court of France, offering to withdraw his obedience from the emperor, and give the consulship of Rome to Charles Martel, the prime minister of that court (or mayor of the palace, as he is generally called) if he would take him under his protection. But the war in which France had lately been engaged with the Saracens rendered it inconvenient at the moment to comply with the request; and in the year 741, the emperor, the pope, and the French minister were all removed from the stage of life, leaving to their successors the management of their respective views and contentions.

Leo left behind him a son, Constantine Copronymus, who inherited all his father's zeal against images. Pope Grégoire the III. was succeeded by Zachary, an aspiring politician, who, by fomenting discord among the Lombards, contrived to wrest from their king Luitbrand an addition to the patrimony of the church. And Charles Martel was succeeded by his son Pepin, who sent a case of conscience to be resolved by the pope, viz. whether it would be just in him to depose his own sovereign, Childeric, and to reign in his stead. The pope answered in the affirmative, in consequence of which, Pepin threw his master into a monastery, and assumed the title of King. Zachary, the pope, died soon after, namely, in the year 752, and was succeeded by Stephen the III. who, in his zeal for images was not inferior to any of his predecessors.

Voltaire has remarked, that there prevailed at that time a strange mixture of policy and simplicity, of awkwardness and cunning, which strongly characterized the general decay of the age. Stephen, the new pope, who had quarrelled with the king of the Lombards, forged a letter, purporting to be the production of the apostle

Peter, addressed to Pepin and his sons, which is too remarkable to be here omitted. “ Peter, called an apostle by Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, &c. As through me the whole Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman church, the mother of all other churches, is founded on a rock; and to the end, that Stephen, bishop of this beloved church of Rome, and that virtue and power may be granted by our Lord to rescue the church of God out of the hands of its persecutors: To your most excellent princes, Pepin, Charles, and Carloman, and to all the holy Bishops and Abbots, Priests and Monks, as also to Dukes, Counts, and people, I, Peter, the Apostle, &c. I conjure you, and the Virgin Mary, who will be obliged to you, gives you notice, and commands you, as do also the thrones, dominations, &c. If you will not fight for me, I declare to you, by the Holy Trinity, and by my apostleship, that you shall have no share in heaven.”

This letter had its desired effect: Pepin passed the Alps with an army to assist the pope against the Lombards. Intimidated by the presence of the king of the Franks, Astelfus, the Lombard king, immediately relinquished the whole Exarchate of Ravenna\* to the pope, including that and twenty-one other cities, who, by this means, became proprietor of the Exarchate and its dependencies; and, by adding rapacity to his rebellion, was established as a temporal monarch! Thus was the sceptre added to the keys; the sovereignty to the priesthood; and thus were the popes enriched with the spoils of the Lombard kings and of the Roman emperors! He after-

\* The Exarch was the chief imperial officer appointed by the emperor of Constantinople for near two centuries past, to superintend as a vicar or prefect, the affairs of Italy. Ravenna was his residence and the seat of government; and Loric, the territory attached to him, was called the Exarchate of Ravenna.



wards took a journey into France, where he anointed with oil the king of the Franks; and, by the authority of St. Peter, forbade the French lords, on pain of excommunication, to choose a king of another race. Thus did these two ambitious men support one another in their schemes of rapacity and injustice. The criminality of the pope was, indeed, greatly aggravated by the pretence of religion. "It is you," says he, addressing Pepin, "whom God hath chosen from all eternity. For whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified."

Yet the question concerning images was far from being put to rest either at Rome or Constantinople, but continued to agitate the Catholic church for a length of time, and gave occasion to the assembling of council after council, one council annulling what the former had decreed. During the reign of the emperor Constantine Copronymus, a synod was held at Constantinople, to determine the controversy.\* The fathers being met, to the number of three hundred and thirty, after considering the doctrine of scripture, and the opinions of the fathers, decreed, "That every image, of whatsoever materials made and formed by the artist, should be cast out of the Christian church as a strange and abominable thing," adding an "anathema upon all who should make images or pictures, or representations of God, or of Christ, or of the Virgin Mary, or of any of the saints," condemning it

\* It was at this time the prevailing fashion in the Catholic church to dignify the Virgin Mary with the title of "Mother of God." The emperor one day said to the patriarch of Constantinople, "What harm would there be in terming the Virgin Mary *Mother of Christ*?" "God preserve you," answered the patriarch, "from entertaining such a thought. Do you not see how Nestorius is anathematized by the whole church for using similar language?"—"I only asked for my own information," said the emperor; "let it go no further."

as “a vain and diabolical invention”—deposing all bishops, and subjecting the monks and laity, who should set up any of them in public or private, to all the penalties of the imperial constitution.\* Paul I. who was at that time pope of Rome, sent his legate to Constantinople, to admonish the emperor to restore the sacred images and statues to the churches, threatening him with excommunication in case of refusal. But Copronymus treated his message with the contempt it deserved.

On the decease of Paul I. A. D. 768, the papal chair was filled for one year by a person of the name of Constantine, who condemned the worship of images, and was therefore tumultuously deposed; and Stephen the IV. substituted in his room, who was a furious defender of them. He immediately assembled a council in the Lateran church, where the renowned fathers abrogated all Constantine’s decrees, deposed all the bishops that had been ordained by him, annulled all his baptisms and chrisms, and, as some historians relate, after having beat and used him with great indignity, made a fire in the church and burnt him to death. After this, they annulled all the decrees of the synod of Constantinople, ordered the restoration of statues and images, and anathematized that execrable and pernicious synod, giving this curious reason for the use of images—“That if it was lawful for emperors, and those who had deserved well of their country, to have their images erected, but not lawful to set up those of God, the condition of the immortal God would be worse than that of man.”†

Thus the mystery of iniquity continued to work, until at length, under the reign of Irene, the empress of Con-

\* Platina’s Lives of the Popes—Life of Paul I.

† Platina—Life of Stephen.

stantinople, and her son Constantine, about the close of this century was convened, what is termed the seventh general council. It was held at Nice, and the number of bishops present was about three hundred and fifty. In this *venerable* assembly it was decreed, “That holy images of the cross should be consecrated, and put on the sacred vessels and vestments, and upon walls and boards, in private houses, and in public ways. And especially that there should be erected images of the Lord God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, of our blessed Lady, the mother of God, of the venerable angels, and of all the saints. And that whoever should presume to think or teach otherwise, or to throw away any painted books, or the figure of the cross, or any image or picture, or any genuine relics of the martyrs, they should, if bishops or clergymen, be deposed, or if monks or laymen be excommunicated.” They then pronounced anathemas upon all who should not receive images, or who should apply what the scriptures say against idols to the holy images, or who should call them idols, or who should wilfully communicate with those who rejected and despised them; adding, according to custom, “Long live Constantine and Irene his mother—Damnation to all heretics—Damnation on the council that roared against venerable images—The holy Trinity hath deposed them.”\* One would think the council of Pandemonium would have found it difficult to carry impiety and profaneness much beyond this.

Irene and Constantine approved and ratified these decrees—the result of which was, that idols and images were erected in all the churches, and those who opposed them were treated with great severity. And thus, by the intrigues of the popes of Rome, iniquity was established

\* Platina—Life of Hadrian I.

by a law, and the worship of idols authorized and confirmed in the Catholic church, though in express opposition to all the principles of natural religion, and the nature and design of the Christian revelation.

But it is time for us to return and take some notice of another important branch of ecclesiastical history, which belongs to the period of the seventh and eighth centuries, viz. the rise of the Mahomedan imposture.\*

MAHOMET was born in the year 569 or 570, at Mecca, a city in Arabia Felix. He was descended from the tribe of Koreish, and the family of Hashem, the most illustrious of the Arabs, the princes of Mecca, and the hereditary guardians of their code of religious institutions. In his early infancy he was deprived of his father, his mother, and his grand-father; but his uncles were numerous and powerful, and in the division of the inheritance, the orphan's share was reduced to five camels and an Ethiopian female slave. At home and abroad, in peace and war, Abu-Taleb, the most respectable of his uncles, was the guide and guardian of his youth. In his twenty-fifth year, he entered into the service of Cadijah, a rich and noble widow of Mecca, who soon rewarded his fidelity with the gift of her hand and fortune. By this alliance he was raised from a humble sphere in life to the station of his ancestors; and the lady who had thus elevated him, was content with his domestic virtues, till, in the fortieth year of his age, he assumed the title of a prophet, and proclaimed the religion of the Koran.

According to the tradition of his companions, Mahomet was distinguished by the beauty of his person. Before

\* The story of this extraordinary man, the pretended Arabian prophet, has been written by the author of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," with all that felicity of diction, for which he stands unrivalled; but at much too great length to be introduced into this sketch. I have endeavoured to seize the more prominent features of the portrait.



he spoke, the orator engaged on his side the affections of his audience, who applauded his commanding presence, his majestic aspect, his piercing eye, his gracious smile, his flowing beard, his countenance that painted every sensation of the soul, and his gestures that enforced each expression of the tongue. In the familiar offices of life, he scrupulously adhered to the grave and ceremonious politeness of his country; his respectful attention to the rich and powerful was dignified by his condescension and affability to the poorest citizens of Mecca. His memory was capacious and retentive, his wit easy and social, his imagination sublime, his judgment clear, rapid, and decisive. With all these advantages, Mahomet was an illiterate barbarian; his youth had never been instructed in the arts of reading and writing; the common ignorance exempted him from shame or reproach, but he was reduced to a narrow circle of existence, and deprived of those faithful mirrors which reflect to our mind the minds of sages and heroes. Yet the volume of nature and of man was open to his view. When only thirteen years of age, he twice accompanied his uncle's caravan into Syria, to attend the fairs of Bostra and Damascus, but his duty obliged him to return home as soon as he had disposed of the merchandize with which he was entrusted. From his earliest youth, Mahomet was addicted to religious contemplation; and every year during the month of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world and from the society of his wife, to the cave of Heva, three miles from Mecca, where he consulted the spirit of fraud or enthusiasm, and where he at length matured the faith which, under the name of ISLAM, he at last preached to his family and nation; a faith compounded of an eternal truth and a necessary fiction—THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD, AND THAT MAHOMET IS HIS APOSTLE.

Such are the first principles of the religion of Mahomet, which are illustrated, and enlarged upon with numerous additional articles in the Koran, or, as it is sometimes termed, the Alcoran. The prophet of Mecca rejected the worship of idols and men, of stars and planets, on the rational principle, that whatever rises must set; that whatever is born must die; that whatever is corruptible must decay and perish. According to his own account, or the tradition of his disciples, “the substance of the Koran is uncreated and eternal; subsisting in the essence of the Deity, and inscribed with a pen of light on the table of his everlasting decrees. A paper copy, in a volume of silk and gems, was brought down to the lowest heaven by the angel Gabriel—who successively revealed the chapters and verses to the Arabian prophet. Instead of a perpetual and perfect measure of the divine will, the fragments of the Koran were produced at the discretion of Mahomet; each revelation is suited to the emergency of his policy or passion, and all contradiction is removed by the saving maxim, that any text of the Alcoran is abrogated or modified by any subsequent passage.

In the spirit of enthusiasm or of vanity, the prophet rests the truth of his mission on the merit of his book; audaciously challenges both men and angels to imitate the beauties of a single page; and presumes to assert that God alone could dictate this incomparable performance. Yet his loftiest strains must yield to the sublime simplicity of the book of Job, composed in a remote age in the same country, and in the same language.\* The contents of the Koran were at first diligently recorded

\* I am aware that this subject has been much disputed among the learned; but the reader who wishes to see it critically examined will find it done by the learned and judicious Bishop Lowth, in his Lectures on the

by his disciples on palm leaves and the shoulder bones of mutton; and the pages, without order or connection, were cast into a chest in the custody of one of his wives. Two years after the death of Mahomet, the sacred volume was collected and published by his friend and successor Abubeker. At the end of two hundred years, the *Sonna*, or oral law was fixed and consecrated by the labours of Al Boeheri, who distinguished seven thousand two hundred and seventy-five *genuine* traditions, from a mass of three hundred thousand reports of a more doubtful or spurious character!

According to the Koran, some rays of prophetic light, commencing with the fall of Adam, and extending in one unbroken chain of inspiration to the days of Mahomet, had been imparted to one hundred and twenty four thousand of the elect, discriminated by their respective measure of virtue and grace—three hundred and thirteen apostles were sent with a special commission to recall their country from idolatry and vice—one hundred and four volumes had been dictated by the Holy Spirit, and six legislators of transcendent brightness have announced to mankind the six successive revelations of various rites, but of one immutable religion. The authority and station of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, and Mahomet, rise in just gradation above each other; but whosoever hates or rejects *any one* of the prophets is numbered with the infidels. For the author of Christianity, the Mahometans are taught by the prophet to entertain an high and mysterious reverence. “ Verily, Christ Jesus, the Son of Mary, is the apostle of God, and his word, which he conveyed into Mary, and a spirit proceeding from him,

Hebrew Poetry. See Lect. 32, 33, 34.—See also the BIBLICAL CYCLOPÆDIA, article Job—and *Clarke's Succession of Sacred Literature*, vol. i. p. 13—15. Also Du Pin on the Canon; and the Notes of Michaelis on Lowth's Lectures.

honourable in this world, and in the world to come; and one of those who approach near to the presence of God." Yet, he teaches that Jesus was a mere mortal, and that at the day of judgment, his testimony will serve to condemn both the Jews, who reject him as a prophet, and the Christians who adore him as the Son of God. The malice of his enemies, we are told, aspersed his reputation, and conspired against his life; but their intention only was guilty; a phantom, or a criminal was substituted on the cross, and the innocent saint was translated to the seventh heaven. During six hundred years, the gospel was the way of truth and salvation; but the Christians insensibly forgot both the laws and example of their founder, and Mahomet was instructed to accuse the church as well as the synagogue, of corrupting the integrity of the sacred text. The piety of Moses and of Christ rejoiced in the assurance of the future prophet, more illustrious than themselves, and the promise of "*the Comforter*," was prefigured in the name, and accomplished in the person of Mahomet, the greatest and last of the apostles of God.

The mission of the ancient prophets, of Moses and of Christ, had been confirmed by many splendid prodigies, and Mahomet was repeatedly urged by the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina, to produce a similar evidence of his divine mission; to call down from heaven the angel, or the volume of his revelation, to create a garden in the desert, or to kindle a conflagration in the unbelieving city. But as often as he is pressed upon this subject, he involves himself in the obscure boast of vision and prophecy, appeals to the internal proofs of his doctrine, and shields himself behind the providence of God, who refuses those signs and wonders that would depreciate the merit of faith, and aggravate the guilt of infidelity. But the very tone of his apologies betrays his weakness and



vexation, while the numerous passages of scandal are more than sufficient to settle the question respecting the integrity of the Koran. The votaries of Mahomet are more confident than he himself was of his miraculous gifts, and their credulity increased as they were removed from the time and place of his exploits. They believe, or affirm, that trees went forth to meet him; that he was saluted by stones; that water gushed from his fingers, that he fed the hungry, cured the sick, and raised the dead; that a beam groaned to him; and that a camel complained to him; that a shoulder of mutton informed him of its being poisoned; and that both animate and inanimate nature were alike subject to this apostle of God. His dream of a nocturnal journey is seriously described as a real and corporeal transaction—a mysterious animal, the Borak, conveyed him from the temple of Mecca to that of Jerusalem; with his companion Gabriel, he successively ascended to the seven heavens, where he both received and repaid the salutations of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the angels, in their respective mansions. Beyond the seventh heaven, Mahomet alone was permitted to proceed; he passed the Veil of Unity, approached within two bow-shots of the throne; and felt a cold that pierced him to the heart, when his shoulder was touched by the hand of God. After this familiar though important conversation, he again descended to Jerusalem, remounted the Borak, returned to Mecca, and performed in the tenth part of a night, the journey of many thousand years. Such are the marvellous tales with which the vulgar are amused.

Prayer, fasting, and alms, are the religious duties of a Mahometan; and he is encouraged to hope that prayer will carry him half way to God—fasting will bring him to the door of his palace—and alms will gain him admittance. During the month of Ramadan, from the rising

to the setting of the sun, the Mussulman abstains from eating and drinking and women and baths and perfumes; from all nourishment that can restore his strength; from all pleasure that can gratify his senses. In the revolution of the lunar year, the month Ramadan coincides by turns with the winter cold and with the summer heat; but the patient martyr, without assuaging his thirst with a drop of water, must wait for the close of a tedious and sultry day. The interdiction of wine is converted by Mahomet into a positive and general law; but these painful restraints are often infringed by the libertine, and eluded by the hypocrite.

The Koran acknowledges the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead and the future judgment. At the blast of the trumpet, new worlds will start into being; angels, genii, and men, will arise from the dead, the human soul will again be united to the body; and this will be succeeded by the final judgment of mankind. After the greater part of mankind has been condemned for their opinions, the true believers only will be judged by their actions. The good and evil of each Mussulman will be accurately weighed in a balance, and a singular mode of compensation will be allowed for the payment of injuries; the aggressor will refund an equivalent of his good actions, for the benefit of the person he has wronged, and if he should be destitute of any moral property, the weight of his sins will be loaded with an adequate share of the demerits of the sufferer. According as the shares of guilt or virtue shall preponderate, the sentence will be pronounced, and all, without distinction, will pass over the sharp and perilous bridge of the abyss; but the innocent, treading in the footsteps of Mahomet, will gloriously enter the gates of Paradise, while the guilty will fall into the first and mildest of the seven hells. The term of expiation will vary from nine hundred to seven

thousand years; but the prophet has judiciously promised that *all* his disciples, whatever may be their sins, shall be saved, by their own faith and his intercession, from eternal damnation.

It is natural enough that an Arabian prophet should dwell with rapture on the groves, the fountains, and the rivers of Paradise; but instead of inspiring the blessed inhabitants with a liberal taste for harmony and science, conversation and friendship, he idly celebrates the pearls and diamonds, the robes of silk, palaces of marble, dishes of gold, rich wines, artificial dainties, numerous attendants, and the whole train of sensual and costly luxury, which becomes insipid to the owner, even in the short period of this mortal life. Seventy-two *Houris*, or black-eyed damsels, of resplendent beauty, blooming youth, virgin purity, and exquisite sensibility, will be created for the use of the meanest believer; a moment of pleasure will be prolonged to a thousand years, and his faculties will be increased a hundred-fold to render him worthy of his felicity.

