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ART. I.—THE RELIGION OF GEOLOGY AND ITS CONNECTED SCIENCES. By Edward Hitchcock, D.D., LL.D., President of Amherst College, and Professor of Natural Theology and Geology. Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co. 1851.

BY THE EDITOR.

DR. HITCHCOCK has long been one of the most laborious cultivators and popular teachers of geology in our country. Naturally ardent, ambitious of success in whatever he undertakes, and excited by the prospect of novel and brilliant discoveries, he has pursued his profession with an ardor approaching to enthusiasm, and has gained in it, by his investigations of the strata of Massachusetts, his lectures, and his publications, a highly flattering rank. As he is a clergyman and professor of natural theology in the institution of which he is president, and as his speculations in respect to the age and history of the earth are regarded by many in the sacred office and others as at war with the teachings of the Scriptures, he has naturally felt desirous to free them from that objection, and has accordingly made it the object of several of his essays or treatises to reconcile the history of the creation in Genesis with his theory; and

prophecy of the re-establishment of Tyre was also verified: On the fall of Babylon, which took place after the dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar had reigned seventy years, the nations of Palestine and the west appear to have recovered in a measure their liberty. The Phenicians had risen to such strength at the time of Xerxes's expedition against Greece, as to furnish a considerable fleet for his service; and Tyre had fully recovered her ancient power and glory, and long enjoyed a prosperous career, when, on Alexander's march to the east, she was again conquered and laid waste.

ART. V.—THE FULNESS OF THE TIMES.

BY THE REV. JOHN FORSYTH, JR., D.D.

In a former article we endeavored to show that during the long period that elapsed between the fall and the advent, human nature was subjected to a series of trials, designed on the one hand to develop its various powers, and on the other to prove that by no merely spontaneous exercise of them, could man rescue himself from the thralldom of sin. We intimated that there may be some allusion to this trial of what is in man, in that declaration of St. Paul, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son."

The same apostle, in his epistle to the Ephesians, though treating of a very different subject, has nearly the same form of words,—“That in the dispensation of the fulness of the times, he might gather together in one all things, in Christ.” Without entering into anything like a critical examination of this passage, we would observe that even those expositors who regard the “dispensation” here spoken of as the one under which we live, for the most part admit that the period on which the apostle's eye was fixed, when he penned these words, is one in the future. The meaning of the verse is, on the whole, very well brought out by Doddridge, who thus paraphrases it: “*That in the economy of the fulness of the times, or when that time was fully come which he in his wise appointment and distribution of things had judged most suitable and eligible, he might re-unite under one head all*

things in Christ, whom he hath constituted Sovereign of angels and men, and of all his dominions and subjects, *both which are in heaven and which are on earth*, that for his glory and the good of the whole society, he should with supreme authority preside over all." If it were necessary, we might quote from other expositors who have never been suspected of the least tendency to what are called Millenarian opinions, statements going to show that the glorious consummation described by Paul is still future, and that a period is approaching when our Lord Jesus Christ shall "with supreme authority preside over all." We shall not presume to affirm, in the absence of a clear Scripture warrant, that the primary design of the long delay of the Redeemer's incarnation, and of the long interval between his first and second advent, was to afford time and room for a complete display of what man can do to retrieve the consequences of his apostasy, but we apprehend that none will deny that such an experiment is one of the results of this divine arrangement, an experiment fitted to convince the most sceptical of the absolute necessity of that interposition in behalf of our race, which the gospel reveals as having been already made in the mission and death of the Son of God, and which, it predicts, shall be repeated in another form, by the appearance of "that same Jesus" in the glory of his Father, as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The history of our world during the first four thousand years of its existence, establishes the fact beyond all gain-saying, that the human mind could never have discovered the true remedy for the manifold evils introduced by the fall. Whether it proves more than this, may, by some, perhaps be doubted. It might be said, grant that the experience of ages, the manifest worthlessness of all the specifics devised by human wisdom to heal the moral diseases of the human family, puts the inability of man to discover the proper remedy beyond doubt, it may still be affirmed that he is quite capable of applying the remedy, when once it is made known to him. He needs no other help. Under the guidance of his own reason he can travel surely and safely on the path of life, after it has been clearly revealed. But it is needless to put the case hypothetically, for such views of the spiritual capacities of man have obtained in all ages, and

are held by many now. The saying of a Grecian sage, that if virtue should appear on earth in human form, the whole world would join in doing her reverent homage, has been repeated by many a Christian divine. Is this true? The history of the last eighteen centuries gives a very emphatic and decisive answer to the question.

