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POPERY

THE

PUNISHMENT OF UNBELIEF.

A SERMON

Before the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church,
At Baltimore, May 25th, 1848.

BY

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Professor in Western Theol. Seminary.

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EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

Resolved 1. That the thanks of the Assembly be, and they hereby are, tendered to the Rev. Dr. McGill, for his Sermon on Popery, delivered before them last night, and a copy be requested for publication.

Resolved 2. That said sermon be committed to the Board of Publication with the request that they send a copy to every minister in our connexion, and to every session destitute of the stated means of grace.—*Printed Minutes, [1848] page 33.*

SERMON.

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. 10.

SCEPTICISM and credulity are sisters, however unlike they may be in appearance. There is a debility of understanding in the man who fails to believe, upon sufficient evidence, which will always subject him to the power of delusion. The father of British infidelity, Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, while hesitating about the publication of his book, which assailed the foundations of Christianity, prayed for some sign from God, that might direct him in the matter: and then, standing at his window, and looking earnestly at the heavens, he saw, he says, “an opening from whence there came a bright light” towards himself;

and this determined him, as a token of divine approbation, to publish that book. The same individual, that could reject the overwhelming evidence of Christianity itself, could follow, at the same time, the phantasy of his own imagination, with all the devotion of a besotted credulity.

What is true of an individual, in this respect, may be true of a system, a generation, an age. Take the age of Porphyry, for instance, on the threshold of the era at which history will lead us to start with the subject before us; an age extending from Ammonius Saccas to Julian the Apostate. The great school to which these ancient infidels belonged, the New Platonic, was distinguished, alike, for bitter hostility against the gospel, and for the most anile, extravagant, and frivolous superstition. Its entire aim was to find, for all the superstitions of all ages, a philosophical basis; and thus to perpetuate, as essentially true and reasonable, the most absurd and debasing systems of pagan delusion that ever existed. That school was

never abolished. Strangely, it found asylum in the very Church, whose nursing fathers, from Theodosius to Justinian, pursued it with exterminating edicts. And the main features of the wicked and mysterious one, described in our text, are precisely its great characteristics: unbelief and superstition combined—believing without love, and believing without limit—believing too little, and believing too much, in mingled deformity—a proud rejection of the simple truth, and a mean credulity, a deceivableness of unrighteousness, which may be carried to all extremes of damning error.

But there is one terrible peculiarity in this baptized perpetuation of a system which Porphyry and Julian bequeathed to the Church; one that is exceedingly hard to be defined or expressed, though abundantly urged in the passage before us; and that is the curse of reprobation, judicial abandonment from God. The Spirit of God restrained the working of this school, and similar evils, until the gospel should be proclaimed through all accessi-

ble parts of the earth; and was then taken out of the way, in sovereign displeasure, for the lack of faith and love, with which it was reasonable its glad tidings should have been received. Cast off from the presence and Spirit of God, in vengeful dereliction, the rejectors of the gospel became "those that perish," and an easy prey to an anti-Christian tendency, which had been working from the days of the apostles, and indeed from the days of apostate Adam himself—to stagger at divine truth, and lean on human lies.

We assume the interpretation of this chapter, that identifies the great apostasy it describes with Popery, which we define to be a false church, distinguished for imposing an excess of belief, that results from the want of sound faith, and is incompatible with the exercise of such a faith. And were we to assume it as no more than hypothesis, in the investigation of any clause of the whole connexion, yet, would we be compelled, from all the sources of history, observation, and the Bible, to see, at last, that we can

find even the critic's cool consistency, in nothing but the lineaments of spiritual Rome.

Like every other prophecy of Scripture, it was not understood precisely before the time of its fulfilment came; except for the practical use, which the prophet designed—to relieve the Church from the impression that the day of judgment was at hand—to deter believers from giving heed to seducing spirits, or false teachers, who were already abroad—and to endear the ultimate consolation, which arises from the discriminating and eternal love of God, in the decree of election. Beyond this service of these awful lines, the most eminent fathers, from Tertulian to Augustine, frankly confessed their inability of comprehension. And the maudlin piety of Popish commentators, would fain persuade us now, that we should not be wiser than the ancient fathers; that it is equally incomprehensible at present; that the fulfilment is yet in the future; and, of course, that the splendid contribution of Protestant

faith, to the evidences of Christianity, in the demonstration, that this grand prediction is already turned to actual history, is worse than spurious.