Such are the outlines of the religion of Mahomet, which he began to preach at Mecca, in the year 609. His first converts were his wife, his servant, his pupil, and his friend. In process of time, ten of the most respectable citizens of Mecca were introduced to the private lessons of the prophet; they yielded to the voice of enthusiasm and repeated the fundamental creed,—“There is but one God, and Mahomet is his apostle.” Their faith, even in this life, was rewarded with riches and honours, with the command of armies and the government of kingdoms! Three years were silently employed in the conversion of fourteen proselytes, the first fruits of his mission. But in the fourth he assumed the prophetic office, and resolving to impart to his family the benefits of his religion, he prepared a banquet for the entertain-

ment of forty guests of the race of Hashem. "Friends and kinsmen," said Mahomet to the assembly, "I offer you, and I alone can offer, the most precious of gifts, the treasures of this world and of the world to come. God has commanded me to call you to his service. Who among you will support my burthen? Who among you will be my companion and my Vizir?" No answer was returned, till the silence of astonishment, and doubt and contempt, was at length broken by the impatient courage of Ali, a youth in the fourteenth year of his age. "O prophet, I am the man; whosoever rises against thee, I will dash out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O prophet, I will be thy vizir over them." Mahomet accepted his offer with transport. His uncle Abu-Taleb, advised the prophet to relinquish his impracticable design. "Spare your remonstrances," replied the fanatic, to his uncle and benefactor, "if they should place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left, they should not divert me from my course." He persevered ten years in the exercise of his mission, during which time the religion that has since overspread the East and the West advanced with a slow and painful progress within the walls of Mecca.

In his uncle Abu-Taleb, though no believer in his mission, the impostor found a guardian of his fame and person, during the life of that venerable chief; but at his death, which took place in the year 622, Mahomet was abandoned to the power of his enemies, and that too at the moment when he was deprived of his domestic comforts by the loss of his faithful and generous wife Cadijah. The tribe of the Koreishites and their allies were, of all the citizens of Mecca, the most hostile to his pretensions. His death was resolved upon, and it was agreed that a sword from each tribe should be buried in his heart, to divide the guilt of his blood, and to baffle the vengeance



of his disciples. An angel or a spy revealed their conspiracy, and flight was the only resource of Mahomet. At the dead of night, accompanied by his friend Abubeker, he silently escaped from his house—three days they were concealed in the cave of Thor, three miles from Mecca, and in the close of each evening they received from the son and daughter of Abubeker a supply of intelligence and food. The most diligent search was made after him; every haunt in the neighbourhood was explored; his adversaries even arrived at the entrance of the cave, but the sight of a spider's web and a pigeon's nest are supposed to have convinced them that the place was solitary and inviolate. "We are only two," said the trembling Abubeker. "There is a third," replied the prophet, "it is God himself." No sooner was the pursuit abated, than the two fugitives issued from the den, and mounted their camels: on the road to Medina they were overtaken by the emissaries of the Koreish; but they redeemed themselves with prayers and promises from their hands. In this eventful moment the lance of an Arab might have changed the history of the world.

The religion of the Koran might have perished in its cradle, had not Medina embraced with faith and reverence the outcasts of Mecca. But some of its noblest citizens were converted by the preaching of Mahomet. Seventy-three men and two women of Medina held a solemn conference with Mahomet, his kinsman and his disciples, and pledged themselves to each other by a mutual oath of fidelity. They promised, in the name of the city, that if he should be banished, they would receive him as a confederate, obey him as a leader, and defend him to the last extremity. "But if you are recalled by your country," said they, "will you not abandon your new allies?" "All things," replied Mahomet, "are now common between us; your blood is as my blood; your

ruin as my ruin. We are bound to each other by the ties of honour and interest. I am your friend and the enemy of your foes." "But if we are killed in your service," said they, "what will be our reward?" "PARADISE," replied the prophet. "Stretch forth thy hand." He stretched it forth, and they reiterated the oath of allegiance and fidelity.

From his establishment at Medina, Mahomet assumed the exercise of the regal and sacerdotal office. On a chosen spot of ground he built a house and a mosque, venerable for their rude simplicity. When he prayed and preached in the weekly assembly, he leaned against the trunk of a palm tree; and it was long before he indulged himself in the use of a chair or pulpit. After a reign of six years, fifteen hundred of his followers, in arms, and in the field, renewed their oath of allegiance, and their chief repeated the assurance of his protection.

From this time Mahomet became a martial apostle—he fought in person at nine battles or sieges, and fifty enterprises of war were achieved in ten years by himself or his lieutenants. He continued to unite the professions of merchant and a robber, and his petty excursions for the defence or the attack of a caravan insensibly prepared his troops for the conquest of Arabia. The distribution of the spoil was regulated by the law of the prophet; the whole was collected in one common mass; a fifth of the gold and silver, the cattle, prisoners, &c. was reserved for pious and charitable uses; the remainder was shared in adequate portions by the soldiers. From all sides the roving Arabs were allured to the standard of *religion* and *plunder*; the apostle sanctified the licence of embracing the female captives as their wives or concubines, and the enjoyment of wealth and beauty was the type of their promised paradise. "The sword," says Mahomet, "is the key of heaven and hell: a drop

of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer; whoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermillion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubims."

Till the age of sixty-three, the strength of Mahomet was equal to the fatigues of his station. He had, by that time made an entire conquest of Arabia, and evinced a disposition to turn his arms against the Roman empire; but his followers were discouraged. They alleged the want of money, or horses, or provisions; the season of harvest, and the intolerable heat of the summer. "Hell is much hotter," said the indignant prophet; but he disdained to compel their service. He was then at the head of ten thousand horse and twenty thousand foot, in the way that leads from Medina to Damascus, intent upon the conquest of Syria, when he was stopped short in his career, having been poisoned, as he himself seriously believed, at Chaibar, in revenge by a Jewish female. Its fatal effect, however, was not immediate, for during four years the health of Mahomet declined; his infirmities increased, and he was at last carried off by a fever of fourteen days continuance, which, at intervals, deprived him of the use of his reason, and he died in the year 632. His death occasioned the utmost consternation among his followers. The city of Medina, and especially the house of the prophet, was a scene of clamorous sorrow, or of silent despair. "How can he be dead?" exclaimed his deluded votaries, "our witness, our intercessor, our mediator with God. He is not dead. Like Moses and Jesus, he is wrapt in a holy trance, and speedily will he return to his faithful people." The evidence of sense was disregarded, and Omar, unsheathing his scimitar, threatened to strike off the heads of the infidels who

should dare to affirm that the prophet was no more. But the tumult was appeased by the weight and moderation of Abubeker. "Is it Mahomet," said he to Omar and the multitude, "or the God of Mahomet whom you worship? The God of Mahomet liveth for ever, but the apostle was a mortal like ourselves, and, according to his own prediction, he has experienced the common fate of mortality." He was piously interred by the hands of his nearest kinsman, on the same spot on which he expired. Medina has been rendered famous by the death and burial of Mahomet, and the innumerable pilgrims of Mecca often turn aside from the way to bow in voluntary devotion, before the simple tomb of the prophet. Having thus briefly glanced at the rise and progress of Mahometanism, I quit the subject, to notice the state of the Catholic church.

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The emperors of Rome and Constantinople, who professed Christianity, had now been lavishing on the clergy riches, immunities, and privileges, during three succeeding centuries; and these seducing advantages had contributed to a relaxation of discipline, and the introduction of such a mass of disorders as wholly destroyed the spirit of the Christian profession. Under the dominion of the Barbarian kings, the degeneracy increased, till the pure principles of Christianity were lost sight of in the grossness of superstition, in consequence of which, men were led to endeavour to conciliate the favour of heaven by the same means that satisfied the justice of man, or by those employed to appease their fabulous deities. As the punishments due for civil crimes, among the Barbarian conquerors, might be bought off by money, they attempted, in like manner, to bribe heaven, by benefactions to the church, in order to supersede all future inquest.



They seem to have believed, says the Abbe de Mably, that avarice was the first attribute of the Deity, and that the saints made a traffic of their influence and protection. "Our treasury is poor," said Chilperic, king of the Franks, "Our riches are gone to the church; the bishops are the kings." And true it is, that the superior clergy, by the influx of wealth and the acquisition of lands, combined the influence of worldly grandeur with that of religion, insomuch that they were often the arbiters of kingdoms, and disposed of the crown, while they regulated the affairs of the state.

Historians have exhibited to us the most melancholy picture of the universal darkness and ignorance, which, at the beginning of the seventh century, had overspread all ranks of men. Even the ecclesiastical orders scarcely afforded an exception to this general description. Among the bishops, the grand instructors and defenders of the Christian church, few, we are told, could be found whose knowledge and abilities were sufficient to compose the discourses, however mean and incoherent, which their office sometimes obliged them to deliver to the people. The greater part of those among the monastic orders, whom the voice of an illiterate age had dignified with the character of learning, lavished their time and talents in studying the fabulous legends of pretended saints and martyrs, or in composing histories equally fabulous, rather than in the cultivation of true science, or the diffusion of useful knowledge. The want even of an acquaintance with the first rudiments of literature was so general among the higher ecclesiastics of those times, that it was scarcely deemed disgraceful to acknowledge it. In the acts of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, many examples occur, where subscriptions are to be found in this form—*"I, such an one, have subscribed by the hand of such an one, because I cannot write. And such a bishop having*

*said that he could not write, I, whose name is underwritten, have subscribed for him.” \**

We may take a specimen of the divinity that was current during the seventh century, from the description given of a good Christian by the highly revered St. Eloi, Bishop of Noyon, in one of his famous homilies. We are informed by the writer of his life, that “besides his other miraculous virtues, one was *especially* bestowed on him of the Lord; for on his diligent search, and persevering with singular ardour of faith in this investigation, many bodies of holy martyrs, concealed from human knowledge for ages, were discovered to him, and brought to light!” Let the reader mark the divinity of this renowned bishop.

“He is the GOOD CHRISTIAN,” says he, “who comes often to church, and brings his oblation to be presented on God’s altar; who presumes not to taste of the fruits he hath gathered, till he hath first made his offering of them to God; who, on the return of the sacred solemnities, for many days preceding, observes a sacred continence, even from his own wife, that he may approach God’s altar with a safe conscience; and who can repeat from memory the creed and the Lord’s prayer.” So much for his good Christian; on which the learned translator of Mosheim very properly remarks, “We see here a large and ample description of the character of a good Christian, in which there is not the least mention of the love of God, resignation to his will, obedience to his laws, or of justice, benevolence, and charity to men, and in which the whole of religion is made to consist in coming often to the church, bringing offerings to the altar, lighting candles in consecrated places, and such like vain services.”

\* White’s Bampton Lectures, Sermon ii. and notes, p. 6.

But let us hear this luminary of the seventh century once more. “Redeem your souls,” says he, “from the punishment due to your sins, whilst you have the remedies in your power. Offer your tythes and oblations to the churches—light up candles in the consecrated places, according to your abilities—come frequently to church, and with all humility pray to the saints for their patronage and protection; which things if ye do, when at the last day ye stand at the tremendous bar of the eternal Judge, ye may say confidently to him, “Give Lord, because I have given.”\* *Da Domine quia dedi.*

In several churches of France, a festival was celebrated in commemoration of the Virgin Mary’s flight into Egypt—it was called the feast of the ass. A young girl, richly dressed, with a child in her arms, was placed upon an ass superbly decorated with trappings. The ass was led to the altar in solemn procession—high mass was said with great pomp—the ass was taught to kneel at proper places—a hymn, no less childish than impious, was sung in his praise; and when the ceremony was ended, the priest, instead of the usual words with which he dismissed the people, brayed three times like an ass; and the people, instead of the usual response, brayed three times in return.†

“Every thing sacred in religion,” says Mons. Voltaire, when treating of this period, “was disfigured in the West, by customs the most ridiculous and extravagant. The festivals of fools and asses were established in most churches. On days of solemnity, they created a bishop

\* Surely the late Mr. Milner must have been very much off his guard when, writing of this bishop, he tells his reader—“Eloi, bishop of Noyon, carefully visited his large diocese—and was very successful among the people.—But *God was with him both in life and doctrine.*” *History of the Church*, vol. iii. p. 116.

† Robertson’s *History of Charles V.* vol. i.

of fools; and an ass was led into the body of the church, dressed in a cape and four cornered cap. Church dances, feastings on the altar, revelry and obscene farces were the ceremonies observed on those festivals, and in many dioceses these extravagancies were continued for seven centuries. Were we to consider only the usages here related, we should imagine we were reading an account of Hottentots or Negroes; and it must be confessed that in many things we did not fall much short of them.”\*

But it is disgusting to relate such mummary, and perhaps I ought to apologise to my reader for laying it before him. He may rest assured, however, that it is only a sample from a fruitful crop which it were easy to produce. If he be shocked, as he well may, at contemplating such disgraceful things coupled with the name of the pure and holy religion of the Son of God, he will be glad to turn his attention with me to a more pleasing subject.

While the Christian world, as it has been the fashion to call it, was thus sunk into an awful state of superstition—at a moment when “darkness seemed to cover the earth, and gross darkness the people”—it is pleasing to contemplate a ray of celestial light darting across the gloom. About the year 660, a new sect arose in the east, under the name of PAULICIANS,† which is justly entitled to our attention.

In Mananalis, an obscure town in the vicinity of Somosata, a person of the name of Constantine entertained

\* General History, vol. 1. ch. 35.

† It is much to be regretted that of this class of Christians, all our information is derived through the medium of their enemies. The two original sources of intelligence concerning them are Photius, b. i. *Contra Manichæos*; and Siculus Hist. *Manicheor.* and from them Mosheim and Gibbon have deduced their account of the Paulicians. The latter writer



at his house a deacon, who, having been a prisoner among the Mahometans, was returning from Syria, whither he had been carried away captive. From this passing stranger, Constantine received the precious gift of the New Testament in its original language, which, even at this early period, was so concealed from the vulgar, that Peter Siculus, to whom we owe most of our information on the history of the Paulicians, tells us, the first scruples of a Catholic, when he was advised to read the bible, was, “it is not lawful for us profane persons to read those sacred writings, but for the priests only.” Indeed the gross ignorance which pervaded Europe at that time rendered the generality of the people incapable of reading that or any other book; but even those of the laity who could read, were dissuaded by their religious guides from meddling with the bible. Constantine, however, made the best use of the deacon’s present—he studied his New Testament with unwearied assiduity—and more particularly the writings of the apostle Paul, from which he at length endeavoured to deduce a system of doctrine and worship. “He investigated the creed of primitive Christianity,” says Gibbon, “and whatever might be the success, a protestant reader will applaud the spirit of the inquiry.”\* The knowledge to which Constantine himself was, under the divine blessing, enabled to attain, he gladly communicated to others around him, and a Christian church was collected. In a little time several individuals arose among them qualified for the work of the ministry; and several other churches were collected throughout Armenia and Cappadocia. It

has entered far more fully into the subject than the former, and, what is singular enough, he has displayed more candour! I have collected from these two modern authors the concise account given above, and have aimed at impartiality.

\* Decline and Fall, vol. x. ch. 54.

appears from the whole of their history to have been a leading object with Constantine and his brethren to restore, as far as possible, the profession of Christianity to all its primitive simplicity.

Their public appearance soon attracted the notice of the Catholic party, who immediately branded them with the opprobrious appellation of Manichæans; but “they sincerely condemned the memory and opinions of the Manichæan sect, and complained of the injustice which impressed that invidious name on them.”\* There is reason, therefore, to think, that they voluntarily adopted the name of Paulicians, and that they derived it from the name of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Constantine now assumed or received the name of Sylvanus, and others of his fellow labourers were called Titus, Timothy, Tichicus, &c. and as the churches arose and were formed in different places, they were named after those apostolic churches to which Paul originally addressed his inspired writings, without any regard to the name of the city or town in which they assembled for worship.

The labours of Constantine—Sylvanus, were crowned with much success. Pontus and Cappadocia, regions once renowned for Christian piety, were again blessed with a diffusion of the light of divine truth. He himself resided in the neighbourhood of Colonia, in Pontus, and their congregations, in process of time, were diffused over the provinces of Asia Minor, to the westward of the Euphrates. “The Paulician teachers,” says Gibbon, “were distinguished only by their scriptural names, by the modest title of fellow-pilgrims; by the austerity of their lives, their zeal and knowledge, and the credit of some extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit. But they were incapable of desiring, or at least of obtaining the

\* Gibbon, *Ubi supra*.

wealth and honours of the Catholic prelacy. Such anti-christian pride they strongly censured."

Roused by the growing importance of this sect, the Greek emperors began to persecute the Paulicians with the most sanguinary severity; and the scenes of Galerius and Maximin were re-acted under the Christian forms and names. "To their excellent deeds," says the bigoted Peter Siculus, "the divine and orthodox emperors added this virtue, that they ordered the Montanists and Manichæans (by which epithets they chose to stigmatise the Paulicians) to be capitally punished; and their books, wherever found, to be committed to the flames; also that if any person was found to have secreted them, he was to be put to death, and his goods confiscated." A Greek officer, armed with legal and military powers, appeared at Colonia, to strike the shepherd, and, if possible, reclaim the lost sheep to the Catholic fold. "By a refinement of cruelty, Simeon (the officer) placed the unfortunate Sylvanus before a line of his disciples, who were commanded, as the price of their own pardon, and the proof of their repentance, to massacre their spiritual father. They turned aside from the impious office; the stones dropt from their filial hands, and of the whole number, only one executioner could be found; a new David, as he is styled by the Catholics, who boldly overthrew the giant of heresy."\* This apostate, whose name was Justus, stoned to death the father of the Paulicians, who had now laboured among them twenty-seven years. The treacherous Justus betrayed many others, probably of the pastors and teachers, who fared the fate of their venerable leader; while Simeon himself, struck with the evidences of divine grace apparent in the sufferers, embraced at length the faith which he

\* Gibbon, *ut supra*.

came to destroy—renounced his station, resigned his honours and fortunes, became a zealous preacher among the Paulicians, and at last sealed his testimony with his blood. \*

During a period of one hundred and fifty years, these Christian churches seem to have been almost incessantly subjected to persecution, which they supported with Christian meekness and patience; and if the acts of their martyrdom, their preaching and their lives were distinctly recorded, I see no reason to doubt, that we should find in them the genuine successors of the Christians of the first two centuries. And in this as well as former instances, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. A succession of teachers and churches arose, and a person named Sergius, who had laboured among them in the ministry of the gospel thirty-seven years, is acknowledged, even by their vilest calumniators, to have been a most exemplary Christian. The persecution had, however, some intermissions, until at length Theodora, the Greek empress, exerted herself against them, beyond all her predecessors. She sent inquisitors throughout all Asia Minor in search of these sectaries, and is computed to have killed by the gibbet, by fire, and by the sword, A HUNDRED THOUSAND PERSONS. Such was the state of things at the commencement of the ninth century. †

- \* “ Thrice hail, ye faithful shepherds of the fold,
- “ By tortures unsubdued, unbribed by gold;
- “ In your high scorn of honours, honoured most,
- “ Ye chose the martyr’s, not the prelate’s post;
- “ Firmly the thorny path of suffering trod,
- “ And counted death “ all gain ” to live with God.”