The advent of the Son of God was at once the terminating point of one series of experiments, illustrative of the capacities of man to discover the remedy for his moral wants, and the starting point of another series, equally illustrative of his ability to apply the remedy when found. The promise of a Saviour twice given to the entire race, and twice forgotten by the larger part of it, is at length fulfilled. The Messiah whose coming had been the theme of prophecy and poetry through a long tract of ages, at length personally appears on earth, and accomplishes the work of obedience and atonement given him to do; he broke down the barriers that confined the true religion within the narrow limits of Judea, he set up a new dispensation, so resplendent for its light and liberty as to cast all previous ones into the shade; a dispensation, whose external forms as well as its doctrines adapted it to all countries, and to all conditions of society; and while he directed those who were charged with its propagation to begin their work at Jerusalem, expressly commanded them to teach all nations. Viewing Christianity in the strong contrast it presents to Judaism and to Gentile Philosophy, not to speak of Polytheism, one might have imagined that a speedy and universal triumph awaited it; that its claims, so soon as they were fairly presented, would win their way to every heart. How the world received it and its divine author, the history of the primitive church abundantly shows. The Sun of Righteousness, heralded by the morning star of the old economy, arose full-orbed, "with healing under his wings;" but was his coming hailed with joy by the myriads groping their way amid the thick darkness of pagan superstition, or the dim shadows of Jewish types? Did the nations whom he came to save, turn with glad accord to gaze upon his softened splendor, eager to drink in his beams? No. The light shone in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not.

The triumphs of the gospel during the first of those greater

periods into which the history of the Christian church is commonly divided, were indeed glorious. It encountered, as we know, the bitterest opposition from Jew and Gentile. Rich as were the blessings which it promised and conferred, in every land its approach was as obstinately resisted as if its presence had involved the direst miseries of war, pestilence, and famine; a fact, by the way, wholly inexplicable except on the hypothesis that human nature has become so radically depraved that "men love darkness rather than light." Within little more than two centuries after the command was given to the apostles to "go, and teach all nations," scarcely a region could be named within the limits of the Roman empire, into which the heralds of the cross had not penetrated. The church, with a world in arms against her, worked her way, often through seas of blood, until she reached and entered the very palace of the Cæsars, and Christianity became the established religion of the empire. By this rapid spread, and these marvellous victories, the New Dispensation gave a fresh proof of its dignity, by evincing its adaptedness to meet the moral wants of man, and that it possessed all the requisite conditions of an universal religion. It displayed an innate energy, a mastery over the human heart, a power to remould human character, which could be accounted for only on the supposition of its being the instrument through which Omnipotence operates.

As before hinted, the very features of Christianity that adapted it for universal diffusion—the fewness and simplicity of its outward forms, the clear enunciation of its peculiar doctrines, the whole system of truth being brought within the compass of a single volume of very moderate dimensions, a volume which every human being was entitled to possess, and bound to study for himself—these features, we say, would seem to render it an easy task both to spread the Christian faith, and to keep it free of all corrupting admixtures. Even if the New Testament had not been written, if the church had been left dependent upon tradition for the preservation of her faith and her franchises, one might have imagined that both would be quite safe, and that each succeeding generation would guard with the most jealous care the priceless deposit with which they were intrusted not for their own benefit alone, but for that of coming ages. To

guard, however, against all possible risk of loss or of adulteration, the divine author of the gospel embodied its facts, doctrines, and laws in the written word, in holy Scripture.

It might be said by those who exalt the religious tendencies and capacities of the man, his innate power not indeed to discover divine truth, but to recognise it when revealed, that even the rejection and persecution of Christianity in its early ages, is not a fair and conclusive proof of the falsity of their theory. They might say, we admit that in rejecting and persecuting the gospel they rejected and persecuted the truth, but then great allowance should be made for them, since truth came to them in a form not only new, but one which gave a sudden and wide shock to their inveterate prejudices and most deeply seated habits. No wonder that the miracles of the gospel did not produce instant conviction in the minds of men whose ancestral religions all claimed to rest upon a basis more or less miraculous. Some time would be necessarily required to dissipate the mists of prejudice, and to bring the evidence of the divinity of the gospel fairly before the popular mind. Let us admit that the treatment of Christ and his apostles furnishes no decisive proof of the spiritual impotency of man, or of his love of darkness in preference to light. The fact thus set aside is only one of a series. We are in a position to take a wider survey, one extending over a long tract of centuries, and including within its limits a nominally Christian world.