Here, too, we have Protestant unity, and Papal distraction. Scarcely a shadow of variation is traceable in the commentary of all evangelical expositors; while the variations of Popish conjecture have been endlessly diversified. The only point on which there seems to be a general agreement among them, is, that this anti-Christian power must be that of an individual man, on a momentary errand of vengeance, in the providence of God; and not, as we interpret, according to familiar use in every language, a succession of individuals representing a system. But, to look no further than our text, we ask, what individual man has ever yet been found in history, or what individual enemy of Christ and his Church, can be at all imagined, who could erect dominion in a way so complicate and on a basis so impalpable, as these words suggest? His way is

a train, like that of the old serpent himself; stealthy as time, versatile as change, and inveterate as the heresy of human nature. His legitimate subjects are the perishing, the reprobate; who are left with a curse, to the strong working of error, in the corruptions of their own nature: because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. The great fact, which lies at the foundation of his power, is the most inscrutable of all facts, submitted to the observation of men—the judicial dereliction of men's souls: and consequently no particular history can be made out of such a fact: all particular judgments sent on any church, are sent to reclaim her, before she is finally cast away. No chronicle of one man, or of one epoch, or one age, can comprehend the case before us; nothing but an empire of delusion, which requires many ages to develop its causes, and progress, and effects. And when we read that it began its working, even in the days of the Apostles, when decay was manifest in every visible power

on the face of the earth; that it was restrained for a season, when no existing proclivity of man was restrained, but his apostasy from the truth of the gospel; that it would be revealed at length, in such a form, as would require no more than a pentecostal visitation of the Lord Jesus Christ, to destroy and consume it; that it would come with miracles of falsehood, which Mohammed never attempted; and with a blended exercise of power and deceit, which no other individual scourge of mankind has ever exhibited; and that its yoke would be fixed, not merely on disparaged thrones, and desecrated temples, and trampled liberties of men, but on their hardened hearts, for disrelish of the truth, at its first promulgation and primitive diffusion—can we forbear to affirm, that, if Popery be not the subject here, the Bible has one prediction that can never be fulfilled, and history a lapse of 1800 years that can never be explained?

The proposition, then, which we present from these words is, that *Popery is an or-*

ganized form of God's judicial wrath upon the unbelief of men.

It is not imported in this proposition, that all individuals, who are visibly embraced in the system, are reprobate, or even unbelieving men: for, as a pious individual may be left in the hands of Satan himself, for a time, to be deceived and debased by his wiles; so may there be pious individuals, left all their lives, to the delusions of this wicked one, whose coming is after the working of Satan. As there may be reprobate men in the bosom of the true Church itself, who are living in judicial abandonment of God, so may there be elected men in the bosom of an organized antipathy to the true Church, who are living in covenanted fellowship with the Father of mercies. It is one thing to be the victim of its power, through accident of birth and prejudice, and another thing to be the subtile and prepense apologist to men for its abominations.

Nor is it imported in this proposition, that all reprobate men have feelings of affinity

with Popish delusion. Many such have been, and still are, ferocious opposers of Popery, in name and form; some of them are nominal Protestants; many of them open infidels; and just as Babylon of old was swallowed up by another oppressor, as the dream and drama of persecuting power, in past history, was one continual succession of diverse materials, gold and silver, and brass, and iron, so may there be, after this golden head of spiritual despotism, other forms of anti-christian hostility, such as infidelity, fanaticism, and corruption of morals; which may be willing, for a season, to join the Church herself, in giving Romanism up to her final doom. We mean, that thus far in the career of the gospel, its "day of vengeance" has been the day of Popery; its chief retributions upon unbelief, have been embodied in this form of evil: and all the good that may be found adhering to Popery, is accidental, as much as is the evil, which may be found adhering to the true Church of Christ. Its nature is antagonism to his kingdom. Its existence is a

creature of his wrath, permitted in his own absence to revenge the quarrel of his gospel, on the enmity and unbelief of human nature.