HYPOCRISY, a poem by the Rev. C. Colton, part i. p. 156.

† It has been already stated that we derive all our information concerning the Paulicians, through the medium of their adversaries, the writers belonging to the Catholic church. It should not, therefore, sur-



prise us to find them imputing the worst of principles and practices to a class of men whom they uniformly decry as heretics. Mosheim says, that of the two accounts of Photius and Peter Siculus, he gives the preference for candour and fairness to that of the latter—and yet I find Mr. Gibbon acknowledging, that “the six capital errors of the Paulicians are defined by Peter Siculus *with much prejudice and passion.*” (DECLINE and FALL, vol. x. ch. 54.) One of their imputed errors is, that they rejected the whole of the Old Testament writings; a charge which was also brought, by the writers of the Catholic school, against the Waldenses and others, with equal regard to truth and justice. But this calumny is easily accounted for. The advocates of Popery, to support their usurpations and innovations in the kingdom of Christ, were driven to the Old Testament for authority, adducing the kingdom of David for their example. And when their adversaries rebutted the argument, insisting that the parallel did not hold, for that the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, is a very different state of things from the kingdom of David, their opponents accused them of giving up the divine authority of the Old Testament. Upon similar principles, it is not difficult to vindicate the Paulicians from the other charges brought against them; but to do that would require more room than can be here allotted to the subject.

## CHAPTER IV.

A VIEW OF THE STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION  
FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE NINTH TO THE END  
OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

A. D. 800—1200.

## SECTION I.

*A concise description of the vallies of Piedmont, and of  
the Pyrenees; with some account of the life and doc-  
trine of Claude, bishop of Turin.*

THE principality of Piedmont,\* derives its name from the circumstance of its being situated at the foot of the Alps—a prodigious range of mountains, the highest indeed in Europe, and which divide Italy from France, Switzerland, and Germany. It is bounded on the east by the duchies of Milan and Montferrat; on the south by the county of Nice and the territory of Genoa; on the west by France; and on the north by Savoy. In former times it constituted a part of Lombardy, but more recently has been subject to the king of Sardinia, who takes up his residence at Turin, the capital of the province, and one of the finest cities in Europe. It is an extensive tract of rich and fruitful vallies, embosomed in mountains which are encircled again with mountains higher than they, intersected with deep and rapid rivers,

\* The term “Piedmont” is derived from two Latin words, viz. *Pede montium*, “at the foot of the mountains.”

and exhibiting, in strong contrast, the beauty and plenty of Paradise, in sight of frightful precipices, wide lakes of ice, and stupendous mountains of never-wasting snow. The whole country is an interchange of hill and dale; mountain and valley—traversed with four principal rivers, viz. the Po, the Tanaro, the Stura, and the Dora, besides about eight and twenty rivulets great and small, which, winding their courses in different directions, contribute to the fertility of the vallies, and make them resemble a watered garden.

The principal vallies are Aosta and Susa on the north—Stura on the south—and in the interior of the country, Lucerna, Angrogna, Raccapiatta, Pramol, Perosa, and S. Martino. The valley of Clusone, or Pragela, as it is often called, was in ancient times a part of the province of Dauphiny in France, and has been, from the days of Hannibal, the ordinary rout of the French and other armies, when marching into Italy. Angrogna, Pramol, and S. Martino are strongly fortified by nature on account of their many difficult passes and bulwarks of rocks and mountains; as if the allwise Creator, says Sir Samuel Morland,\* had, from the beginning, designed that place as a cabinet, wherein to put some inestimable jewel, or in which to reserve many thousand souls, which should not bow the knee before Baal.

Several of these vallies are described by our geographers as being remarkably rich and fruitful—as fertile and pleasant as any part of Italy. In the mountains are mines of gold, silver, brass, and iron; the rivers abound with a variety of exquisite fish; the forests and the fields with game; while the soil yields every thing necessary to the enjoyment of human life,—abundance of corn, rice, wine, fruits, hemp, and cattle. Throughout the

\* History of the Churches of Piedmont, p. 5.

whole territory, except on the tops of the mountains, there is to be found great plenty of fruits, especially of chesnuts, which the inhabitants gather in immense quantities, and after drying them in an oven or upon a kiln, they manufacture from them an excellent kind of biscuit, which in France they call marroons, and where they are in high estimation as a species of confectionary. They first of all string them, as they do their beads or chaplets, and then hang them up in some humid place for their better preservation. As the bread made from the chesnut constitutes a considerable part of the food of the inhabitants of Piedmont, it is a common practice among them, after reserving what may be necessary for their own sustenance, to sell or exchange the surplus with the inhabitants of the plain for corn or other commodities.

In the patriarchal age of the world, when the people of the east had parcelled out the country into many separate states, some savage and others civilized, it is said of the Hebrews, that they went from one nation to another; from one kingdom to another people. In the middle ages, the same spirit prevailed over the west. Petty chiefs assumed independence, and formed a vast number of separate kingdoms. Reputed heretics, like the ancient Israelites, emigrated from place to place, taking up their abode only where they could enjoy the privileges of religious liberty.

The Pyrenean mountains, which separate France and Spain, extend from the Mediterranean sea to the Atlantic ocean, that is, at least two hundred miles, and in breadth at several places more than one hundred. The surface is, as may naturally be expected, wonderfully diversified. Hills rise upon hills, and mountains over mountains, some bare of verdure, and others crowned with forests of huge cork trees, oak, beech, chesnuts, and ever-greens. When travellers of taste pass over them, they are in raptures,



and seem at a loss for words to express what they behold. The landscape, say they, on every side is divine. More delightful prospects never existed even in the creative imagination of Claude Lorraine.\* In some places are bleak, perpendicular rocks and dangerous precipices; in others beautiful, fertile, and very extensive vallies, adorned with aloes, and wild pomegranates; enriched with olives, lemons, oranges, apples, corn, flax; and perfumed with aromatic herbs, and animated with venison and wild fowl. Numerous flocks of sheep and goats enliven the hills, manufacturers of wool inhabit the vallies, and corn and wine, flax and oil, hang on the slopes. Inexhaustible mines of the finest iron in the world abound there, and the forests supply them with plenty of timber. There are whole towns of smiths, who carry on the manufacture of all sorts of iron work, especially for the use of the military and navy, and their workmanship is much extolled. This chain of mountains runs from the Bay of Biscay to the Bay of Roses, and the sea-ports about each of them were accustomed to be crowded with inhabitants, commerce, plenty, and wealth.

A spectator, taking his stand on the top of the ridge of these mountains, will observe, that at the foot, on the Spanish side, lie Asturias, Old Castile, Arragon, and Catalonia; and on the French side, Guienne and Languedoc, Toulouse, Bearn, Alby, Roussillon, and Narbonne, all of which places were remarkable in the darkest times for harbouring Christians who were reputed heretics.† Indeed, from the borders of Spain, throughout the greatest part of the south of France, among and below the Alps, along the Rhine, and even to Bohemia, thousands of the disciples of Christ, as will hereafter be shewn, were found, even in the very worst of times, preserving the

\* Swinburne's Travels, ch. xliv.

† Robinson's Eccles. Researches, p. 280.

faith in its purity, adhering to the simplicity of Christian worship, patiently bearing the cross after Christ: men distinguished by their fear of God and obedience to his will, and persecuted only for righteousness' sake.

Voltaire has so justly and beautifully described the general state of Italy as it existed at a period some little time subsequent to that of which I am about to treat, that, I shall here introduce his words. "In the beautiful and trading cities of Italy," says he, "the people lived in ease and affluence. With them alone the sweets of life seemed to have taken up their residence, and riches and liberty inspired their genius and elevated their courage. Notwithstanding the dissensions that prevailed every where, they began to emerge from that brutality which had in a manner overwhelmed Europe after the decline of the Roman empire. The necessary arts had never been entirely lost. The artificers and merchants, whose humble station had protected them from the ambitious fury of the great, were like ants, who dug themselves peaceable and secure habitations, while the vultures and eagles of the world were tearing one another in pieces."\*

This pleasing picture, which, no doubt, is very correct, as it respects the civil affairs of men, is equally applicable to the inhabitants of Piedmont and the Pyrenees, as to those states of Italy of whom Voltaire speaks; but if applied to the concerns of the kingdom of heaven, the felicity resulting from it will be found to have been almost exclusively theirs, during several of the succeeding centuries. I shall not, however, with the view of justifying this remark, here anticipate occurrences which will come more properly under the reader's notice in prosecuting that branch of ecclesiastical history, on which we are about to enter.

\* General History, ch. 69.

The former chapter affords an ample insight into the gradual encroachments and domineering influence of the church of Rome, during the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries. But it ought to be noticed, that neither the prevailing corruptions of that church, nor the arrogant claims of its successive popes, were implicitly allowed by all the other bishops and churches, even in Italy itself. "In the year 590, the bishops of Italy and the Grisons (Swisserland), to the number of nine, rejected the communion of the Pope, as of an heretic. This schism had already continued from the year 553, and towards the close of the century, the emperor Maurice, having ordered them to be present at the council of Rome, they were dispensed with by the same emperor, upon their protesting that they could not communicate with Pope Gregory I.; so little were they persuaded at that time of the Pope's infallibility, that to lose communion with him was to lose the communion of the church, or that they held their ordinations from the hand of the Popes, and from the bishops subjected to their jurisdiction."\*

In the following century a firm and noble stand was made against the papal usurpations by Paulinus, bishop of the church of Aquileia, in Italy. This venerable man was born about the year 726, near Friuli; but of the earlier part of his life, we know little more than that he was in great favour with Charles the Great, king of France, and preached the gospel to the Pagans of Carinthia and Styria, and to the Avars, a nation of Huns. In the year 776, he was ordained bishop of Aquileia, in which office he continued labouring till his death, which took place in 804. He seems to have possessed a strong and an enlightened mind, for there are few of the abominations of his times which he does not appear to have

\* Dr. Allix's Remarks on the Ancient Churches of Piedmont, ch. v. p. 32.

combated. In the year 787, he, and some other Italian bishops agreed to condemn the decrees of the famous second council of Nice, which had established the worship of images,\* declaring it to be idolatrous, and that, too, notwithstanding the council had received the sanction of pope Adrian, who was present at its deliberations, and exerted all his authority to maintain its decisions. This shews that, at this time, the despotism of Antichrist was not universally owned, even throughout Italy itself. The city of Rome and its environs seem to have been at that period the most corrupt part of Christendom in Europe.

Amongst other corruptions which prevailed, the doctrine of transubstantiation then began to be generally propagated. Paulinus undertook to refute that absurdity, in a treatise on the eucharist, which he wrote at the request of Charles the Great, and which he dedicated to that monarch. He affirms that the eucharist was a morsel or bit of bread, and that it is either death or life to him that partakes of it, according as he hath or hath not faith in that which is signified by it. He pours the utmost contempt upon the sacrifice of the mass, opens up the scripture doctrine of Christ's priestly office, as after the order of Melchisedec, vindicates his incarnation and crucifixion as the true propitiatory sacrifice for sin, and thunders out the boldest anathemas against all human satisfactions, maintaining that the blood of none of those who have themselves been redeemed is capable of blotting out the least sin, for that this privilege comes alone through the Lord Jesus Christ. "The Son of God," says he, "our Almighty Lord, because he redeemed us by the price of his blood, is properly called the true Redeemer by all that are redeemed by him. He, I say,

\* See page 426.



was not redeemed, because he was never captive; but we are redeemed, who were captives sold under sin, and bound by the hand-writing that was against us, which he took away, blotting it out with his blood, which the blood of no other redeemer could do, and fixed it to his cross, openly triumphing over it in himself."

In opposition to the Arians, who attributed to Christ only an adopted Sonship, he thus illustrates John vi. 32—58. "Is it said, that he who doth not eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, hath not eternal life? "He that eats *my* flesh," saith Christ, "and drinks *my* blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day; my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." The power of raising up at the last day belongs to none but the true God; for the flesh and blood cannot be referred to his divine, but to his human nature, by which he is the Son of man. And yet if that Son of man, whose flesh and blood this is, (for that one and the same person is both the Son of God and Son of man) were not *really* God, his flesh and blood could not procure eternal life to those that eat them. Hence the evangelist John saith, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin." Moreover, whose flesh and blood is it that gives life to those that eat and drink them, but the Son of man's, whom God the Father hath sealed; who is the true and almighty Son of God. For HE, the bread of life, came down from heaven for us, and gives his life for the world, to the end that whosoever eats thereof, shall live for ever." In reference to Christ's intercession, he says, "He is called the Mediator, because he is a middle person between both the disagreeing parties, and reconciles both of them in one. Paul is not a mediator, but a faithful ambassador of the Mediator." He then quotes his words, "We are ambassadors for Christ,

praying you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." "Our advocate," says he, "is one that intercedes for those that are already reconciled, even as our Redeemer doth, when he shews his human nature to God the Father, in the unity of his person, being God-man. John doth not intercede for us, but declares Him (Jesus) to be the propitiation for our sins."

These extracts, which might be enlarged to a great extent, are sufficient to give the intelligent reader some idea of the doctrinal principles of Paulinus. He denied the supremacy of Peter over the rest of the apostles—lays it down as an inviolable maxim of Christianity, that God alone is the object of our faith, in opposition to what was taught in the church of Rome—and, in short, to quote the words of a learned writer,—“Whoever examines the opinions of this bishop, will easily perceive that he denies what the church of Rome affirms with relation to many of its leading tenets, and affirms what the church of Rome denies: and whatever colourable pretexts may be employed, it will be difficult not to perceive this opposition through them all.” \*

But the succession of events now leads me to call the reader's attention to the life and labours of **CLAUDE, BISHOP OF TURIN**. This truly great man, who has not improperly been called the first Protestant reformer, was born in Spain. In his early years he was a chaplain in the court of the emperor Lewis the Meek (Ludovicus Pius, king of France and emperor of the West) and was even then in high repute for his knowledge of the scriptures, and his first-rate talents as a preacher; in consequence of which, says the Abbe Fleury, Lewis perceiving the deplorable ignorance of a great part of Italy, in regard to the doctrines of the gospel, and desirous of pro-

\* Allix's Remarks, p. 52.

viding the churches of Piedmont with one who might stem the growing torrent of image worship, promoted Claude to the see of Turin, about the year 817. In this event, the attentive reader will hereafter perceive the hand of God, so ordering the course of events in his holy providence as, in the very worst of times, to prepare, "a seed to serve him, and a generation to call him blessed." The expectations of the emperor were amply justified in the labours of Claude ; by his writings he ably illustrated the sacred scriptures, and drew the attention of multitudes to their plain and simple meaning, unadulterated by the corrupt glosses of the Catholic priesthood. "In truth," says Fleury, himself a Catholic writer, "he began to preach and instruct with great application." His first zeal was directed against images, relics, pilgrimages, and crosses. It is not to be supposed that efforts such as his, directed against the prevailing superstitions of the age, should produce no ostensible effect ; the monks were presently up in arms against him, reviling him as a blasphemer and a heretic, and his own people became so refractory that, in a little time, he went about in fear of his life. Supported, however, by the testimony of a good conscience, and a confidence in the goodness of his cause, Claude persevered, and wrote comments on several books of scripture, of which, unfortunately, the only one that has been printed is his exposition of the epistle to the Galatians. "He bore a noble testimony," says Mr. Robinson (in his *Ecclesiastical Researches*, p. 447) against the prevailing errors of his time, and was undoubtedly a most respectable character."

Of one whose reputation stands so high, it cannot be necessary to enter upon any formal vindication against the calumnies of his opponents, but it may be satisfactory to the reader to have before him a summary of the principles which he held, and for which he nobly con-

tended. Let it be observed then, that, throughout the whole of his writings, he maintains that “Jesus Christ is the alone head of the church.” This, the reader will perceive, struck immediately at the root of the first principle of Popery—the vicarious office of the bishop of Rome. He utterly discards the doctrine of human worthiness in the article of justification, in such a manner as overthrows all the subtle distinctions of Papists on the subject. He pronounces anathemas against traditions in matters of religion, and thus drew the attention of men to the word of God, and that alone, as the ground of a Christian’s faith. He maintained, that men are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law—the doctrine which Luther, seven hundred years afterwards, so ably contended for, and which so excessively provoked the advocates of the church of Rome. He contended that the church was subject to error, and denied that prayers for the dead can be of any use to those that have demanded them; while he lashed, in the severest manner, the superstition and idolatry which every where abounded under the countenance and authority of the see of Rome.

The writings of Claude were voluminous; for he was indefatigable in explaining the scriptures, and in opposing the torrent of superstition. He wrote three books upon Genesis in the year 815, and also a Commentary on the Gospel by Matthew, of which there are several copies in England. He wrote a Commentary on Exodus in the year 821, and another on Leviticus in 823, besides which, he wrote comments *on all the apostolic epistles*, which have been since found, in manuscript in two vols. in the Abbey of Fleury, near Orleans, in France. These latter were drawn up at the express request of the emperor, Ludovicus Pius, to whom he dedicated his Commentary on the Epistle to



the Ephesians; also of Justus, bishop of Charroux, and of Dructeramnus, an abbot of celebrity, to whom he dedicated his Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians. As a specimen of his style and sentiments, the reader may take the following extracts from his illustration of the Lord's supper.

“The apostles being sat down at table, Jesus Christ took bread, blessed and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying to them, Take, and eat—this is my body. The ancient solemnities of the passover, which were used in commemoration of the deliverance of the children of Israel, being ended, he passeth on to the new, because he would have the same to be celebrated in his church, as a memorial of the mystery of her redemption, and to substitute the sacrament of his body, and of his blood, instead of the flesh and blood of the paschal lamb; and to shew that it was he himself to whom God had sworn, and shall never repent, “Thou art the eternal Priest according to the order of Melchisedec.” Moreover, he himself breaks the bread which he gives the disciples, that he might represent and make it appear, that the breaking of his body would not be contrary to his inclination, or without his willingness to die; but as he himself elsewhere says, that he had power to give his life, and to deliver it up himself, as well as to take it again, and raise himself from the dead. He blessed the bread before he brake it, to teach us that he intended to make a sacrament of it. When he drew nigh to the time of his death and passion, it is said, that, having taken the bread and cup, he gave thanks to his Eternal Father. He who had taken upon him to expiate the iniquities of others, gave thanks to his Father, without having done any thing that was worthy of death: He blesseth it with profound humility at the very time that he saw himself laden with stripes, no doubt to teach us that sub-

mission which we ought to exercise [under the chastening hand of God.] If he, who was innocent, endured, with meekness and tranquillity, the stripes due to the iniquities of others, it was to teach and instruct us what we ought to do when corrected for our own transgressions. In regard to his saying, "This is my blood of the New Testament," it is to teach us to distinguish between the new covenant and the old—the latter of which was consecrated by the effusion of the blood of goats and oxen, as the [Jewish] lawgiver said at the sprinkling of it, "This is the blood of the covenant that God hath commanded you:" For it was necessary that the patterns of true things should be purified by these, but that the heavenly places should be purified with more excellent sacrifices, according to what the apostle Paul declares throughout his whole epistle to the Hebrews, where he makes a distinction between the law and the gospel. Jesus Christ, when about to suffer, says, "I will drink no more of this fruit of the vine, until the day that I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." As if he had plainly said, "I will no longer take delight in the carnal ceremonies of the synagogue, amongst the number of which, the great festival of the Paschal lamb was one of the chiefest; for the time of my resurrection is at hand; that day will arrive, when I shall be lifted up to my heavenly kingdom, even to a state of glorious immortality, where I shall be filled together with you, with a new joy for the salvation of my people, which shall be born again in the spring of one and the same grace. The "new wine," may also import the immortality of our renewed bodies; for when he saith, "I will drink it with you," he promises them the resurrection of their bodies, in order to their being clothed with immortality."