What, then, are we taught in reference to the spiritual capacities of man, by the history of the society founded by Christ himself, whose first ministers bore his own immediate commission, were endowed with extraordinary powers, and were intrusted with the oracles of God? To obtain a satisfactory answer to this inquiry, let us examine the first great period of ecclesiastical history, viz. that extending from the day of Pentecost to the final overthrow of Paganism. We see, at the outset, a most remarkable social organization, a community made up of men, Jews and Gentiles, called out of darkness into light—a society divine in its origin and endowments, consisting mainly, if not wholly, of regenerated men, and possessed of an instrument, "the powerful Word of God," fitted to revolutionize and regenerate the world. It will certainly be admitted that never before was humanity

placed in circumstances so favorable for the full development of any innate tendencies remaining in it towards God and goodness, and for successfully struggling with that mysterious evil agency which had exerted during so many ages such a disastrous influence upon the fortunes of our race. What now is the lesson taught by the history of the Christian church itself? It is essentially the same as those with which the previous history of the world for four thousand years is so full—that man's own energies are utterly inadequate to the task of effecting his deliverance from the mighty grasp of that evil which his apostasy brought into the world; that the leaven of sin is perpetually at work, permeating the entire mass of human nature, so that no form of society which that nature may assume, not one even of divine construction, is exempt from its deadly influence, or can hinder its corrupting every source of life. In a word, from the new experiment we get a new discovery of sin reigning unto death, we see it entering within the very precincts of the newly constructed house of the living God, to deface and defile it; we see it seducing the visible spouse of the Redeemer, and converting her into "the mother of harlots and abominations;" in fine, we see it corrupting the divine remedy for human guilt and woe, so as to make it the occasion of giving a tremendous stimulus to the disease which afflicts our race, and of introducing forms of wickedness unmatched by any recorded even in the dark annals of Paganism.

The New Testament furnishes us with numerous testimonies that "the mystery of iniquity," to use its own expressive phrase, had begun to develop itself within the bosom of the church, a considerable time before the termination of the apostolic age. The epistles were addressed to congregations of believers resident in widely distant localities, and with scarce an exception, we discover in them tokens that agencies were at work "among their own selves," endangering the purity of their faith, of their morals, or of both, and subjecting them to an incessant struggle in defence of the gospel against the treason of professed friends as well as the physical force of open enemies. On this point it is needless to enter into particulars with which every biblical student must be familiar. Suffice it to say, that the apostles labored

hard to nip these evils in the bud. Their letters to the churches were evidently intended to guard them against dangers of whose presence they had ample evidence—to correct disorders, to refute heresy, as well as to expound the positive doctrines of the Christian system. And no doubt their efforts for the maintenance of the cause of truth, yielded much precious fruit in their own day; nor can it be questioned that by the labors of the holy men who immediately succeeded them—those who are justly styled “the apostolic fathers,” as their scanty literary remains show that they were deeply imbued with the apostolic spirit—the visible body of Christ was largely edified, not only by the increase of its numbers, but also by the development of its spiritual life. Still the history of the church during the period which is commonly and justly regarded as her most glorious epoch, supplies the most decisive proof that she had thus early received an impress from the very influences which it was her special mission to resist and destroy. During the first three centuries, the church was in a condition in which one might have supposed it scarcely possible for human passion or folly operating *ab intra* to do her serious damage. She was involved in a “great fight of afflictions,” and was forced to maintain an almost incessant battle for her existence. To confess Christ then, was to imperil all that men hold dear. What was there to tempt a carnal man to embark in such a cause? Nothing. On the contrary, the circumstances of the church were in every way and pre-eminently fitted to repel the carnal, the ambitious, the hypocrite, the mere enthusiast; in a word, all who were not actuated by a clear and overpowering conviction of the divine authority of the gospel of Christ. Yet in spite of these repelling circumstances, while the fires of persecution were blazing in all their fierceness, while the church was wandering in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth, compelled to worship at midnight in the lonely cemeteries, or in the dark, damp catacombs, we know that carnality and ambition were not strangers to the visible fellowship of saints; we know that the germs of a system of iniquity the most enormous that the world ever saw—the very masterpiece of Satan,—were developed with a marvellous rapidity. Judaism and Gentilism, apparently so antago-

nistic to each other, exerted a constant and concurrent influence upon the church in the way of corrupting her faith and her forms.

It would require much more space than we have at command, to discuss the causes of this declension, and minutely to trace its progress, even if we had the means of doing it. Unfortunately, the remains of the Christian literature of the first and second centuries are too scanty to do full justice to the subject. But it is not necessary for our purpose. It is the undeniable fact that the church began very early to decline from her pristine purity, with which we are chiefly concerned. While the distinctive articles of the Christian faith were held fast, and asserted with unflinching boldness against all opposers, other doctrines crept in by which the vital influence of those precious gospel truths which were embodied in the recognised creeds of the church, was seriously weakened or entirely annulled. The ministry, instituted by Christ mainly as an agency of instruction to "teach all nations," gradually assumed the character, and affected to discharge the functions of a priesthood; and at length a wide gulf separated the pastor and his flock, the clergy and the laity. Baptism and the Lord's supper were converted into "tremendous mysteries." Celibacy was regarded as essential to the highest virtue; while marriage, "honorable in all," was held, by not a few, to be little better than a decent sort of adultery. Not only were the foundations of monasticism laid, but the superstructure was carried a good way up. The wealth, the power, the pomp of many bishops, especially in the larger cities, would have filled the hearts of the apostles with amazement and horror.