In the year 828, Claude was attacked most fiercely by a French monkish writer of the name of Dungalus, who

censures him for taking upon himself, after a lapse of more than eight hundred and twenty years, to reprove those things that had hitherto been in continual use, as if there had been none before himself that had ever had any zeal for religion. About the same time another writer of the same school, whose name was Theodemirus, wrote to him, giving him to understand that his opinions and behaviour every where gave great offence. His answer to these writers was such as made it quite unnecessary for him to write another treatise on the same or a similar occasion; and in the following extracts from it, the reader may almost persuade himself that he is perusing the pages of the immortal Luther.

“ I have received,” says he to Theodemirus, “ by a special messenger, your letter, with the articles, wholly stuffed with babbling and fooleries. You declare in these articles, that you have been troubled that my fame was spread not only throughout all Italy, but also in Spain and elsewhere; as if I were preaching a new doctrine, or setting myself up as the founder of a new sect, contrary to the rules of the *ancient* Catholic faith, which is an absolute falsehood. But it is no wonder that the members of Satan should talk of me at this rate, since they called [Christ] our Head a deceiver, and one that had a devil, &c. For, I teach no new heresy, but keep myself to the *pure truth*, preaching and publishing nothing but that. On the contrary, as far as in me lies, I have repressed, opposed, cast down, and destroyed, and do still repress, oppose, and destroy, to the utmost of my power, all sects, schisms, superstitions, and heresies, and shall never cease so to do, God being my helper, as far as in me lies.

“ When I came to Turin, I found all the churches full of abominations and images; and because I began to destroy what every one adored, every one began to open

his mouth against me. These kind of people against whom we have undertaken to defend the church of God, tell us, if you write upon the wall, or draw the images of Paul, of Jupiter, of Saturn, or Mercury, neither are the one of these Gods, nor the other apostles, and neither the one nor the other of these are men, and therefore the name is changed. But surely if we ought to worship them, we ought rather to worship them during their life time, than as thus represented as the portraits of beasts, or (what is yet more true) of stone or wood, which have neither life, feeling, nor reason. For if we may neither worship nor serve the works of God's hand, how much less may we worship the works of men's hands, and pay adoration to them in honour of those whose remembrance we say they are? For if the image you worship is not God, wherefore dost thou bow down to false images; and wherefore, like a slave, dost thou bend thy body to pitiful shrines, and to the work of men's hands? Certainly, not only he who serves and honours visible images, but also whatsoever creature else, whether heavenly or earthly, spiritual or corporeal, serves the same instead of God, and from it expects the salvation of his soul, which he ought to look for from God alone. All such are of the number of those concerning whom the apostle said, that "they worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator."

"But mark what the followers of superstition and false religion allege! They tell us it is in commemoration and honour of our Saviour that we serve, honour, and adore the cross—persons whom nothing in the Saviour pleaseth, but that which was pleasing to the ungodly, viz. the reproach of his sufferings and the token of his death. Hereby they evince that they perceive only of him, what the wicked saw and perceived of him, whether Jews, or heathens, who do not see his resurrection, and do not



consider him but as altogether swallowed up of death, without regarding what the apostle says, "We know Jesus Christ no longer according to the flesh."

"God commands one thing, and these people do quite the contrary. God commands us to bear our cross, and not to worship it; but these are all for worshipping it, whereas they do not bear it at all—to serve God after this manner, is to go a-whoring from him. For if we ought to adore the cross, because Christ was fastened to it, how many other things are there which touched Jesus Christ, and which he made according to the flesh? Did he not continue nine months in the womb of the virgin? Why do they not then on the same score worship all that are virgins, because a virgin brought forth Jesus Christ? Why do they not adore mangers and old clothes, because he was laid in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes? Why do they not adore fishing-boats, because he slept in one of them, and [from it] preached to the multitudes, and caused a net to be cast out, wherewith was caught a miraculous quantity of fish? Let them adore asses, because he entered into Jerusalem upon the foal of an ass; and lambs, because it is written of him, "Behold the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." But these sorts of men would rather eat live lambs than worship their images! Why do they not worship lions, because he is called "the lion of the tribe of Judah?" or rocks, since it is said "and that rock was Christ?" or thorns, because he was crowned with them? or lances, because one of them pierced his side?

"All these things are ridiculous, and rather to be lamented than set forth in writing; but we are compelled to state them in opposition to fools, and to declaim against those hearts of stone, which the arrows and sentences of the word of God cannot pierce. Come to yourselves again, ye miserable transgressors; why are

ye 'gone astray from the truth, and why, having become vain, are ye fallen in love with vanity? Why do you crucify again the Son of God, and expose him to open shame, and by these means make souls, by troops, to become the companions of devils, estranging them from their Creator, by the horrible sacrilege of your images and likenesses, and thus precipitating them into everlasting damnation?

“As for your reproaching me, that I hinder men from running in pilgrimage to Rome, I demand of you yourself, whether thou thinkest that to go to Rome is to repent or to do penance? If indeed it be, why then hast thou for so long a time damned so many souls by confining them in thy monastery, and whom thou hast taken into it, that they might there do penance, if it be so that the way to do penance is to go to Rome, and yet thou hast hindered them? What hast thou to say against this sentence, “Whosoever shall lay a stone of stumbling before any of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck, and he cast into the bottom of the sea?”

“We know very well that this passage of the gospel is quite misunderstood—“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven;” under the pretence of which words, the stupid and ignorant multitude, destitute of all spiritual knowledge, betake themselves to Rome, in the hope of acquiring eternal life. But the ministry [of the gospel] belongs to all the true presbyters and pastors of the church, who discharge the same as long as they are in this world, and when they have paid the debt of death, others succeed in their places, who possess the same authority and power.

“Return, O ye blind, to your light; return to him who enlightens every man that cometh into the world.

All of you, however numerous ye may be, who depart from this light, ye walk in darkness, and know not whither ye go, for the darknes has put out your eyes. If we are to believe God when he promiseth, how much more when he swears, and saith, If Noah, Daniel, and Job, (that is, if the saints whom you call upon, were endowed with holiness, righteousness, and merit equal to theirs) they shall neither deliver son nor daughter; and it is for this end he makes the declaration, that none might place their confidence, in either the merits or the intercession of saints. Understand ye this, ye people without understanding? Ye fools, when will ye be wise? Ye who run to Rome, there to seek for the intercession of an apostle.

“The fifth thing for which you reproach me is—that you are much displeased, because “the apostolic lord” (for so you are pleased to nominate the late Pope Paschal) had honoured me with this charge. But you should remember that he only is apostolic who is the keeper and guardian of the apostle’s doctrine, and not he who boasts himself of being seated in the chair of the apostle, and in the mean time neglects to acquit himself of the apostolic charge, for the Lord saith that the scribes and pharisees sat in Moses’ seat.”\*

From these extracts, some estimate may be formed of the principles and character of Claude of Turin—a name less known in the present day, and a character less honoured, than they deserve. By his preaching, and by his valuable writings, he disseminated the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven—and, although the seed were as a grain of mustard seed cast into the earth, the glorious effects ultimately produced by it justify the truth of our Lord’s parable, that when it is grown up, it produceth a tree, whose branches are so ramified and extended, that

\* Allix’s Remarks, ch. ix. p. 64—77.

the birds of the air come and lodge therein. His doctrine grew exceedingly—the vallies of Piedmont were in time filled with his disciples, and while midnight darkness sat enthroned over almost every portion of the globe the WALDENSES, which is only another name for the inhabitants of these vallies, preserved the gospel among them in its native purity, and rejoiced in its glorious light.

Claude continued his labours at Turin at least twenty years, for he was alive in eight hundred and thirty-nine—but we have no documents existing that enable us to trace out the operation of his principles in the formation of independent churches, in a state of separation from the world; and it is very probable that during the life of this venerable man, but few attempts of this kind were made. The Catholic writers, particularly Genebrard in his *Chronology*, and also Rorengo, have explicitly owned, that “the vallies of Piedmont, which belonged to the bishoprick of Turin, preserved the opinions of Claude in the ninth and tenth centuries;” and, in the account of the PATERINES, which we shall soon arrive at, we shall see how extensively they spread not only in Piedmont, but throughout the neighbouring country of the Milanese. “It is admitted,” says Mr. Robinson, “that if the Waldenses had reasoned consequentially on the principles of their master, they would, after his death, have dissented, but there is no evidence that they did reason so.” He, therefore, is of opinion, that some considerable time elapsed (probably half a century) before they broke off all communion with the established church.

It will no doubt appear a matter of surprise to some, that an opposer so zealous and intrepid as Claude certainly was, should have escaped the fury of the church of Rome. But it should be remembered, that the despotism of that wicked court had not yet arrived at its ple-



nitude of power and intolerance. To which may be added as another very probable reason, that some of the European monarchs viewed the domineering influence of the bishops of Rome with considerable jealousy, and gladly extended their protection to those whose labours had a tendency to reduce it; such was at this time the case with the court of France in regard to Claude. It is, nevertheless, sufficiently manifest, that this great man held his life in continual jeopardy. “In standing up,” says he, “for the confirmation and defence of the truth, I am become a reproach to my neighbours, to that degree, that those who see us do not only scoff at us, but point at us one to another. But God, the father of mercies, and author of all consolation, hath comforted us in all our afflictions, that we may be able, in like manner, to comfort those that are cast down with sorrow and affliction. We rely upon the protection of him who hath armed and fortified us with the armour of righteousness and of faith, the tried shield of our salvation.”\*

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## SECTION II.

*The state of the Catholic Church from the ninth to the twelfth century. A. D. 800—1200.*

THE ninth and tenth centuries of the Christian æra, are universally allowed to form the lowest point of depression to which the profession of the religion of Jesus was reduced in regard to darkness and superstition. It will not, therefore, be necessary to detain the reader long from subjects of a more pleasing nature, by dwelling very minutely upon the state of things during this period.

\* Collection of his Works, tom. i. quoted by Dr. Allix, p. 72.

The fact is acknowledged by the papists themselves; by Caranza, Genebrard, Baronius, and others, who describe the tenth century as *a monstrous age*. The language of the latter writer indeed is so remarkable, that it deserves to be quoted. Alluding to Psalm xliv. 23. he says, "Christ was then, as it would appear, in a deep sleep, and the ship was covered with waves; and what seemed worse, when the Lord was thus asleep, there were no disciples, by their cries to awaken him, being themselves all fast asleep." It may not, however be without its use to take a rapid glance at the proceedings of the court of Rome, and mark the stages by which the antichristian power arrived at its zenith.

On entering upon this subject, there is one remarkable circumstance which merits the reader's notice as he proceeds, for the fact is worthy of his attention. It has fallen to our lot, through the good providence of God, to see this monstrous power, which for a succession of ages tyrannized over the bodies and souls of men, virtually annihilated by the power of France. What the reader should particularly remark is, that it was by the aid of that same power, in a very especial manner, that the "Man of Sin" was elevated to his throne. It can scarcely be necessary to recall to his recollection the intrigues between the popes and French monarchs, of which I have given a short detail in a former section.\* The sequel will appear to be quite in character; but we must go back a little to trace the subject in order.

On the death of Pepin, king of France, in the year 768, his dominions were divided between his two sons, Charles and Carloman, the latter of whom dying two years afterwards, Charles became sole monarch of that country. In his general character, he somewhat resembled our English Alfred, and is deservedly ranked

\* See page 423.

amongst the most illustrious sovereigns that have appeared—a rare instance of a monarch, who united his own glory with the happiness of his people. In private life he was amiable; an affectionate father, a fond husband, and a generous friend. Though engaged in many wars, he was far from neglecting the arts of peace, the welfare of his subjects, or the cultivation of his own mind. Government, morals, religion, and letters, were his constant pursuits. He frequently convened the national assemblies, for regulating the affairs both of church and state. His attention extended to the most distant corner of his empire, and to all ranks of men. His house was a model of economy, and his person of simplicity and true grandeur. “For shame,” he would say to some of his nobles, who were more finely dressed than the occasion required, “learn to dress like men, and let the world judge of your rank by your merit, not your dress. Leave silks and finery to women, or reserve them for those days of pomp and ceremony when robes are worn for show, not use.” He was fond of the company of learned men, and assembled them from all parts of Europe, forming in his palace a kind of royal academy, of which he condescended to become a member, and of which he made Alcuin, our learned countryman,\* the head; at the same time honouring him as his companion and particular favourite. “The dignity of his person, the length of his

\* For the honour of our country, I here record a few particulars concerning Alcuin. He was born in the north of England, and educated at York, under the direction of Archbishop Egbert, whom in his letters he frequently styles his beloved master, and the clergy of York the companions of his youthful studies. Being sent on an embassy by Offa, king of Mercia, to the emperor Charlemagne, his talents and his virtues so won upon the latter, that he contracted a high esteem for him, and a mutual friendship ensued. Charles earnestly solicited, and at length prevailed upon him to settle in his court and become his preceptor in the sciences. He accordingly instructed that prince in rhetoric, logic, mathe-

reign, the prosperity of his arms, the vigour of his government, and the reverence of distant nations, distinguish Charles from the royal crowd: and Europe dates a new æra from his restoration of the western empire.”\*

But with all these amiable traits in the character of Charles the Great (or Charle-magne, as he is usually

matics, and divinity, and was treated with so much kindness and familiarity by the emperor, that by way of eminence, the courtiers called him “the emperor’s delight.”

Alcuin having passed many years in the most intimate familiarity with Charlemagne, at length, with great difficulty, obtained leave to retire to his Abbey of St. Martins at Tours. Here he kept up a constant correspondence with the emperor, and their letters evince their mutual regard for religion and learning, and their anxiety to promote them in the most munificent manner. In one of these letters, which Dr. Henry has translated, there is a passage which throws some light on the learning of the times. “The employments of your Alcuin,” says he to the emperor; “in his retreat, are suited to his humble sphere, but they are neither inglorious nor unprofitable. I spend my time in the halls of St. Martin, in teaching some of the noble youths under my care the intricacies of grammar, and inspiring them with a taste for the learning of the ancients; in describing to others the order and revolutions of those shining orbs which adorn the azure vault of heaven; and, in explaining to others the mysteries of divine wisdom, which are contained in the holy scriptures; suiting my instructions to the views and capacities of my scholars, that I may train up many to be ornaments to the church of God and to the court of your imperial majesty. In doing this, I find a great want of several things, particularly of those excellent books in all arts and sciences, which I enjoyed in my native country, through the expense and care of my great master Egbert. May it, therefore, please your majesty, animated with the most ardent love of learning, to permit me to send some of your young gentlemen into England, to procure for us those books which we want, and transplant the flowers of Britain into France, that their fragrance may no longer be confined to York, but may perfume the palaces of Tours.” Charlemagne often solicited Alcuin to return to court, but he excused himself, and remained at Tours until his death, May 19, 804. He understood the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages extremely well; was an excellent orator, philosopher, and mathematician. His works, which consist of 53 treatises, homilies, commentaries, letters, poems, &c. are comprised in 2 vols. folio.

\* Gibbon, vol. ix. ch. 49.



called) a superstitious attachment to the see of Rome, unhappily mingled itself with all his policy, and led him to engage in theological disputes and quibbles unworthy of his character.\* It would have been well for his memory, indeed, had he stopped there; but a blind zeal for the propagation of Christianity, which extinguished his natural feelings, made him guilty of severities which shock humanity. One of the leading objects of his reign, was the conversion of the Saxons, a nation of Germany, to the Christian faith. He seems to have considered a reception of the mild doctrines of Christianity as the best means of taming a savage people, and to accomplish this he sent his armies to invade their country. After a number of battles gallantly fought, and many cruelties committed on both sides, the Saxons were totally subjected; but as they were no less tenacious of their religious than of their civil liberty, persecution marched in the train of war, and stained with blood the fetters of slavery. Four thousand five hundred of their principal

\* The following short letter written by Charlemagne, and addressed to Odilbert, Archbishop of Metz, while it exhibits a striking proof of this monarch's concern to promote attention to the means of instruction and learning, is not less deserving attention on account of the disclosure which it makes of the state of religion in his day.

“ We have often wished,” says he, “ if we could accomplish it, to converse with you and your colleagues familiarly on the utility of the holy church of God. But although we are not ignorant of the real concern with which you watch over divine things, yet we must not omit, while we trust in the co-operating influence of the Holy Spirit, by our authority to exhort and admonish you to labour in word and doctrine in the church of God, more and more studiously, and with watchful perseverance; so that by your pious diligence the word of God may spread and flourish extensively, and the number of the Christian people may be multiplied, to the praise and glory of our Saviour. Wherefore we desire to know in writing, or from your own mouth, in what manner you and your clergy teach and instruct both those who are candidates for the holy office of the ministry, and the people committed to you in the Sacrament of Baptism. That is,

men, because they refused, on a particular occasion, to give up their celebrated general, Witikind, were ordered to be massacred—an instance of severity scarcely to be paralleled in the history of mankind, especially if we consider that the Saxons were not the natural subjects of Charles, but an independent people struggling for freedom. He compelled the Saxons, *under pain of death*, to receive baptism; condemned to the severest punishments the breakers of Lent, and everywhere substituted force for persuasion.