There are those who, either for party purposes, through party prejudices, or from sheer ignorance of Christian antiquity, are accustomed to represent the corruptions above mentioned, as the immediate offspring of the policy of Constantine. It was the union of church and state, they would have us believe, that became to the former the Pandora's box—the source of all the evils that darkened and defiled her history through succeeding centuries. One of the ablest writers* of the present day maintains that the measures taken

* Isaac Taylor, *Spiritual Despotism*, p. 194.

by Constantine were a positive benefit to the church, in other respects besides the security they afforded her of exemption from wasting persecution, that "the pure voluntary principle, as applied to the maintenance of the clergy, had, at the close of the third century, reached a point at which, as well for the good of the community as for the preservation and honor of the church, it needed some effectual check; that such a check, drawn from motives of good sense or piety, was not available, and that nothing could have taken hold of it but a vigorous interference on the part of the state." Be this as it may, the fact is beyond question that the manifold evils supposed by many to have originated in the policy of Constantine, and which, no doubt, were stimulated by the change in the political relations of the church, were actively at work within her bosom, long before that great emperor was born. If any one desires proofs of this averment, he will find them in abundance in the writings of Cyprian—a man eminent for his personal holiness, for his labors and sufferings in the cause of Christ—himself "a faithful martyr," yet in no small measure infected by the leaven of corruption. We of course do not mean to deny the existence, or even the prevalence, of real piety in the church, during and after the days of Cyprian. Her history contains not a few bright pages. She held the grand verities of the gospel with a tough grasp which all the power of the persecutor could not make her relax. Her fellowship included multitudes of humble followers of the Lamb, men and women who loved the faith once delivered to the saints, and who, in contending for it, "counted not their lives dear unto them." But, for all this, the records of the age bear us out in the assertion, that within less than three centuries the church had assumed a type materially different from "the mould into which" she "was delivered" by the apostles. The "gold had become dim and the fine gold changed." Nor was the declension the result simply of causes operating *ab extra*; it was to a large extent spontaneous, the work of professed, and in many instances of real saints—of men who had been called out of darkness and made partakers of a divine life. In the condition and tendencies of the church at the close of the third century of her existence in the new form which she put on after the coming of Christ, we are

presented with the results of an experiment, with reference to the capacities of human nature, differing in its most material circumstances from those that preceded. A community consisting mainly of regenerated men, including Jew and Gentile within its catholic fellowship, and possessing a clear and complete revelation of the Divine will, is put upon trial. If the history of the race during the earlier ages, proved the inability of man to discover the true remedy for his moral disease, the history of the church no less conclusively proves his incapacity to preserve, and properly apply the remedy after it has been made known; it thus appears that he not only could never have broken the chains of his bondage, but even after they have been severed by Almighty power, he could not maintain his freedom.

But it might be said, with a view to take off the edge of this conclusion, that the nature of the materials out of which the early church was constructed should be taken into account; the fact that her membership was mainly derived from nations in the last stages of their existence—nations whose character and habits had been formed under a civilization intensely corrupt; and that the evil leaven thus introduced had been allowed to operate without the least control by the state, with which religion had ever been in close alliance, or by that civil government which is as truly an ordinance of God as the church herself. If the experiment had stopped at the close of the period of which we have spoken, this consideration might have been regarded as having some weight; but as we follow the church through the stages of her subsequent career, we are compelled to own that it has no force whatever. At the period when Constantine became sole occupant of the imperial throne, the church, though much deteriorated, contained a large amount of living piety, as was manifest in the heroic fortitude with which she faced the storm of persecution excited by enemies who had avowed the fixed purpose to extirpate her from the earth—a storm which continued to rage up to the very moment when the palace of the Cæsars was so suddenly opened for her admission as an honored guest. The fires that had burned so long could not fail to consume a vast deal of dross. Again, it should not be forgotten, that the departure of the church from the simplicity of Christ during the

earlier years of comparative peace, was not unresisted. Warning voices were constantly heard; and along the whole line of her history we can trace a succession of faithful witnesses.