As the little learning which, at that period, remained among mankind, was monopolized by the clergy, it cannot excite our surprise that they obtained the most signal marks of his favour. He established the payment of

Why does a child first become a Catechuman? and what is a Catechuman? And so of other things in their order. Of examination, what is it? Of the creed; what is the interpretation, or meaning of it among the Latins? Of belief, in what manner are we to believe in God the Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ his Son, and in the Holy Spirit? &c. Of renouncing Satan, and his works and pomp, what is this renunciation? What is the meaning of breathing on the person, and exorcising him? Why does the Catechuman receive salt? Why are the ears touched? the breast anointed with oil? the arms crossed? and the breast and arms washed? Why are white garments put on? Why is the head anointed with the holy chrism? Why is it covered with a mystical vail? And why is conformation made with the body and blood of Christ? All these things we require you by careful study to examine, and to report an accurate account of them to us in writing; and further, to state whether you so maintain and preach these things, and govern your own life by the doctrines which you preach.” *Rankin’s History of France*, Vol. I. p. 406. Now all this had been well, if the Scriptures had said any thing about these things; but it was unfortunate for the zeal of this monarch, that the things here enumerated, and about which he was concerned, were almost entirely the corruptions of Christianity, with which that divine institution has nothing to do except to condemn them as the doctrines and commandments of men. One cannot but feel curious to know what kind of answers the Archbishop would return to these sage questions.

tithes, and admitted the clergy into the national assemblies, associating them with the secular nobles in the administration of justice ; in return for which, they honoured him with the most marked distinctions, permitting him to sit in councils purely ecclesiastical. Accordingly, in the year 794 we find him seated on a throne in the council of Frankfort, with one of the pope's legates on each hand, and three hundred bishops waiting his nod.

The object of that council was to investigate the sentiments of two Spanish bishops, who, to refute the accusation of Polytheism, brought against the Christians by the Jews and Mahommedans, gave up the proper divinity of Jesus Christ, and maintained that he was the Son of God only by adoption. The monarch opened the assembly, and proposed the condemnation of this heresy. The council decided conformably to his will ; and in a letter to the churches of Spain, in consequence of that decision, Charles expressed himself in these remarkable words : “ You entreated me to judge of myself ; I have done so. I have assisted as an auditor and an arbiter in an assembly of bishops ; we have examined, and by the grace of God, we have settled what *must* be believed ! ”

It was during the reign of Charles the Great, that the empress Irené convened the second council of Nice\* for the purpose of re-establishing the use of images, which Leo IV. and his son Constantine Copronymus had exerted themselves so much to suppress. That council accordingly decreed that we ought to render to images an honorary worship, but not a real adoration, the latter being due to God alone. Whether designedly or not, but so it was, that in the translation of the Acts of this coun-

\* See page 426.

cil, which pope Adrian sent into France, the meaning of the article which respected images was entirely perverted, for it ran thus: "I receive and honour images according to that adoration which I pay to the Trinity." Charles was so shocked at this impiety, that in the effervescence of his zeal, and with the aid of the clergy, he drew up a treatise, called the Caroline books, in which he treated the Nicene council with the utmost contempt and abuse. He transmitted his publication to Adrian, desiring him to excommunicate the empress and her son. The pope excused himself on the score of images, rectifying the mistake upon which Charles had proceeded; but at the same time insinuated, that he would declare Irené and Constantine heretics, unless they restored some lands which formerly belonged to the church. He also took the opportunity of hinting at certain projects which he had formed for the exaltation of the Romish church, and of the French monarchy.\* "I cannot," said he, "after what the council of Nice has done, declare Irené and her son heretics; but I shall declare them to be such, if they do not restore to me my patrimony in Sicily."

In the year 796, Leo. III. who had succeeded Adrian in the papacy, transmitted to Charles the Roman standard, requesting him to send some person to receive the oath of fidelity from the Romans, an instance of submission with which that monarch was highly flattered. Accordingly in the year 800, we find Charles at Rome, where he passed six days in private conferences with the pope. On Christmas day, as the king assisted at mass in St. Peter's church, in the midst of the ecclesiastical ceremonies, and while upon his knees before the altar, the Pope advanced and put an imperial crown up-

\* Millot's Elements of General History, part ii.



on his head. As soon as the people perceived it, they exclaimed, “ Long life and victory to Charles Augustus, crowned by the hand of God ! Long live the great and pious emperor of the Romans.” The supreme pontiff then conducted him to a magnificent throne, which had been prepared for the occasion, and as soon as he was seated, paid him those honours which his predecessors had been accustomed to pay to the Roman emperors. Leo now presented him with the imperial mantle, on being invested with which, Charles returned to his palace amidst the acclamations of the multitude.

Favours such as these that were conferred by the pontiff on the French monarch, imperiously called for an adequate return, and it is due to Charlemagne to say that he was by no means deficient in gratitude. His name, and those of his successors, are consecrated as the saviours and benefactors of the Roman church. The Greek emperor had abdicated or forfeited his right to the exarchate of Ravenna, and the sword of Pepin, the father of Charles, had no sooner wrested it from the grasp of Astolphus, than he conferred it on the Roman pontiff, as a recompence “ for the remission of his sins and the salvation of his soul.” The splendid donation was granted in supreme and absolute dominion, and the world then beheld, for the first time, a Christian bishop invested with the prerogatives of a temporal prince ; the choice of magistrates, and the exercise of justice ; the imposition of taxes, and the wealth of the palace of Ravenna.

“ Perhaps,” says Gibbon, “ the humility of a Christian priest should have rejected an earthly kingdom which it was not easy for him to govern without renouncing the virtues of his profession.” I feel no disposition to controvert the justice of this remark ; but humility does not appear to have been a very prominent trait in the charac-

ters of the Roman pontiffs ; and the profuse liberality of the French kings, at this time, was not much calculated to promote it among them. By their bounty, the ancient patrimony of the church, which consisted of farms and houses, was converted into the temporal dominion of cities and provinces. The cities and islands which had formerly been annexed to the exarchate of Ravenna, were now also, by the gratitude of Charles, yielded to the pope, to enlarge the circle of the ecclesiastical state ; and the new emperor lived to behold in his ecclesiastical ally, a greatness which, in the cool moments of reflection, he was unable to contemplate without jealousy. But Charles died in the year 814, at Aix-la-Chapelle, his usual residence, in the seventy-second year of his age, and the forty-sixth of his reign. He had previously associated his son Louis with him in the administration of government ; and, as if this great man had foreseen the approaching usurpations of the church, he placed the imperial crown upon the altar, and ordered the prince to put it on his own head, thereby intimating that he held it only of God.

The young prince, though very amiable in his disposition and manners, appears to have been much inferior to his father in strength of mind. I have already had occasion to mention him in a former section as the friend and patron of Claude of Turin. His piety and parental fondness are praised by historians, but his abilities were inadequate to the support of so great a weight of empire. He rendered himself odious to the clergy, by attempting to reform certain abuses among them, not foreseeing that this powerful body would not pay the same deference to his authority, which had been yielded to the superior capacity of his father. Three years after his accession to the throne, he admitted his eldest son, Lothaire, to a participation of the French and German territories, de-

clared his son Pepin, king of Aquitaine, and Louis king of Bavaria. This division gave offence to his nephew, Bernard, at that time king of Italy, who revolted, and levied war against his uncle, in contempt of his imperial authority, to which he was subject—a rebellious conduct, in which he was encouraged by the archbishop of Milan and the bishop of Cremona. Louis, on this occasion, acted with vigour. He raised a powerful army, and was preparing to cross the Alps, when Bernard was abandoned by his troops, and the unfortunate prince, being made prisoner, was condemned to lose his head. His uncle mitigated the sentence to the loss of his eyes, but the unhappy prince died three days after the punishment was inflicted; and Louis, to prevent future troubles, ordered three natural sons of Charlemagne to be shut up in a convent.

In a little time the emperor was seized with keen remorse for his conduct. He accused himself of the murder of his nephew, and of tyrannic cruelty to his brothers. In this melancholy humour he was encouraged by the monks; and it at last grew to such a height, that he impeached himself in an assembly of the states, and requested the bishops to enjoin him public penance. The clergy, now sensible of his weakness, set no bounds to their usurpations. The popes concluded that they might do any thing under so pious a prince. They did not wait for the emperor's confirmation of their election; the bishops exalted themselves above the throne, and the whole fraternity of the Catholic clergy claimed an exemption from all civil jurisdiction. Even the monks, while they pretended to renounce the world, seemed to aspire to the government of it.

In the year 822, the three sons of Louis were associated in a rebellion against their father,—an unnatural crime, in which they were encouraged by some of the

reigning clergy. The emperor, abandoned by his army, was made prisoner; and in all probability would have lost his crown had not the nobility pitied their humbled sovereign, and by sowing dissension among the three brothers, contrived to restore him to his dignity. In 832, the three brothers formed a new league against their father, and Gregory IV. then pope, went to France in the army of Lothaire, the eldest brother, under pretence of accommodating matters, but in reality with an intention of employing against the emperor that power which he derived from him, happy in the opportunity of asserting the supremacy and independence of the Holy See. The presence of the pope, in those days of superstition, was of itself sufficient to determine the fate of Louis. After a deceitful negociation, and an interview with Gregory on the part of Lothaire, the unfortunate emperor found himself at the mercy of his rebellious sons. He was deposed in a tumultuous assembly, and Lothaire proclaimed in his stead; after which infamous transaction the pope returned to Rome.

To give stability to this revolution, and at the same time to conceal the deformity of their own conduct, the bishops of Lothaire's faction had recourse to a curious artifice. "A penitent," said they, "is incapable of all civil offices; a royal penitent must therefore be incapable of reigning; let us subject Louis to a perpetual penance, and he can never reascend the throne." He was accordingly arraigned in an assembly of the states, by Ebbo, archbishop of Rheims, and condemned to do penance for life.

Louis was then prisoner in a monastery at Soissons, and being greatly intimidated, he patiently submitted to a ceremony no less solemn than degrading. He prostrated himself on a hair cloth, which was spread before



the altar, and owned himself guilty of the charges brought against him, in the presence of many bishops, canons, and monks—Lothaire being also present, that he might enjoy the sight of his father's humiliation. Nor was this all; the degraded emperor was compelled to read aloud a written confession, in which he was made to accuse himself of sacrilege and murder; and to enumerate among his crimes, the marching of troops in Lent, calling an assembly on Holy Thursday, and taking up arms to defend himself against his rebellious children!. So easy is it for superstition to transform into crimes the most innocent, and even the most necessary actions. After having made this humiliating confession, Louis, at the command of the archbishop, laid aside his sword and belt, divested himself of his royal robes, put on the penitential sackcloth, and retired to the cell that was assigned him.

But the feelings of nature, and the voice of humanity, at length prevailed over the prejudices of the age and the policy of the clergy. Lothaire became an object of general abhorrence, and his father of compassion. His two brothers united against him, in behalf of that father whom they had contributed to humble. The nobility returned to their obedience, paying homage to Louis as their lawful sovereign; and the ambitious Lothaire was obliged to crave mercy in the sight of the whole army, at the feet of a parent and an emperor, whom he had lately insulted. Louis died in the year 840 near Mentz, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the twenty-seventh of his reign, leaving to his unnatural son Lothaire a crown, a sword, and a very rich sceptre. The bishop of Mentz observing that he had left nothing to his son Louis, reminded him that at the least, forgiveness was his duty; "Yes, I forgive him," cried the dying prince, with great

emotion; "but tell him from me that he ought to seek forgiveness of God, for bringing my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave."\*

Lothaire succeeded his father in the imperial dignity, and, after a reign of fifteen years, took the habit of a monk, that, according to the language of those times, he might atone for his crimes, and though he had lived a tyrant, die a saint. In this pious disguise he expired, before he had worn it a week.

His father Louis, by a second marriage, had a son who was afterwards known by the name of Charles the Bald. At the time of his father's death he was only seventeen years of age; but his father, in bequeathing the empire to Lothaire, had stipulated for a portion of territory to his youngest child, and the former to fulfil the wishes of his indulgent father and intreaties of a fond mother, consented to resign to him a part of his territories. But scarcely was Charles warm in his seat, when he conspired with his brother Louis to dispossess Lothaire of the empire. Here fraternal hatred appeared in all its horrors. A battle was fought at Fontenoy, in Burgundy, than which, few engagements that are upon record were more bloody, for 100,000 men are said to have fallen on the spot.† Lothaire was defeated, and obliged to abandon France to the armies of his victorious brothers. To secure their conquest the latter applied to the clergy, and with the more confidence of success, as Lothaire, in order to raise his troops with greater expedition, had promised the Saxons the liberty of renouncing Christianity, the very idea of which was abhorred by the church of Rome. The bishops assembled at Aix-la-Chapelle, and after examining the misconduct

\* Vita Ludov. Pii. passim:

† Gibbon's Rome, vol. ix. ch. 49.

of the emperor, inquired of the two princes, whether they chose to follow his example, or to govern *according to the laws of God*--by which they meant, in enforcing Christianity upon the Saxons. Their answer may be easily anticipated. "Receive then the kingdom by the divine authority," added the prelates: "we exhort you, we command you to receive it." But Lothaire, by means of his indulgence to the Saxons, and other expedients, was enabled to raise a new army, and to recover his throne.\*

Nothing is more clear, than that the clergy now aspired to the right of disposing of crowns, which they founded on the ancient Jewish practice of anointing kings. They had recourse to the most miserable fictions and sophisms to render themselves independent. They refused to take the oath of fidelity, "because sacred hands could not, without abomination, submit to hands impure!" One usurpation led to another; abuse constituted right—a quibble appeared a divine law. Ignorance sanctified every thing, and the most enormous usurpations of the clergy obtained a ready sanction from the slavish superstition of the laity. One very popular argument which the former much insisted on was, that the splendour of *their* dignity was to the majesty of the emperors and kings as the effulgence of the sun to the borrowed light of the moon; and therefore they demanded and extorted from crowned heads the most extravagant marks of respect and the most debasing humiliations. They trumped up a collection of forged acts, known at present by the name of "*The DECRETALS*," spurious writings, in which are supposed the existence of ancient canons, ordaining that no provincial council shall be held without the permission of the pope; and that all ecclesiastical causes

\* Russel's *Modern Europe*, vol. i. let. 10.

shall be under his jurisdiction. The words of the immediate successors of the apostles are also therein quoted, and they are supposed to have left writings behind them. All these being written in the wretched style of the eighth century, and the whole filled with blunders of the grossest kind, both historical and geographical, the artifice was sufficiently apparent; but they had only ignorant persons to deceive. These false decretals imposed upon mankind for eight hundred years, and though the fraud was at length detected, the customs established by them still subsist in some countries: their antiquity supplied the place of truth! The papal chair was filled about the middle of the ninth century by Nicholas I. one of the most obstinate, inflexible, and ambitious prelates that ever disgraced the priesthood. Even his own clergy, the bishop of Treves and Cologne accused him of making himself *emperor of the world*, an expression which, though somewhat strained, was not wholly without foundation. He asserted his dominion over the French clergy, and received appeals from all ecclesiastics, dissatisfied with their bishops. Hence he taught the people to acknowledge a supreme tribunal at a distance from their own country, and of course a foreign sway. He issued his orders in the most authoritative style, to regulate the disputed succession to the kingdom of Provence. "Let no one prevent the emperor," says he, "from governing the kingdoms which he holds in virtue of a succession confirmed by the holy see, and by the crown which the sovereign pontiff has set on his head."

It is, however, pleasing to find that, deplorable as was the state of things, this domineering conduct of the popes did not always go without remonstrance, even from some of the clergy themselves. Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, for example, about the year 875, raised his



voice in the most spirited manner against the arrogant pretensions of Adrian II. the successor of Nicholas. This bold and independent prelate desired the pope to call to mind that respect and submission which the ancient pontiffs had always paid to princes, and to reflect that his dignity gave him no right over the government of kingdoms; that he could not be at the same time pope and king: that the choice of a sovereign belongs to the people; that anathemas ill applied have no effect upon the soul; and that free men are not to be enslaved by a bishop of Rome.\* But the voice of an individual is easily drowned in the clamours of a mob. The evil proceeded in defiance of the expostulation of Hincmar. About the year 877, Pope John VIII. convened a council at Troyes in France, one of the canons of which is sufficiently remarkable to be adduced as a specimen of the spirit of the times. It expressly asserts, that "*the powers of the world shall not dare to seat themselves in the presence of the bishops, unless desired.*"

To dwell minutely upon this subject, and to illustrate the reign of the antichristian power by a copious detail of historical facts, though an easy task, would require more room than can be conveniently allotted to such a discussion in this sketch. The reader will probably be satisfied with this concise detail. Indeed all our historians, civil and ecclesiastical, agree in describing the tenth century of the Christian æra as the darkest epoch in the annals of mankind. "The history of the Roman pontiffs that lived in this [tenth] century," says the learned Mosheim, "is a history of so many monsters, and not of men; and exhibits a horrible series of the most flagitious, tremendous, and complicated crimes, as all writers, even those of the Romish communion, unanimously confess."

\* Fleury's Eccles. Hist.

Nor was the state of things much better in the Greek church at this period; as a proof of which, the same learned writer instances the example of Theophylact, patriarch of Constantinople. “This *exemplary* prelate, who sold every ecclesiastical benefice as soon as it became vacant, had in his stable above two thousand hunting horses, which he fed with pignuts, pistachios, dates, dried grapes, figs steeped in the most exquisite wines, to all which he added the richest perfumes. One Holy Thursday, as he was celebrating high mass, his groom brought him the joyful news that one of his favourite mares had foaled; upon which he threw down the Liturgy, left the church, and ran in rapture to the stable, where having expressed his joy at that grand event, he returned to the altar to finish the divine service, which he had left interrupted during his absence.”\*

To avoid the necessity of recurring to a topic so replete with every thing that can excite disgust in the mind of a humble Christian, I shall take leave of it by a short review of the state of things as they existed in the middle of the eleventh century.

In the year 1056, Henry IV. surnamed the Great, though only five years old, ascended the throne of his father as emperor of Germany. During the first years of his reign, the empire was harassed with civil wars, and Italy was a prey to intestine disorders. Nicholas II. then filled the pontifical chair; and he caused a council to be convened which consisted of a hundred and thirteen bishops, who passed a decree, by which it was ordained, that in future the cardinals only should elect the pope, and that the election should be confirmed by the rest of the Roman clergy and the people, “saving the honour,” it was added, “due to our dear son Henry, now king;

\* Quoted from Fleury’s Eccles. Hist.

and who, if it please God, shall one day be emperor, according to *the privilege which we have already conferred upon him*; and saving the honour of his successors, on whom the apostolic see *shall confer the same high privilege.*"

There resided at this time at Rome, one Hildebrand, a monk of the order of Cluny, who had recently been created a cardinal; a man of a restless, fiery, and enterprising disposition; but chiefly remarkable for his furious zeal for the pretensions of the church. He was born at Soana in Tuscany, of obscure parents, brought up at Rome, and had been frequently employed by that court to manage various political concerns which required dexterity and resolution, and he had rendered himself famous in all parts of Italy for his zeal and intrepidity. Hildebrand had interest enough to procure himself to be elected to the pontifical chair, in the year 1073, by the title of Gregory VII. and the papacy has not produced a more extraordinary character. "All that the malice or flattery of a multitude of writers have said of this pope, is concentrated in a portrait of him drawn by a Neapolitan artist, in which Gregory is represented as holding a crook in one hand, and a whip in the other, trampling sceptres under his feet, with St. Peter's net and fishes on either side of him."\* Gregory was installed by the people of Rome, without consulting the emperor, as had hitherto been customary; but though Henry had not been consulted upon the occasion, Gregory prudently waited for his confirmation of the choice before he assumed the tiara. He obtained it by this mark of submission; the emperor confirmed his election, and the new pontiff was not dilatory in pulling off the mask, for in a little time he raised a storm which fell with violence

\* Voltaire's Universal History, vol. i. ch. xxxvi.

upon the head of Henry, and shook all the thrones in Christendom. He began his pontificate with excommunicating every ecclesiastic who should receive a benefice from a layman, and every layman by whom such benefice should be conferred. This was engaging the church in an open war with all the sovereigns of Europe. But the thunder of the holy see was more particularly directed against Henry, who sensible of his danger and anxious to avert it, wrote a submissive letter to Gregory, and the latter pretended to take him into favour, after severely reprimanding him for the crimes of simony and debauchery, of which he now confessed himself guilty. The pope at the same time proposed a crusade, the object of which was to deliver the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem from the hands of the Turkish infidels; offering to head the Christians in person, and desiring Henry to serve as a volunteer under his command!