If the church, as a body, had a recuperative energy, an innate *vis medicatrix*, in virtue of which she could of herself arrest and throw off disease, and thus regain her proper normal condition, the era at which she not only won imperial favor, but was brought into an alliance with a Christian state, involving on its part guardianship and control, was precisely the period when we should have looked for the exercise of this intrinsic power. Constantine was neither her tyrant nor her slave. He did not attempt to define her faith, nor to interfere with her discipline. Not only was there no hindrance in the way of reform, there was everything to invite the church to employ the first moments of calm sunshine after "the windy storm and tempest" in a solemn survey of her past history, of her present position, of the great work she was called to do, and of the means by which alone it could be accomplished. Her spiritual independence had not yet been invaded; and there can be little doubt that her imperial patron would have lent his aid to any fair scheme of reform in which the mass of Christian pastors and people concurred. But we can discern no symptom of any such movement, nor is there any historical evidence that the thing was even thought of by pastors or by people. In virtue of the new relations between the church and the state, the bishops were no longer permitted to exercise their authority uncontrolled. True, their power in earlier times was only spiritual, but who does not know that the spiritual is the highest form of power. Look at Ireland. Who controls the masses there? Whose dominion over them is most peremptory and perfect? It is the priest that rules—not the priest of a lordly establishment, but of a merely tolerated sect. He dictates to electors the man for whom they must vote; he can at will rouse the turbulent elements of that unhappy land into active resistance to the laws. Yet his power is simply spiritual. And therefore it is idle to say that because the church before Constantine was free from state trammels there could have been no spiritual tyranny. We do not mean to intimate that the pastors of

the third century were of the same type with the priests of the nineteenth, but there can be no doubt that the former exercised a dominion over the faith of their people which the apostles expressly and earnestly repudiated. As the official dispensers of the cleansing waters of baptism, and of the "tremendous mystery" of the eucharist, they were regarded by multitudes as the virtual arbiters of their eternal destiny.

The change in the external condition of the church through the agency of Constantine was followed, after the lapse of a few generations, by a still more remarkable revolution, giving birth to those forms of society with whose annals, according to Sir James Macintosh, modern history begins. Beyond the bounds of Roman rule, in the far north, the fancied region of perpetual storms, "the fountains of the great deep are broken up," and a mighty flood rushes southwards in an ever deepening channel, and with an ever widening surface, until nearly all the ancient seats of empire and civilization are submerged. In a moral sense it might truly be said that "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." Chaos ruled again. The old owners of the magnificent regions washed by the Mediterranean, the lands where art, science, commerce had for ages dwelt, debased and enfeebled by a luxurious refinement, were forced to transfer their possessions to a new and more vigorous race. We have not space even to give a brief summary of the stirring events connected with the overthrow of the Roman power in the west, of the successive invasions of the Gothic hosts. The new comers were indeed barbarians and pagans, but they were untainted by many of the degrading vices prevalent in the countries they subdued, and their religion, though of course unable to generate the purest morals, did not eradicate all virtue. The banners of the cross had been unfurled among some of these conquering hordes before they had crossed the Alps, and the rapidity with which at least nominal Christianity was spread among some of their tribes, would seem to indicate that there was in the Gothic mind a certain propension towards the gospel.

The period to which we have adverted was necessarily one of anarchy and violence, of intense and wide-spread misery.

Tempest succeeded tempest, of each of which it might be said, that the like had never been seen on earth. As from the summit of the Alpine range, which one might have regarded as an insurmountable barrier to such armies as Alaric led, that great conqueror gazed upon the outspread plains of Italy, he beheld a land blooming with beauty like the garden of the Lord; within a few short months his savage followers had converted it into a desolate wilderness. The terrible storm at length slowly abates its violence; the waters of the overflowing flood gradually subside; a new world is revealed to view, occupied by new races, containing the germs of a new order of things; the church enters upon a new stadium, with a fresh command from her divine head to teach all nations.

The actual effect upon the church of these two great revolutions, the first of which changed so materially the political relations of the Christian society, while the latter as effectually changed both the elements and the form of civil society, is too well known to need an extended description. Their only result was to stimulate into a more vigorous activity than ever, those elements of evil, which, through human weakness or wickedness, had become incorporated with the constitution of the church. Yet the native tendency of both these dispensations, and more especially of the latter, was to produce directly opposite results, to check the progress of declension, and to quicken the spirit of reform. The divine Head of the church spake to her in language as plain, if not a voice as audible as when he promulgated his law at Sinai; in the first instance, by the sudden extinction of the flames of persecution, combined as it was with the utter overthrow of the power that had so often kindled them; in the second, by subjecting the church (in common with the state) to another fiery trial in a new form, which was followed by another marvellous deliverance. With the Bible in her hands the church could not but know by whose agency these extraordinary events had been brought about; and aware as she was of the solemn warnings addressed by the faithful and true Witness to the churches of Asia Minor and recorded in the closing book of revelation, she could be in no doubt that "the windy storm and tempest" had been allowed to beat against her; that she had shared in "the

temptation which came upon all the world," because she had left her first love.