Gregory next formed the project of making himself lord of Christendom, by at once dissolving the jurisdiction which kings and emperors had hitherto exercised over the various orders of the clergy, and subjecting to the papal authority all temporal princes, rendering their dominions tributary to the see of Rome; and however romantic the undertaking may appear, it was not altogether without success. Solomon, king of Hungary, was at that time dethroned by his cousin Geysa, and fled to Henry for protection, renewing his homage to the latter as head of the empire. Gregory, who favoured the cause of the usurper, exclaimed against this act of submission, and said in a letter to Solomon, "You ought to know, that the kingdom of Hungary belongs to the Roman church; and learn, that you will incur the indignation of the holy see, if you do not acknowledge that you hold your dominions of the pope, and not of the emperor." This presumptuous declaration, and the neglect with



which it was treated, brought the quarrel between the empire and the church to a crisis: it was directed to Solomon, but intended for Henry.

Hitherto the princes of Christendom had enjoyed the right of nominating bishops and abbots, and of giving them investiture by the ring and crosier. The popes, on their part, had been accustomed to send legates to the emperors to entreat their assistance, to obtain their confirmation, or to desire them to come and receive papal sanction. Gregory now resolving to push the claim of investitures, sent two of his legates to summon Henry to appear before him as a delinquent, because he still continued to bestow investitures, notwithstanding the papal decree to the contrary: adding, that if he failed to yield obedience to the church, he must expect to be excommunicated and dethroned.

This arrogant message, from one whom he regarded as his vassal, greatly provoked Henry, who abruptly dismissed the legates, and lost no time in convoking an assembly of princes and dignified ecclesiastics at Worms; where, after mature deliberation, they came to this conclusion, that Gregory having usurped the chair of St. Peter, by indirect means, infected the church of God with many novelties and abuses, and deviated from his duty to his sovereign in several instances, the emperor, by the supreme authority derived from his predecessors, ought to divest him of his dignity, and appoint a successor. Henry, consequently, sent an ambassador to Rome, with a formal deprivation of Gregory; who, in his turn, convoked a council, at which were present one hundred and ten bishops, who unanimously agreed that the pope had just cause to depose Henry, to annul the oath of allegiance which the princes and states had taken in his favour, and to prohibit them from holding any correspondence with him on pain of excommunication. And

this execrable sentence was immediately fulminated against the emperor and his adherents. "In the name of Almighty God, and by your authority," said Gregory, addressing the members of the council, "I prohibit Henry from governing the Teutonic kingdom and Italy. I release all Christians from their oath of allegiance to him; and I strictly forbid all persons to serve or attend him as king."

This is the first instance of a pope presuming to deprive a sovereign of his crown; but unhappily it was too flattering to ecclesiastical pride to be the last. No preceding prelate had hitherto dared to use such imperious language as Gregory; for though Louis, the son of Charles the Great, had been deposed by his bishops, there was at least some colour for that step; they condemned him in appearance only to do public penance.

The circular letters written by Gregory breathe the same spirit as his sentence of deposition. In them he repeatedly asserts, that "bishops are superior to kings, and made to judge them"—expressions equally artful and presumptuous. His object is said to have been that of engaging in the bonds of fidelity and allegiance to the pope as vicar of Christ, all the potentates of the earth, and to establish at Rome an annual assembly of bishops, by whom the contests which from time to time might arise between kingdoms and sovereign states, were to be decided, the rights and pretensions of princes to be examined, and the fate of nations and empires determined.\*

Gregory well knew what consequences would result from the thunders of the church. The bishops in Germany immediately came over to his party, and drew with them many of the nobles. The Saxons took the oppor-

\* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. cent. xi. part ii.

tunity of revolting: even the emperor's favourite Guelf, a nobleman to whom he had given the duchy of Bavaria, supported the mal-contents with that very power which he owed to his sovereign's bounty; and the princes and prelates who had assisted in deposing Gregory, gave up their monarch to be tried by the pope, who was requested to come to Augsburg for that purpose.

To avoid the odium of this impending trial, Henry took the strange resolution of suddenly passing the Alps, accompanied only by a few domestics, and of throwing himself at the feet of Gregory, in order to implore his absolution. The pontiff was at that time on a visit to the countess or duchess Matilda, at Canosa, a fortress on the Appenines. At the gate of this mansion, the emperor presented himself as an humble penitent. He alone was admitted within the outer court, where, being stripped of his robes, and wrapped in sackcloth, he was compelled to remain three days, in the month of January (A. D. 1077) barefoot and fasting, before he was permitted to kiss the feet of his holiness!! The indulgence was, however, at length granted him—he was permitted to throw himself at the feet of the haughty pontiff, who condescended to grant him absolution, after he had sworn obedience to the pope in all things, and promised to submit to his solemn decision at Augsburg; so that Henry reaped nothing but disgrace and mortification from his journey, while the pontiff, elate with triumph, and now considering himself as the lord and master of all the crowned heads in Christendom, said in several of his letters, that “it was his duty to pull down the pride of kings.”

Happily for Henry, all sense of propriety and of common decency was not banished from the earth. The princes of Italy were disgusted with the strange accommodation that had taken place between him and the

pope. They never could forgive the insolence of the former, nor the abject humility of the latter. But their indignation at Gregory's arrogance over-balanced their detestation of their monarch's meanness. He took advantage of this temper, and, by a change of fortune hitherto unknown to the German emperor's, found a strong party in Italy, when abandoned by his own subjects. All Lombardy took up arms against the pope, while the latter was raising all Germany against the emperor. The former had recourse to every art to procure the election of another emperor in Germany, while Henry, on his part, left nothing undone to persuade the people of Italy to choose another pope. The Germans chose Rodolph, duke of Suabia, who was solemnly crowned at Mentz; and this gave Gregory an opportunity of exercising all his finesse in order to extort submission from Henry. He affected to be displeased that Rodolph was consecrated without his order. He had deposed Henry, but it was still in his power to pardon him—he therefore declared that he would acknowledge as emperor and king of Germany that claimant who should be most submissive to the holy see.

But Henry was not now to be duped. He chose rather to trust to the valour of his arms than to the generosity of the pope, and therefore marched his troops against his rival Rodolph, whom he defeated in several engagements. Gregory seeing no hopes of submission, thundered out a second sentence of excommunication, in which, after *depriving Henry of strength in combat, and condemning him never to be victorious*—he desires the world to take notice that it is in the pope's power to take away empires, kingdoms, principalities, &c. and to bestow them on whom he pleases. The whole concludes with the following extraordinary apostrophe to the apostles, Peter and Paul: “Make all men sensible that, as



you can bind and loose every thing in heaven, you can also upon earth, take from or give to, every one according to his deserts, empires, kingdoms, principalities. Let the kings and princes of the age instantly feel your power, that they may not dare to despise the orders of your church; and let your justice be so speedily executed upon Henry, that nobody may doubt of his falling by your means and not by chance.” \*

But the apostles were either deaf to the prayer of their pretended successor, or declined their co-operation with it. Henry triumphed over his enemies. Rodolph had his hand cut off in a battle which was fought with great fury near Mersburgh, in Saxony, and, discouraged by the misfortune of their chief, his followers gave way. Rodolph, perceiving his end approaching ordered the amputated member to be brought him, and thus addressed his officers. “Behold the hand with which I took the oath of allegiance to Henry—an oath which, at the instigation of Rome, I have violated, in perfidiously aspiring to an honour that was not due to me.”

The affairs of Henry now revived apace. A new pope was elected, who took the title of Clement III. and the emperor, thus delivered from his formidable antagonist, soon dispersed the rest of his enemies in Germany, and proceeded to Italy, to settle the new pontiff in the papal chair. The gates of Rome being shut against him, he was compelled to attack the city in form. After a siege of two years, it was taken by assault, and with difficulty saved from pillage, but Gregory retired into the castle of St. Angelo, from whence he hurled defiance, and fulminated his thunder against the conqueror. The siege of St. Angelo was now prosecuted with vigour, but in the absence of Henry, Gregory found means to escape, and died soon after at Salerno, A. D. 1085. His last words

\* Fleury's Eccles. History.

were, "I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore I die in exile." \*

But the troubles of Henry did not terminate with the life of Gregory. The pontiffs who succeeded, proved as inimical to his peace and tranquillity as their predecessor had been. Urban II. contrived, in conjunction with the countess Matilda, to seduce the emperor's son into a rebellion against his father. This young prince, whose name was Conrad, assumed the title of king of Italy, and succeeded so well in his usurpation, that the greater part of the cities of Italy and their nobles acknowledged him as their sovereign. The emperor, despairing of being able to reduce him to obedience by arms, assembled the German princes, who put the delinquent to the ban of the empire,† and declared his brother Henry king of the Romans. Two years afterwards, both Conrad and the pope died—the latter being succeeded in the papal chair by Pascal II. (another Gregory) and the former by his younger brother Henry as king of Italy.

The new pope was scarcely invested with office ere he contrived to excite young Henry to rebel against his father. He called a council, to which he summoned the aged monarch; and as the latter did not obey the citation, he excommunicated him for the schisms which he had introduced into the church; stimulating his son to rebellion, by alleging that he was bound to take upon himself the reins of government, as he could not acknowledge an excommunicated king or father. In vain did the emperor use every paternal remonstrance to dissuade

\* Life of Gregory VII. by Dithmar.

† The word *ban* originally signified banner, afterwards edict, and lastly, a declaration of outlawry, which was thus intimated. "We declare thy wife a widow, thy children orphans, and send thee, in the name of the devil, to the four corners of the earth."

his son from proceeding to extremities ; the breach became wider, and each prepared for the decision of the sword. But the son, dreading his father's military superiority, and confiding in his tenderness, had recourse to a stratagem as base as it was effectual. He threw himself unexpectedly at the emperor's feet, and implored pardon for his undutiful behaviour, which he attributed to the influence of evil counsellors. In consequence of this submission, he was taken into favour by his indulgent parent, who instantly dismissed his army. The ungrateful youth now revealed the perfidy that was in his heart ; he ordered his father to be confined— assembled a diet of his own confederates, at which the pope's legate presided, and repeated the sentence of excommunication against the emperor, whose dignity was instantly transferred to his rebellious son.

The archbishops of Mentz and Cologne were sent as deputies to the old emperor, to intimate his deposition and demand his *regalia*. Henry received this deputation with equal surprise and concern ; and finding that the chief accusation against him was “ the scandalous manner in which he had set bishopricks to sale,” he thus addressed the audacious ecclesiastics : “ If I have prostituted the benefices of the church for hire, you, yourselves, are the most proper persons to convict me of that simony. Say then, I conjure you in the name of the eternal God ! what have I exacted, or what have I received, for having promoted you to the dignities that you now enjoy ? ” They acknowledged that he was innocent, so far as regarded their preferments. “ And yet,” continued he, the archbishops of Mentz and Cologne, being two of the best in my gift, I might have filled my coffers by exposing them to sale. I bestowed them, however, upon you, out of free grace and favour, and a worthy return you make to my benevolence ! Do

not, I beseech you, become abettors of those who have lifted up their hands against their lord and master in defiance of faith, gratitude, and allegiance."

As the unfeeling prelates, deaf to this pathetic address, insisted on his compliance with the object of their mission, Henry retired, and put on his regal ornaments; then returning to the apartment he had left, and seating himself on a chair of state, he renewed his remonstrance in these words; "Here are the marks of that royalty with which I was invested by God, and the princes of the empire; if you disregard the wrath of heaven, and the eternal reproach of mankind, so much as to lay violent hands on your sovereign, you may strip me of them. I am not in a condition to defend myself."

Regardless of these expostulations, the two archbishops snatched the crown from his head, and dragging him from his chair, forcibly pulled off his robes. While thus employed, Henry exclaimed, "Great God! (the tears flowing down his venerable cheeks) thou art the God of vengeance, and wilt repay this outrage. I have sinned I own, and merited such shame by the follies of my youth; but thou wilt not fail to punish those traitors for their violence, ingratitude and perjury."

To such a degree of wretchedness was this prince afterwards reduced by the barbarity of his son, that, destitute of the common necessities of life, he entreated the bishop of Spire, whom he had promoted to that see, to grant him a canonry for his subsistence, representing that he was capable of performing the office of "chanter or reader." Disappointed in that humble request, he shed a flood of tears, and turning to those who were present, said, with a deep sigh, "*My dear friends, at least have pity upon my condition, for I am touched by the hand of the Lord.*"

Yet in the midst of these distresses, when every one



thought his courage was utterly extinguished, and his soul overwhelmed by despondence, Henry found means to escape from custody and reached Cologne, where he was recognized as lawful emperor. Repairing next to the Netherlands, he found friends who raised a considerable body of men to assert his claims, and facilitate his restoration; he also issued circular letters, calling upon the princes of Christendom to interest themselves in his cause. He even wrote to the pope, intimating that he was inclined to an accommodation, provided it could be settled without prejudice to his cause. But before any thing material could be executed in his favour, Henry died at Leige (Aug. 7. 1106) in the fifty-sixth year of his age and the forty-ninth of his reign. He was a prince of great courage and excellent endowments both of body and mind. In his appearance there was an air of dignity which spoke the greatness of his soul. He possessed a natural fund of eloquence and vivacity, his temper was placid and merciful, his kindness and benevolence extensive, and his life exhibited an admirable pattern of fortitude and resignation.\*

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### SECTION III.

*Sketch of the state of the Christian profession from the death of Claude of Turin to the times of Peter Waldo.*

A. D. 843—1160.

DURING the dark ages which succeeded the invasion of Europe by the barbarous nations, when feudal anarchy distracted the civil governments, and a flood of super-

\* Russel's *Modern Europe*, vol. i. part i. letter 23. and the authors there quoted on this subject.

stition had deluged the church, Christianity, banished from the seats of empire, and loathing the monkish abodes of indolence and vice, meekly retired into the sequestered vallies of Piedmont. Finding there a race of men unarrayed in hostile armour, uncontaminated by the doctrines and commandments of an apostate church, unambitious in their temper, and simple in their manners, she preferred their society, and among them took up her abode. The turbulence of the times, which drove many from the more fertile plains of France and Italy, in search of freedom and tranquillity, greatly augmented the population of this remote district; and, in the ninth century, the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven had been held forth among them with considerable clearness and ability by Claude, bishop of Turin.\*

Remote from the influence of noisy parties, and little conversant with literature, we can scarcely expect any notice of them, until their increase and prosperity excited the attention of ambition and avarice, and occasioned it to be rumoured in the neighbouring ecclesiastical states, that a numerous people occupied the southern vallies of the Alps, whose faith and practice differed from those of the Romish church; who paid no tithes, offered no mass, worshipped no saints, nor had recourse to any of the prescribed means for redeeming their souls from purgatory.

The archbishops of Turin, Milan, and other cities, heard this report with anxiety, and the necessary measures were accordingly adopted for ascertaining its truth or falsehood; the former turning out to be the result, and finding that these people were not to be controlled by the authority and denunciations of the church of Rome, the

\* See chap. iv. sect. i. p. 457—468. and *L'Hist. Generale des Eglises Vaud. par. Giles Juan Leger*, ch. 20, 21, 22, 28. *Rankin's Hist. France*, vol. iii.

aid of the civil power was demanded. The princes and nobles of the adjacent countries at first refused to disturb them; they had beheld with pleasure their simple manners, their uprightness and integrity, their readiness to oblige, and their fidelity in the discharge of all the duties of civil and social life. The clamour of the Romish clergy, however, ultimately prevailed, and the civil power was armed against the peaceable and inoffensive inhabitants of the vallies. Scaffolds were erected and fires kindled at Turin and other cities around them. The fortitude and confidence of the martyrs, however, increased as their faith and constancy were tried. "Favor, me," said Catalan Girard, who was one of their number, as he sat upon the funeral pile at Reuel—"favor me with those two flint stones," which he saw near him. Being handed to him, he added, as he threw them to the ground, "Sooner shall I eat these stones, than you shall be able by persecution to destroy the religion for which I die."\*

Multitudes, however, fled like innocent and defenceless sheep from these devouring wolves. They crossed the Alps; and travelled in every direction as Providence and the prospect of safety conducted them, into Germany, England, France, Italy, and other countries. There they trimmed their lamps and shone with new lustre. Their worth everywhere drew attention, and their doctrine formed increasing circles around them. The storm which threatened their destruction, only scattered them as the precious seeds of the future glorious reformation of the Christian church.† In the present section, we shall endeavour to mark their dispersions into different countries, and the treatment they met with during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, prior to the appearance

\* Perrin's History of the Vaudois, part ii. b. ii. ch. 4.

† Dr. Rankin's History of France, vol. iii. p. 193—198.

of Peter Waldo of Lyons. Our materials of information are scanty, and even those we must be content to receive chiefly from their implacable enemies; but by a little patient research, and the aid of a discriminating judgment in selecting the probable from the fictitious, we shall be furnished with some interesting information relative to this obscure portion of their history.