Nor was this all. Besides the general teachings of the Scriptures, in regard to the moral government of God, she had the more specific declarations of the prophetic word, "as a light shining in a dark place." In that "sure word of prophecy," the full-length portrait of the Antichrist was drawn; it contained predictions of the ultimate overthrow of that mighty empire, whose limits reached to the furthest bounds of the earth, not merely as a future event of the utmost political importance, but as being closely connected with the coming of "that man of sin and 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, showing himself that he is God." Whether the Roman empire was truly the hindrance to the development of the man of sin to which St. Paul refers, is a question not necessary to be discussed here; but there can be no doubt that such was the prevailing opinion among the earlier fathers. And hence they looked with a solemn awe upon those indications of the decline of the Roman Power which could not fail to suggest themselves to serious and thinking men, and to beget the conviction that the dreadful catastrophe which should usher in "that Wicked" could not be very distant. "We pray," says Tertullian, in his noble Apology, "for the emperors and the empire of Rome, because we know that it is the Roman empire which holds back calamities threatening the whole earth, and the end of the world itself." In the next century, Lactantius declared "all things will ere long totter and fall, only there seems no reason to fear it while the city of Rome is safe." We might quote other passages that show that during this period there was a widespread persuasion that when the dominion of Rome terminated, "the end of all things was at hand." And therefore, when the church beheld province after province subjugated by the Gothic hordes; when at length the rude banner of the barbarian was seen waving over the Eternal city, as she proudly styled herself, and imperial Rome sank to rise no more; it was as if the voice of the Son of God had been heard from out of the heaven of heavens where he sits enthroned, proclaiming in the ear of universal Christendom, the time is

at hand. Surely, if ever God addresses men in other ways than through the medium of his written word, if his providential dispensations have an intelligible meaning, it must be owned that he then spake to his church in tones loud enough, one should think, to awake the dead, calling upon her to repent, to do her first works, to return to her first love, and thus to prepare herself for the reconquest of the world.

If the church possessed a self-reformative energy, the events to which we have adverted were pre-eminently fitted to call it forth into vigorous activity. But whatever impression was made by them on the general mind of Christendom or upon those who formed and guided the opinions of the masses, it was not of a kind to check the progress of corruption; on the contrary, the dread inspired by the apprehended nearness of the day of judgment, seems rather to have stimulated the superstitious tendencies of the age. The light which still shone in darkness, and now and then in particular localities, blazed forth with a glorious effulgence, waxed more and more dim, until at last a night of pitchy darkness settled down upon the Christian world.

But it might be said that the deplorable condition of the church, during the ages that are well styled Dark, her deep ignorance, superstition, idolatry, or, in a word, the inroads of the old paganism under a Christian name, were owing, if not wholly, at least in great part, to causes over which the church had no control. The means for the diffusion of knowledge, spiritual and secular, were so limited as to render the elevation of the masses of society above a very low point, a simple impossibility. The press had no existence: books were costly; bibles were rare; a popular religious literature was a thing not so much as dreamed of. Hence the lay membership of the church were entirely dependent upon the clergy for religious knowledge, and even the great majority of the clergy were nearly, if not quite, as destitute of libraries, as the flocks to whom they ministered. Free discussion, independent research, so essential to the discovery and the spread of truth, was not to be looked for, unless among a few of the loftiest and richest dignitaries, from the utter want of the necessary helps. No wonder, therefore, that the knowing few so easily led captive the ignorant

many, and persuaded them into the belief of all manner of lying legends; and that the few faithful witnesses against the reigning superstition, and for the truth in Jesus, who from time to time appeared, were so easily overborne. In a word, the virulence of the distemper by which the church was infected, was much more owing to the want of the requisite conveniences for applying the remedies in her possession, than to any subjective tendency to disease. We might have felt that this explanation had a great deal of plausibility, if the experimental process had terminated with the dark ages; but there was still another trial awaiting the church, and a cursory survey of its results will suffice to show that such an explanation is quite inadmissible.

After a long night of centuries, the dawn of a coming day is discerned. In various parts of Europe, the germs of a new intellectual life show themselves, which are soon after quickened into a growth of marvellous rapidity, by that grandest of human inventions—the Press. Books, once so costly and so rare as to form a fit present for a prince, are now brought within the reach of the poorest peasant. The book of books, the Bible, once found only in the libraries of monarchs and monasteries, was now to be seen in many a cottage of the poor. Almost at the same moment, and at points widely distant from each other—amid the Alpine mountains and on the plains of Germany—the heralds of a recovered gospel are heard proclaiming its glad tidings to all nations. The long lost doctrine of a free salvation is again preached; the right of every man to search the Scriptures for himself, and to interpret their contents, responsible to God alone for his faith, is boldly asserted. Not only is it asserted; thousands in many lands exercise it. The movement begun by Luther and Zwingli rapidly extends itself from country to country, among all classes of society, so that long before the close of that generation nearly the whole of northern Europe is emancipated from Romish bondage, and the church reformed assumes a distinct and independent organization.

More than three centuries have elapsed since that great religious revolution, the parent of so many others of a political and social nature. What has been the history of Protestantism, and what light does it cast upon the capacities

and tendencies of human nature? That the world has reaped from the Reformation blessings manifold and rich, can be denied only by the blindest bigotry. Candid Romanists have acknowledged as much. Wherever Protestantism has gone, literature, science, commerce, the useful arts have followed in her train; she has founded colleges by hundreds, and common schools by thousands; the offspring of a struggle for religious liberty, of a contest for the freedom wherewith Christ made his people free, she has prompted inquiry in regard to the rights of men as members of society, as the subjects of government. To the Protestant Reformation, Britain and America owe the chief elements of their grandeur and their power. Compare North America with South, Scotland with Spain, England with Italy, Prussia with Austria, how strong and how uniform the contrast! Compare continent with continent, or kingdom with kingdom, or canton with canton, you meet the same diverse results; on the one hand, an intense intellectual life, science gaining fresh triumphs, commercial enterprise, growing wealth, schools, colleges, personal freedom, and a high standard of social morality; while on the other hand, you as invariably find ignorance, superstition, poverty, vice, in a word, all the symptoms of social paralysis. We could show that the results first enumerated are the native fruits of that "glorious gospel" with the revived preaching of which Protestantism started into being. Most emphatically has the Reformation vindicated its claim to be regarded as a divinely originated movement.

But the question arises, why is the church of the Reformation, after the lapse of three centuries, confined within such narrow limits? Why did she not, from her very birth, go on conquering and to conquer? She occupied a higher vantage ground than the church had ever before held, since the days of the apostles; she possessed instrumentalities for the preservation of her own purity, and for the rapid propagation of the faith, which were wanting even in the primitive church. The recovered gospel encountered, indeed, the fierce opposition of mighty enemies, but it enjoyed at the same time the protection of powerful friends. If emperors and kings mustered their forces to put it down, other princes were prepared to jeopard their crowns in its defence. Again,

limited as was the power of the press of Luther's day as compared with that of our own, its capacities were still sufficiently developed to render it a mighty agent for the propagation of truth. The Bible, the catechism, the prayer-book, the religious treatise, whether in the form of the tract, the sermon, or the solid volume, were all brought within the reach of the masses. Many of those difficulties which in former ages impeded the triumph of the church were now removed; and it might have been imagined by the contemporaries of the Reformers, that the glorious days foretold by the prophets could not be far off, when the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. We need not say that if such hopes were entertained, they were destined to be bitterly disappointed. Protestantism, as we have before observed, can point to many noble monuments of its elevating power, to many proofs of its divine origin; yet no one untinged with prejudice can read its history without feelings of deep sadness; or could survey its present condition, and still retain a sanguine hope of the coming of the period when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, were it not for the express divine promise that this blessed consummation awaits the world.

The church of the Reformation has scarcely assumed an independent organization before we find her membership, in spite of the imperative necessity of union, split into two antagonistic and irreconcilable communions, not by difference of opinion about some fundamental article of faith, but in regard to the meaning of an external rite. Bibles in almost every tongue are multiplied and scattered like the leaves of autumn; men are rightly taught that God alone is the Lord of conscience; they are exhorted to exercise their divinely given privilege to investigate all things for themselves. And what have been the results of their liberal use of the right of private judgment? Among them are to be reckoned truculent fanaticism, monstrous heresy, downright infidelity, multitudinous and strangely variegated sectarianism. We do not by any means intend to say that these have been the chief results, and as little would we be understood to intimate that they are the legitimate result of that free inquiry which Protestantism favors; but none can deny that such consequences have been produced; that men with the Bible in

their hands, have attempted to make it sanction fanaticism, heresy, and sectarianism in their worst forms.