But before we proceed, it may be proper to remark, that about the middle of the eleventh century, and during the pontificate of Pope Leo IX. (A. D. 1050) rose up BERENGARIUS, a person of great learning and talents, who denied the doctrine of *the real presence*, as it was then commonly termed; and by writing against it, called forth all the learned of the church of Rome to defend the doctrine of transubstantiation. Berengarius was a native of France, educated under Fulbert, bishop of Chartras, a very learned man; and taking orders in the church, became deacon of St. Maurice, and ultimately archbishop of Angers, in the province of Anjou. He was also principal of the academy of Tours. The prevalent sentiment of his day relative to the eucharist was, that the bread was the identical body, and the wine the very blood of Christ—not only figuratively, but substantially and properly. Berengarius, on the contrary, insisted that the body of Christ is only in the heavens; and that the elements of bread and wine are merely the symbols of his body and blood. Several of the bishops wrote against him, most bitterly complaining of his heresy; but not feeling the force of their arguments, Berengarius remained unmoved; and defended his opinions with the utmost pertinacity. He wrote a letter on the subject to Lanfrank, who was at that time at the head of the convent of St. Stephens at Caen in Normandy, and called from thence by William the Conqueror to be Archbishop of Canterbury, which being opened while the latter was



from home, was officiously transmitted by the convent to Pope Leo. The Pontiff, shocked at its heretical contents, summoned a council at Vercelli, at which Berengarius was commanded to be present. His friends, however, advised him against going, and he consequently sent two persons to attend the council, and answer in his behalf. Lanfrank also was present and pleaded for Berengarius, but the latter was condemned, the two persons who appeared for him imprisoned, and Lanfrank commanded by the Pope to draw up a refutation of the heresy of Berengarius on pain of being himself reputed a heretic; with which injunction he thought it prudent to comply. This example was followed also by the council of Paris, summoned the very same year by Henry I. in which Berengarius and his numerous adherents, were threatened with all sorts of evils both spiritual and temporal—evils which were in part executed against the heretical prelate, for the monarch deprived him of all his revenues. But neither threatenings nor fines, nor the decrees of Synods, could shake the firmness of his mind, or oblige him to retract his sentiments. In the meanwhile, the opinions of Berengarius were every where spreading rapidly, insomuch that if we may credit contemporary writers, “his doctrine had corrupted all the English, Italian, and French nations.” Thuanus adds, that “in Germany were many of the same doctrine, and that Bruno, bishop of Treves, banished them all out of his diocese, sparing only their blood.” During the remainder of the life of Leo IX. Berengarius and his friends enjoyed a temporary respite, but no sooner had Victor II. succeeded to the pontifical chair, than the flame of religious discord was rekindled, and a council was assembled at Tours, in 1055, to examine anew the doctrine of Berengarius. At this council the famous Hildebrand, who was afterwards created Pope Gregory

VII. appeared in the character of legate, and opposed the new doctrine with the utmost vehemence. Berengarius was also present at this assembly, and overawed, by threats rather than convinced by argument, he professed to abandon his opinions, solemnly abjured them in the presence of the council, and made his peace with the church. In this, however, he appears to have been insincere, for soon after this period he taught anew, though with more circumspection, the opinions he had formerly professed. The account of his perfidy reaching Rome, he was summoned to attend a council which was convened there in 1059, and on this occasion, so terrified was Berengarius, that he declared his readiness to embrace and adhere to the doctrines which that venerable assembly should think proper to impose upon him. A confession of faith was accordingly drawn up, which he publicly signed and ratified by an oath. In that confession the following declaration was contained,—that the bread and wine after consecration were not only a sacrament, but also the real body and blood of Jesus Christ; and that this body and blood were handled by the priests, and consumed by the faithful, not sacramentally, but in reality and truth, as other sensible objects are. This doctrine was so monstrously absurd; it was such an impudent insult upon common sense and the very first principles of reason, that it is impossible it should impose upon the acute mind of Berengarius for a moment, nor could it possibly become the object of his serious belief, and his conduct, almost immediately after, proved that his profession of it was an odious act of dissimulation; for no sooner was he returned into France, than he expressed the utmost detestation and abhorrence of the doctrines he had been obliged to profess at Rome, solemnly abjured them in his discourse and writings; and returned zealously to the profession and defence of his former real opinion.

The controversy, however, was still prolonged during many years, and a multitude of writings on both sides of the question, were continually issuing, and the followers of Berengarius every where increasing. His adversaries now had recourse to the seducing influence of soft and friendly expostulation, to engage him to dissemble anew ; or, in other words, to return from his pretended apostacy ; but these proved ineffectual. At length, Gregory VII. was raised to the papal chair, a man whose enterprising spirit no difficulties nor opposition could discourage. This prelate, resolving to put an end to this wide-spreading controversy, sent an order to Berengarius to repair to Rome in the year 1078. Gregory had a high esteem for the latter, and though to silence the clamours of the multitude he found it necessary to oppose him, he did it with all possible mildness. He permitted Berengarius to draw up a new confession of his faith, and to renounce that which he had formerly sworn to abide by.

This new confession not proving satisfactory to his enraged adversaries, though Gregory himself approved it, a second was drawn up, which was indeed less vague and equivocal, but then it contained all the quintessence of absurdity which characterized the original one ; for he now professed to believe that “the bread and wine were, by the mysterious influences of the holy prayer, and the words of Christ, substantially changed into the true, proper, and vivifying body and blood of Christ.” No sooner had he made this strange declaration than the pope loaded him with caresses and sent him back to France, graced with the most honourable testimonies of his liberality and friendship. Solemn however as the declaration had been at Rome, Berengarius had no sooner returned to his residence than he began to compose an elaborate refutation of his last confession, which excited afresh the flames of theological contro-

versy. Berengarius, however, amidst the clamours of his enraged adversaries, from this time observed a profound silence. Disgusted with a controversy in which the first principles of reason were so impudently insulted, and exhausted by an opposition which he was unable to overcome, he abandoned all his worldly concerns and retired into solitude, to pass the remainder of his days in fasting, prayer, and the exercise of piety. In the year 1088 death put a period to the affliction which he suffered in his retirement, occasioned by a bitter reflection upon the dissimulation he had been guilty of at Rome; leaving behind him, in the minds of the people, a deep impression of his extraordinary sanctity, and his followers were as numerous as his fame was illustrious.\* This controversy was too remarkable to be wholly passed over in this place, but having said thus much of it, I now pass on to a more pleasing and profitable subject.

A little before the year 1140, Evervinus of Stainfield, in the diocese of Cologne, in Germany, addressed a letter to the celebrated Saint Bernard, concerning certain heretics in his neighbourhood. This letter has been preserved by Mabillon, and the learned Dr. Allix has furnished us with a translation of it in his *Remarks on the Antient Churches of Piedmont*, p. 140. A few extracts from it, will enable us to form some judgment concerning this class of men. Evervinus was much perplexed in his mind about them; and to obtain a solution of his doubts, he wrote as follows, to the renowned Bernard, whose word, at that time, was as law throughout Christendom.

“There have lately been some heretics discovered among us near Cologne, of whom some have with satis-



faction returned again to the church. One that was a bishop among them and his companions, openly opposed us in the assembly of the clergy and laity, the lord archbishop himself being present, with many of the nobility, maintaining their heresy from the words of Christ and his apostles. But finding that they made no impression, they desired that a day might be fixed, upon which they might bring along with them men skilful in their faith, promising to return to the church, provided their teachers were unable to answer their opponents; but that otherwise they would rather die than depart from their judgment. Upon this declaration, having been admonished to repent for three days, *they were seized by the people in their excess of zeal, and burnt to death*; and, what is most astonishing, they came to the stake, and endured the torment of the flames, not only with patience, but even with joy. In this case, O holy father, were I present with you, I should be glad to ask you, how these members of Satan could persist in their heresy with such constancy and courage as is rarely to be found among the most religious in the faith of Christ.

“Their heresy is this:—They say that the church is only among themselves, because they alone follow the ways of Christ, and imitate the apostles, not seeking secular gains, possessing no property, following the pattern of Christ, who was himself perfectly poor, nor permitted his disciples to possess any thing.\* Whereas ye, say they to us, join house to house and field to field, seeking the things of this world,—yea, even your monks and regular canons possess all these things—describing themselves as the poor of Christ’s flock, who have no certain abode, fleeing from one city to another, like

\* We shall see reason hereafter to believe that in this particular Evervinus misrepresented them.

sheep in the midst of wolves—enduring persecution with the apostles and martyrs ; though strict in their manner of life, abstemious, laborious, devout and holy, and seeking only what is needful for bodily sustenance, living as men who are not of the world. But you, say they, lovers of the world, have peace with the world because ye are of it. False apostles, who adulterate the word of God, seeking their own things, have misled you and your ancestors. Whereas we and our fathers having been born and brought up in the apostolic doctrine, have continued in the grace of Christ, and shall continue so to the end. “ By their fruits ye shall know them ” saith Christ ; and our fruits are the footsteps of Christ. The apostolic dignity, say they, is corrupted by engaging itself in secular affairs, while it sits in the chair of Peter. They do not hold the baptism of infants, alleging that passage of the gospel, “ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” They place no confidence in the intercession of saints ; and all things observed in the church which have not been established by Christ himself or his apostles, they call superstitious. They do not admit of any purgatory fire after death, contending that the souls as soon as they depart out of the bodies, do enter into rest or punishment, proving it from that passage of Solomon, “ Which way soever the tree falls, whether to the south or to the north, there it lies,” by which means they make void all the prayers and oblations of believers for the deceased.

“ We therefore beseech you, holy father, to employ your care and watchfulness against these manifold mischiefs ; and that you would be pleased to direct your pen against these wild beasts of the reeds, not thinking it sufficient to answer us that the tower of David, to which we may betake ourselves for refuge, is sufficiently fortified with bulwarks, that a thousand bucklers hang on

the walls of it, all shields of mighty men.' For we desire father, for the sake of us simple ones, and that are slow of understanding, you would be pleased by your study, to gather all these arms into one place, that they may be the more readily found, and more powerful to resist these monsters. I must inform you also, that those of them who have returned to our church, tell us, that *they had great numbers of their persuasion scattered almost every where, and that amongst them were many of our clergy and monks.* And as for those who were burnt, they, in the defence they made for themselves, told us, that this heresy had been concealed from the time of the martyrs—and that it had existed in Greece and other countries."

The letter of Evervinus had all the effect upon Bernard that he could desire. The mighty champion immediately prepared himself for the combat. He was then publishing a set of sermons on the Canticles, and in the 65th and 66th of them he enters the lists most vehemently with these heretics. He is extremely offended with them for deriding the Catholics because they baptised infants, and prayed for the dead, and asserted purgatory—condemns their scrupulous refusal to swear at all, which, according to him, was one of their peculiarities—upbraids them with their secrecy in the observance of their religious rites, not considering the necessity which persecution imposed upon them—finds fault with a practice among them of dwelling with women in the same house without being married to them, by which we are no doubt to understand, that they did not think it necessary to solemnize their marriages according to the ceremonies of the church of Rome, though he expresses himself as knowing very little of the manners of the sect; and from the numberless rumours propagated against them, he suspects them of hypocrisy. Yet his testimony in favour of their general conduct seems to overbalance all his invectives.

“If,” says he, “you ask them of their faith, nothing can be more Christian; if you observe their conversation, nothing can be more blameless, and what they speak, they prove by deeds. You may see a man, for the testimony of his faith, frequent the church, honour the elders, offer his gift, make his confession, receive the sacrament. What more like a Christian? As to life and manners, he circumvents no man, over-reaches no man, and does violence to no man. He fasts much, and eats not the bread of idleness, but works with his hands for his support. The whole body, indeed, are rustic and illiterate, and all whom I have known of this sect are very ignorant.” Such was the testimony of the great Saint Bernard in their behalf.\*

\* Dr. Haweis loses all patience with his brother Milner, for attempting to introduce the great Bernard into the calendar of saints. “I am astonished,” says he, “at his attempt to enrol Bernard in his catalogue of evangelical religion. *Saint* added to such a name would be impious. However orthodox some of his sentiments may be, can false miracles, lying prophecies, bloody persecutions of the faithful, and servitude to the papacy and her dominion, constitute a saint of the first water? A protestant divine disgraces his page by these commendations, and renders even the truths which he supports and contends for as evangelical, suspicious.” *Impartial Hist.* vol. ii. p. 230. In all this I fully agree with Dr. Haweis; but then it furnishes me with a powerful plea against his own consistency, who has no scruple to enrol in his catalogue the names of Athanasius and Augustine—men equally renowned for their lust of power, their persecuting principles, their false miracles, their lying prophecies, and abject servitude to the prevailing corruption of their respective times.

To the character of Bernard, however, let us not be unjust. He was not a blind and slavish supporter of the court of Rome, even in those days. On the contrary, he used the greatest freedom of speech in lashing the vices of the clergy of his time, and made himself extremely obnoxious to them by his free remonstrances. “Who at the outset,” says he, “when the order of monks began, would ever have imagined that monks would become so wicked as they since have? Oh, how unlike are we to those in the days of Anthony? Did Macarius live in such a manner? Did Basil teach so? Did Anthony ordain so? Did the fathers in Egypt



We have some additional information concerning these people, given us by Egbert, a monk, and afterwards abbot of Schonaug, who tells us that he had often disputed with these heretics, and that he had learned still more of their opinions from those who had, through the force of torments and the threat of being burned, renounced their communion. He says, "they are commonly called Cathari, [*Puritans*] a sort of people very pernicious to the catholic faith, which, like moths, they corrupt and destroy." He adds, that they were divided into several sects, and *maintained their opinions by the authority of scripture*. He takes particular notice of their denying the utility of baptism to infants, which, say they, through their incapacity, avails nothing to their salvation; insisting that baptism ought to be deferred till they come to years of discretion, and that even then those only should be baptized who make a personal profession of faith, and desire it.\* "They are armed," says he, "with the words of the holy scripture which in any way seem to favour their sentiments, and with those they know how to defend their errors, and to oppose the catholic truth;

carry themselves so? How is the light of the world become darkness? How is the salt of the earth become unsavory? I am a liar," says he, "if I have not seen an abbot having above sixty horses in his train! When ye saw them riding, ye might say, 'These are not fathers of monasteries, but lords of castles—not shepherds of souls, but princes of provinces!'—Oh, vanity of vanities! the walls of churches are glorious, while the poor are starving." Even the popes themselves were not spared by Bernard. He wrote to Eugenius and to Innocent the Second, imputing to them the blame of all the wickedness in the church,—though he approved of its constitution, and defended all its rites and ceremonies. This inconsistent conduct gave rise to a saying which passed into a proverb, and was common for centuries after, viz. *Bernardus non vidit omnia*—Bernard does not see every thing.

\* See his Sermon against the Cathari in Bib. Pat. tom. ii. p. 99, 106. Danver's Hist. Bapt. p. 249.

though in reality they are wholly ignorant of the true meaning couched in those words, and which cannot be discovered without great judgment. They are increased to great multitudes throughout all countries, to the great danger of the church—for their words eat like a canker, and, like a flying leprosy, runs every way, infecting the precious members of Christ. These in our Germany we call Cathari; in Flanders they call them Piphles; in French, Tisserands, from the art of weaving, because numbers of them are of that occupation.”\*

Thus by comparing together these several fragments of information, we may acquire some distinct notion of these Cathari. They were a plain, unassuming, harmless, and industrious race of Christians, patiently bearing the cross after Christ, and both in their doctrine and manners condemning the whole system of idolatry and superstition which reigned in the church of Rome, placing true religion in the faith, hope, and obedience of the gospel, maintaining a supreme regard to the authority of God, in his word, and regulating their sentiments and practices by that divine standard. Even in the twelfth century their numbers abounded in the neighbourhood of Cologne, in Flanders, the south of France, Savoy, and Milan. “They were increased, says Egbert, “to great multitudes, THROUGHOUT ALL COUNTRIES,” and although they seem not to have attracted attention in any remarkable degree previous to this period, yet, as it is obvious they could not have sprung up in a day, it is not an unfair inference that they must have long existed as a people wholly distinct from the catholic church, though, amidst the political squabbles of the clergy, it was their good fortune to be almost entirely overlooked.

\* Dr. Allix's Remarks, p. 150.

The same Egbert, speaking of them, says, "Concerning the souls of the dead, they hold this opinion, that at the very instant of their departure out of the body, they go to eternal bliss or endless misery, for they do not admit the belief of the universal church, that there are some purgatory punishments, with which the souls of some of the elect are tried for a time, on account of those sins from which they have not been purified by a plenary satisfaction in this life. On which account they think it superfluous and vain to give alms for the dead and celebrate masses; and they scoff at our ringing of bells, which, nevertheless, for pious reasons, are used in our churches, to give others warning that they may pray for the dead, and to put them in mind of their own death. As for masses, they altogether despise them, regarding them as of no value, for they maintain that the sacerdotal order has entirely ceased in the church of Rome and all other catholic churches, and that true priests are only to be found in their sect."\*

Throughout the whole of the twelfth century, these people were exposed to severe persecution. The zeal of Galdinus, archbishop of Milan, was roused against them to such a pitch, that after making them the objects of unrelenting persecution, during a period of eight or nine years, he, at length, fell a martyr to his own zeal, dying in the year 1173, in consequence of an illness contracted through the excess of his vehemence in preaching against them.

Towards the middle of the twelfth century, a small society of these *Puritans*, as they were called by some, or *Waldenses*, as they are termed by others, or *Paulicians*, as they are denominated by our old monkish historian, William of Neuburg, made their appearance in England.

\* Sermon I. p. 889, in Bib. pp. Colon. ed. quoted by Dr. Allix, p. 152.

This latter writer speaking of them, says, “ they came originally from Gascoyne, where, *being as numerous as the sand of the sea*, they sorely infested both France, Italy, Spain, and England.” The following is the account given by Dr. Henry, in his history of Great Britain, vol. viii. p. 338. Oct. ed. of this emigrating party, which, in substance, corresponds with what is said of them by Rapin, Collier, Lyttleton, and other of our writers.

“ A company, consisting of about thirty men and women, who spoke the German language, appeared in England at this time (1159), and soon attracted the attention of government by the singularity of their religious practices and opinions. It is indeed very difficult to discover with certainty what their opinions were, because they are recorded only by our monkish historians, who speak of them with much asperity. They were apprehended and brought before a council of the clergy at Oxford. Being interrogated about their religion, their teacher, named Gerard, a man of learning, answered in their name, that they were Christians, and believed the doctrines of the apostles. Upon a more particular inquiry, it was found that they denied several of the received doctrines of the church, such as purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the invocation of saints; and refusing to abandon these damnable heresies, as they were called, they were condemned as incorrigible heretics, and delivered to the secular arm to be punished. The king (Henry II.) at the instigation of the clergy, commanded them to be branded with a red hot iron on the forehead, to be whipped through the streets of Oxford, and, having their clothes cut short by their girdles, to be turned into the open fields, all persons being forbidden to afford them any shelter or relief under the severest penalties. This cruel sentence was executed in its utmost rigour; and, it being the depth of winter, all these unhappy persons



perished with cold and hunger. These seem to have been the first who suffered death in Britain, for the vague and variable crime of heresy, and it would have been much to the honour of the country if they had been the last."