The space that remains to us will not permit us to dwell upon the condition of the church in the very countries where the Reformation began. What it is now, what it has been for many years, is sufficiently known to our readers to render a description needless. A cold, lifeless orthodoxy was succeeded by a colder rationalism, which utterly extinguished spiritual vitality; and now the necessity of reform is not less urgent than it was in the beginning of the sixteenth century. During the greatest part of the last century, it seemed as if the entire Protestant church had fallen into a deep sleep, or had been struck by paralysis; so few and faint were the indications of spiritual health and activity to be discerned in one of her numerous branches. Her slumbers are at length partially broken. The wants and woes of the pagan world begin to engage attention, to enlist sympathy, to excite effort. Bible, mission, tract societies are formed on a basis so catholic that all who "hold the Head even Christ" might occupy. Christians are ashamed that so vast an amount of energy has been expended in the defence of politics and forms, while so little was done to extend the common Christianity. On many a platform nothing was heard but the language of mutual love—urgent entreaties that Christians should "agree to differ," while they unitedly labored to propagate "the things in which they were agreed." The appeals are in vain. The spirit of missions, to which the church for so many ages had been an almost total stranger, reappears in the midst of her; and soon the heralds of the gospel are seen upon their way to the dark and distant islands of the sea. Many a pious soul imagined that the splendors of the millennial day had actually dawned. The institutions to which this revival of the spirit of Christian aggressiveness gave birth have greatly multiplied in number, and are at the present moment in full activity; but can it be said with truth that those who now manage them are animated by a zeal as unselfish and unsectarian as that displayed by their venerable fathers? We venture to affirm that it cannot. In truth, nothing can be plainer than the tendency of missionary zeal to put on a sectarian type. Fifty years ago it seemed as if Christians were on the point

of forgetting their differences under the influence of a common sympathy for the heathen. Now, we have mission boards of every sectarian name; and while we do not mean to deny the existence of a cordial Christian sympathy for the heathen, in the hearts of their members, yet, if we could suppose that Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Baptists, and others, were actuated by blind party zeal alone, we cannot conceive what forms their aggressive efforts could assume other than those which now exist. If the subject were not too delicate for discussion, we could easily show that our other great benevolent institutions have already felt the influence of human infirmity. But we must bring our observations to a close.

From this hasty survey of the more remarkable epochs in the history of the church, we discover in her a perpetual tendency to depart from her proper normal state. Neither the clear teachings of a completed Bible nor the recorded experience of centuries, neither the warnings of prophecy nor the lessons of history, have sufficed to secure her against the seductions of the arch-enemy of God and man. It matters not how greatly her external circumstances may change, whether amid the fires of persecution or the palaces of princes, whether she possesses few means for diffusing knowledge or many, whether she is compelled laboriously to write her Bibles one by one with the pen, or enabled by the press to print and scatter them by thousands, we still encounter the agents of evil within her borders, and find them actively at work. What immense pains have been taken at various times by men of distinguished holiness to maintain the church's faith and life "pure and vigorous;" they have made secessions, disruptions, reformations; by means of rigid examinations, elaborate confessions, and all sorts of canons, they have tried to raise a wall around the garden of the Lord so high that no evil wind could reach it. Vain attempt! Within "the garden inclosed," in its very soil, lie hid the elements of evil, the sources of corruption. Such is the lesson taught by every reformation that has ever been made, whether on a large or a limited scale; before its authors are in their grave the symptoms of declension appear.

We may not presume to affirm that the successive stadia

through which the church has gone, have been expressly arranged by infinite wisdom, for the purpose of trying what man can do towards his own deliverance from the thralldom of evil, even with the aid of a positive revelation; but we may assert that if such an experiment had been intended, it could scarcely have yielded results more decisive than those which we may gather inferentially from the annals of the Christian church. Her whole history proclaims with a voice loud as the sound of many waters, that *sin is exceeding sinful*. It supplies proofs such as can be found nowhere else of the mighty hold which sin has taken of humanity; here we see it casting its deadly poison into the very fountains which grace has opened, converting the richest gifts of God into occasions of the direst evils that ever befell our race; here we see that Satan is accustomed, as of old, to appear among the sons of God, and can induce even sanctified men to become the blind or the willing instruments of his plans, and can persuade them to think that while under him they are doing God service. The history of the church most impressively teaches the absolute necessity of a divine interposition in order to the complete deliverance of man from the dominion of sin. No partial help will suffice; with the divine remedy in his hands he will perish unless God himself apply it. Strange that any one, who surveys the records of past ages or the present state of Christendom, can imagine that the millennial blessedness which awaits the world is to be realized by the simple extension of the church as she now is over the whole earth. Neither Scripture nor experience warrants any such hope; they both point us to Immanuel as the only deliverer; and as the one proclaims as with a thousand tongues, that the emancipation of our world from the bondage of corruption can be effected only by his *immediate* interference, so the other gives us the promise that he will in due time take to himself his great power and reign, and teaches us to pray for the accomplishment of the Father's purpose, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times to gather together all things in Christ."