There is an account of the punishing of these Waldenses, in the *ARCHÆOLOGIA*, vol. ix. p. 292—305, written by the Rev. Mr. Denne, of Wilmington; from which I shall here give a short extract by way of supplement to the preceding narrative. "These persons," says he, "having been believers of the essential doctrines of Christianity, (as is admitted by the bishops) and, as it may be inferred from the silence of the historian, that these sectaries were in their manners inoffensive, nothing but the evil spirit of persecution could have prompted their judges to deliver them up to the civil magistrate. It was the more culpable in the prelates, because there was so little ground for an alarm of their propagating with success their peculiar tenets. For though they seem to have resided for some time in England, they only converted one woman of inferior rank, and she was so slightly attached to them, that she was soon prevailed on to recant and forsake their society. And as they were not disturbers of the public peace, it is somewhat strange that the king, whose disposition was humane, should think those people merited branding and exile. But it was during the contest between Henry and Becket, in support of the just rights of the crown, that this occurrence happened; and his hard usage of these foreigners has been attributed to an unwillingness of affording a pretext to the pope and his adherents to charge them with profaneness, or an inattention to the cause of religion. By the council of Tours, held in 1163, princes were exhorted and directed to imprison all heretics within their dominions, and to confiscate their effects. Of this injunction Henry could not be ignorant, and he might be

actuated by it to treat the delinquents with more rigour than he otherwise would have done." Mr. Denne has fixed the sitting of the council at Oxford in the year 1166.

But the *Cathari*, or Puritans, were not the only sect which, during the twelfth century, appeared in opposition to the superstition of the church of Rome. About the year 1110, in the South of France, in the provinces of Languedoc and Provence, appeared Peter de Bruys, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and exerting the most laudable efforts to reform the abuses and remove the superstitions which disfigured the beautiful simplicity of the gospel worship. His labours were crowned with abundant success. He converted a great number of persons to the faith of Christ, and after a most indefatigable ministry of twenty years continuance, he was burnt at St. Giles's, a city of Languedoc in France, in the year 1130, by an enraged populace, instigated by the clergy, who apprehended their traffic to be in danger from this new and intrepid reformer. His followers were called Petrobrusians; but of his doctrinal sentiments the following are those alone which we can be sure of at this remote period—That the ordinance of baptism was to be administered only to adults—that it was a piece of idle superstition to build and dedicate churches to the service of God, who in worship has a peculiar respect to the state of the heart, and who cannot be worshipped with temples made by hands—that crucifixes were objects of superstition, and ought to be destroyed—that in the Lord's supper the real body and blood of Christ were not exhibited, but only represented in the way of symbol or figure—and lastly, that the oblations, prayers, and good works of the living, could in no respect be beneficial to the dead \*

\* Mosheim's Church History, vol. iii. cent. xii. part 2. ch. v. and the authors there referred to.

A few years after the death of Peter Bruys, rose up an Italian by birth, of the name of Henry, said to have been his disciple, and who was the founder of a sect called the Henricians. He had been both a monk and a hermit; but having received the knowledge of the truth, he laboured to reform the superstitions of the times. Quitting Lausanne, a city of Switzerland, he travelled to Mans, and being banished from thence, removed successively to Poitiers, Bourdeaux, and other cities in France; and at length, in the year 1147, to Toulouse, preaching the gospel in all those places with the greatest acceptance, and declaiming with vehemence and fervour against the vices of the clergy, and the superstitions introduced by them into the Christian church. At Toulouse he was warmly opposed by the great St. Bernard, that luminary of the Catholic church, who though he wrote against him with great bitterness, is nevertheless constrained to admit that Henry was a learned man, and greatly respected by his numerous followers. The latter, however, to avoid his fury, was compelled to save himself by flight. He was nevertheless, seized in his retreat, and carried before Pope Eugenius III. who assembled a council at Rheims, in which he presided in person, and having received a number of accusations against Henry, committed him in the year 1158 to a close prison, in which he soon ended his days. His doctrinal sentiments have not been handed down to us in a manner so full and explicit as could be wished. "All we know is, that he rejected infant baptism; censured with severity the corrupt and licentious manners of the clergy; treated the festivals and ceremonies of the Catholic church with the utmost contempt; and held private assemblies, in which he explained and inculcated his peculiar sentiments."\*

\* Mosheim, vol. iii. cent. xii. part ii, ch. v.

I feel some hesitation in adding to the list of reformers who arose during this benighted period, the name of Arnold of Brescia, because Mosheim and other writers have described him as a man of a turbulent and impetuous spirit; and, though he is universally allowed to have been possessed of extensive erudition, and remarkable for the austerity of his manners, he is represented by those writers as not confining himself to the apostolic weapons of the Christian warfare. Yet, the spirit of candour and fairness would seem to require that allowance should be made for those exaggerations which the malignity of his enraged adversaries prompted them to vent against him. There are few things more difficult than to combine the *leniter in modo*, with the *fortiter in re*, and gentleness seems almost incompatible with the zeal of a reformer. I shall, however, adduce a few impartial testimonies to the character of Arnold, and leave the reader to his own reflections on them. The following account of him is given in a recent publication of great merit.

ARNOLD, at an early period of life travelled into France, and became the disciple of the celebrated Abelard. Having imbibed some of the heretical sentiments, and a portion of that freedom of thought, which distinguished his master, he returned to Italy, and in the habit of a monk, began to propagate his opinions in the streets of Brescia. The zeal of this daring reformer was at first directed against the wealth and luxury of the Romish clergy. Insisting that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, he maintained that the temporal power of the church was an unprincipled corruption of the rights of secular princes, and that all the corruptions which disgraced the Christian faith, and all the animosities which distracted the church, sprung from the power and overgrown possessions of the clergy. These



bold truths were propagated not as mere points of speculation, or as an explanation of the various calamities which then affected the church; they were held as the foundation of a system of reform which the people were excited to carry into execution; and the clergy were called upon to renounce their usurped possessions, and to lead a frugal and abstemious life on the voluntary contributions of the people. The inhabitants of Brescia were roused by the eloquent appeals of their countryman. They revered him as the apostle of religious liberty, and rose in rebellion against their lawful bishop. The church took alarm at these dangerous commotions, and in a general council of the Lateran, held in 1139, by Innocent II. Arnold was condemned to perpetual silence. He sought for refuge beyond the Alps, and found an hospitable shelter in the Canton of Zurich. Here he again began his career of reform, and had the ability to seduce from their allegiance the bishop of Constance, and even the pope's legate. The exhortations of St. Bernard, however, reclaimed these yielding ecclesiastics to a sense of their duty, and Arnold was driven by persecution to hazard the desperate expedient of fixing the standard of rebellion in the very heart of Rome.

Protected, perhaps, if not invited, by the nobles, Arnold harangued the populace with his usual fervour, and inspired them with such a regard for their civil and ecclesiastical rights, that a complete revolution was effected in the city. Innocent struggled in vain against this invasion of his power, and at last sunk under the pressure of calamity. His successors, Celestine and Lucius, who reigned only a few months, were unable to check the popular frenzy. The leaders of the insurrection waited upon Lucius, demanded the restitution of the civil rights which had been usurped from the people, and insisted that his holiness and the clergy should trust

only to pious offerings of the faithful. Lucius survived this demand but a few days, and was succeeded by Eugenius III. who dreading the mutinous spirit of the inhabitants, withdrew from Rome, and was consecrated in a neighbouring fortress.

As soon as Arnold was acquainted with the escape of the pontiff, he entered Rome, and animated with new vigour the licentious fury of the populace. He called to their remembrance the achievements of their forefathers—he painted in the strongest colours, the sufferings which sprung from ecclesiastical tyranny; and he charged them as men and as Romans, never to admit the pontiff within their walls, till they had prescribed the limits of his spiritual jurisdiction, and fixed the civil government in their own hands. Headed by the disaffected nobles, the frenzied populace attacked the cardinals and clergy, who still continued in the city. They set fire to the palaces, and forced the inhabitants to swear allegiance to the new system of things.

The Roman pontiff could no longer view with patience the excesses of this ungovernable mob. At the head of his troops, chiefly composed of Tiburtines, he marched against the city, and after some trifling concessions on his part, was reinstated on the papal throne. Notwithstanding the triumph over the malcontents, the friends of Arnold were still numerous, and continued to disturb the peace of the city, till our countryman, Adrian IV. was raised to the chair of St. Peter. On the first appearance of a riot, during which a cardinal was either killed or wounded in the street, Adrian held an interdict over the guilty city, and from Christmas to Easter deprived it of the privilege of religious worship. This bold and sagacious contrivance gave a sudden turn to the minds of the people. Arnold and his followers were banished from the city, and fled for protection to the viscounts

of Campania. His holiness, however, was not satisfied with restoring peace to his capital. A spirit of revenge burned within him, till he instigated Frederic Barbarossa to force Arnold from his asylum in Campania. This intrepid reformer was immediately seized by Cardinal Gerard in 1155, and was burned alive in the midst of a fickle people, who gazed with stupid indifference on the expiring hero, who had fallen in defence of their dearest rights, and whom they had formerly regarded with more than mortal veneration; his ashes were thrown into the Tiber; but though no corporeal relic could be preserved to animate his followers, the efforts which he made in the cause of civil and religious freedom were cherished in the breasts of future patriots, and inspired those mighty attempts which have chained down and finally destroyed the monster of superstition.

It is impossible not to admire the genius and persevering intrepidity of Arnold. To distinguish truth from error in an age of darkness, and to detect the causes of spiritual corruption in the thickest atmosphere of ignorance and superstition, evinced a mind of more than ordinary stretch. To adopt a plan for recovering the lost glory of his country, and fixing the limits of spiritual usurpation, demanded a degree of resolution which no opposition could controul. But to struggle against superstition entrenched in power, to plant the standard of rebellion in the very heart of her empire, and to keep possession of her capital for a number of years, could scarcely have been expected from an individual who had no power but that of his eloquence, and no assistance but what he derived from the justice of his cause. Yet such were the individual exertions of Arnold, which posterity will appreciate as one of the noblest legacies which former ages have bequeathed. Every triumph that is gained over ecclesiastical power stretched beyond

its just limits, in whatever country it is sanctioned, and under whatever system of faith it is exercised, is the triumph of right reason over the worst passions of the heart. It is the greatest step which the human mind can take in its progress to that knowledge and happiness to which the Almighty has destined it to arrive.\*

“We may truly say,” says Dr. Allix, “that scarcely any man was ever so torn and defamed on account of his doctrine as was this Arnold of Brescia. Would we know the reason of this? It was because, with all his power, he opposed the tyranny and usurpation which the popes began to establish at Rome over the temporal jurisdiction of the emperors. He was the man, who by his counsel renewed the design of re-establishing the authority of the senate in Rome, and of obliging the pope not to meddle with any thing but what concerned the government of the church, without invading the temporal jurisdiction:—this was his crime, and this indeed is such an one as is unpardonable with the pope, if there be any such.”†

“But there was a still more heinous thing laid to his charge, which was this: *Præter hæc de sacramento altaris et baptismo parvulorum, non sane dictur sensisse!* that is, “He was unsound in his judgment about the sacrament of the altar and infant baptism”—(in other words, he rejected the popish doctrine of transubstantiation and of the baptism of infants.) And this alone was sufficient ground for his condemnation; for as he set himself industriously to oppose the accumulating errors in the church of Brescia, his native place, in which he was supported by MAIFREDUS, the consul of that city, accusations against him were transmitted to pope Inno-

\* Brewster’s Edinburgh Encyclop. Art. ARNOLD.

† Allix’s Remarks, p. 169.



cent II. who immediately imposed silence upon him, lest such pernicious doctrine should spread further. On this, Arnold retired from Italy, and settled at Zurich, in the diocese of Constance, where he continued to disseminate his doctrine until the death of the pope, at which time he returned to Rome."

Otho Frisingensis, a Catholic bishop, gives the following account of the death of this great man. "Being entered into the city [Rome] and finding it altogether in a seditious uproar against the pope, he was so far from following the advice of the wise man, not to add fuel to the fire, that he greatly increased it, proposing to the multitude the examples of the ancient Romans, who, by the maturity of their senators' counsels, and the valour and integrity of their youth, made the world their own. He therefore advised them to rebuild the capital, to restore the dignity of the senate, and reform the order of knights. He maintained that the civil government of the city did not belong to the pope, who ought to confine himself to matters purely ecclesiastical. And so far did the mischief of this infectious doctrine prevail, that the mob pulled down several of the houses of the nobility and cardinals, treating the latter with personal abuse, and even violence. He could not hope to escape long, after committing so heinous a crime against persons so extremely jealous of their tyranny.

"Having persisted for a length of time, incessantly and irreverently, in these and similar enterprises, contemning the sentence of the clergy justly and canonically pronounced against him as altogether void, and of no authority; he at length *fell into the hands of some*, on the borders of Tuscany, who took him prisoner, and being preserved for the prince's trial, he was at last, by the præfect of the city, hanged, (Mosheim says he was crucified) and his body burnt to ashes, to prevent the foolish

of Lower Saxony, which joining a squadron that was fitted out by the Frieslanders, Flemings, and people of Brabant, proceeded for the Straits of Gibraltar in their way to Ptolemais. On their arrival at that port, a council of war was held, at which it was resolved to besiege Damietta, in Egypt, which was accordingly invested by sea and land, and taken, after a tedious siege of eighteen months, in the year 1219. Their possession of this place, however, was of no great duration. A dispute arose among the chiefs of the crusaders about precedence, which it was found impossible to adjust without consulting his holiness, who, in his great wisdom, at length directed that the supreme command should be vested in a cardinal of the church of Rome. This monkish general brought the army of the cross between two branches of the river Nile, just at the time when that river, which fertilizes and defends Egypt, began its periodical inundation. The Sultan, informed of their situation, opened the sluices, and overflowed the camp of the crusaders; and while he burnt their ships on one side, the Nile increasing on the other, threatened the hourly destruction of the whole army. The pope's legate finding himself and his troops reduced to the last extremity, restored Damietta, and was glad to conclude with the Sultan a dishonourable treaty, by which he bound himself and his army not to serve against the former for eight years.

When the leaders of the crusading army arrived in Europe the pope was extremely incensed at the loss of Damietta, and wrote a severe letter to the emperor, accusing him of having sacrificed the interests of Christianity by so long delaying the performance of his vow, and threatening him with immediate excommunication, if he did not instantly depart with an army into Asia. Frederic, exasperated at these reproaches, renounced all

correspondence with the court of Rome, filled up vacant sees and benefices, and even expelled some bishops, who were creatures of the pope, on pretence of their being concerned in practices against the state. The pontiff at first attempted to repel force by force, threatening the emperor with the thunder of the church, for presuming to lift his hand against the sanctuary; but finding that Frederic was not to be intimidated, he became sensible of his own imprudence, in wantonly incurring the resentment of so powerful a prince, whose temper he now thought proper to soothe by submissive apologies and gentle exhortations. A reconciliation accordingly took place; and the emperor, as a proof of his sincere attachment to the church, published four severe edicts against the Paterines, Waldenses, and others, to which we shall have occasion afterwards to advert, and which tended greatly to promote the establishment of the Inquisition.

Not long after this a solemn assembly was held at Ferentino, at which both the emperor and pope attended, together with John de Brienne, the titular king of Jerusalem, who had come to Europe to demand succours against the Sultan of Egypt. This monarch had an only daughter, whom he offered in marriage to the emperor, with the kingdom of Jerusalem as her dowry, on condition that he, within two years, performed the vow he had made of leading an army to the Holy Land. Frederic married her on these terms, because he chose to please the pope; and since that time, the kings of Sicily have taken the title of king of Jerusalem. But Frederic evinced no impatience to go and conquer his wife's portion, having business at home of more importance, that required his attendance. The principal cities of Lombardy had entered into a league to renounce his authority; to counteract which, he convoked a diet at Cre-

mona, A. D. 1227, where all the princes and nobles of Germany and Italy were summoned to attend. The interference of the pope produced an accommodation, and it was agreed that the emperor should lay aside his resentment against the confederate towns, and that those towns should furnish and maintain four hundred knights for the relief of the Holy Land. Peace being thus concluded, his holiness reminded the emperor of his vow; Frederic promised compliance, but the pope died before the execution of a project which he seemed to have so much at heart. He was succeeded by Gregory IX. who, pursuing the same line of policy, urged the departure of Frederic for the Holy Land, and finding him still backward, declared him incapable of holding the imperial dignity, as having incurred the sentence of excommunication. Frederic, incensed at such insolence, ravaged the patrimony of St. Peter, and was excommunicated. Wearied, however, at length with increasing contentions, and desirous of gratifying the prejudices of a superstitious age, Frederic resolved to perform his vow, and accordingly embarked for the Holy Land. The pope now prohibited his departure until he was absolved from the censures of the church; but the emperor proceeded in contempt of the pope's threatening, and with better success than his predecessors. He did not indeed desolate Asia, and gratify the barbarous zeal of the times, by shedding the blood of infidels; but he concluded a treaty with the Sultan of Egypt, by which the end of his expedition was fully answered. The Sultan ceded to him Jerusalem and its territory as far as Joppa, Bethlechem, and Nazareth, and all the country between Jerusalem and Ptolemais; Tyre, Sidon, and the neighbouring districts: and in return for these concessions, the emperor granted him a truce for ten years. A. D. 1229.

About twenty years after this, the Sultan of Egypt



having regained his authority in the Holy Land, these frantic expeditions were resumed by Louis IX. king of France, commonly called Saint Louis. This prince no sooner came of age than he was universally acknowledged one of the greatest potentates in Europe; and his character is perhaps one of the most singular in the annals of history. To the abject superstition of a monk, he united all the magnanimity of a hero; but, what may be deemed still more wonderful, the justice and integrity of the sincere patriot, and where religion was not concerned, the mildness and humanity of the true philosopher. But Louis had his foibles. Persuaded that heretics, or those who dissented from the Roman church, deserved the punishment of death, he favoured the tribunal of the Inquisition; and the same turn of thinking led him to ascribe merit to a war against infidels. His humane heart became a prey to the barbarous superstition of the times. When a dangerous illness deprived him of his senses, and almost of his life, his heated imagination took fire, and he thought he heard a voice commanding him to shed the blood of infidels! He accordingly made a vow that, as soon as he recovered, he would engage in a new Crusade, and he immediately took the cross. Nor could any remonstrances induce him to forego his purpose; he considered his vow as a sacred and indissoluble obligation. A. D. 1244.

But though not to be dissuaded from his Eastern expedition, Louis was in no haste to depart. Four years were spent in making preparations and settling the government of his kingdom, which he committed to the care of his mother; and at length, in 1248, he set sail for Cyprus, accompanied by his queen, his three brothers, and almost all the knights of France. Arriving at Cyprus, it was resolved to make a descent upon Egypt, as it was supposed that Jerusalem and the Holy Land



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