I. The names, which are given throughout the context, show the truth of this proposition:—"That man of sin"—"the son of perdition"—"the mystery of iniquity"—"that wicked," or lawless one—not to notice the minuter description, of arrogance, blasphemy, and infernal power and craft of falsehood. Can we read all these denominations, and ponder on the use of them in Scripture, and not believe that the Antichrist portrayed, is unmingled opposition to the kingdom and truth of the Lord Jesus Christ; an incorporated castaway; a contrariety, which is infinitely worse than corruption, merely, of a real but revolted church of the living God? Shall we not believe, with Jonathan Edwards, in his annotations here, that, "as Christianity, or the scheme for setting up the kingdom of God, and advancing his glory and the salvation of men, is called the mystery of godliness; so anti-christianism, or

the scheme for setting up the kingdom of the devil, and accomplishing the destruction of men by *Antichrist*, is called *the mystery of iniquity?* * * * Here is fulfilled what was shadowed forth of old, by the murder of Cain, and his city in the land of Nod, and by the building of the tower of Babel, and by the city of Babylon, and by the mighty Nimrod, and Belus, or Bel, and by the city of Sodom, by Egypt, and Pharaoh; and the great things that were done in Egypt, in the time of Moses and Aaron, are types of what is done by and to the church of Rome. * * * Here is the antitype of proud Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar, and Haman. Here is the antitype of the city and king of Tyrus, and of Antiochus Epiphanes; and here is the chief fulfilment of the ancient prophecies of Daniel and other prophets that relate to the kingdom of iniquity, and also of most of such prophecies in the New Testament. On the same account the anti-christian church is called Mystery, Babylon the Great.”

II. We see the truth of our proposition,

when we consider *the cause of his coming*—the want of faith and love in those that had the knowledge of divine truth; an enmity and obstinacy of unbelief, which provoked the Spirit of God, to leave them consigned to certain perdition; “because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved:” of such his kingdom is composed. These are the original, the real, the ultimate subjects. Popery is born when piety dies. Its acceptable time is *after* the day of salvation; just when it becomes too late, in the process of the heart’s induration. It comes in the night; not of ignorance, nor barbarism, nor social disorder; but the night of spiritual death, which followed the primitive preaching of the everlasting gospel. It comes, not to seduce, so much as succeed, a living Christianity; not like a heresy, which taints the food of the soul, or mingles a feverish life, with the healthy pulsations of religion; but, like an art of the catacombs, it comes to embalm the dead, the dead letter of religion, dead symbols, and dead saints, with all the

odours of sanctity; and then to seal them up, in a sepulchre, for ever.

The man of sin was the product of his age. An age, that had been privileged, to see so wide a diffusion of the gospel; to see the miracles which attested, and the transformations which adorned it; the progress, the power, the glory of its cause, in the season of virgin purity and beauty, could not be forsaken of God, without some dire device of man to attempt another mediation; could not be cast down to hell, without embracing a monster, whose coming would be after the working of Satan. It would have made a Papacy, without a Victor, a Stephen, or a Constantine; without a council at Sardica, or even a bishopric at Rome. We are told, that great imperfections among the early converts from Judaism and Paganism, laid the foundation of Popery: undue regard for things indifferent in themselves; promoting truth and duty, by artifice and fraud; the notion of mystery, transferred to the sacraments; the notion of priest, transferred

to the elders; excessive veneration for martyrs, ascetic separation from the world and its relations; ambitious contention for pre-eminence; these, and many similar elements, are said to have been the material on which this mystery of iniquity was working, for the erection of his power, long before it was fully revealed. But these all are common weeds of our nature that never prevail, in "a garden enclosed"—thorns and briars, that never grow up to destroy, until the ground is thrown out by the husbandman, and "is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

III. *The manner* of his coming, shows with equal force, the cursed antagonism of his nature—"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." Can there be conceived one element of grace in this utter and intense abomination? Sincerity is the lone vestige of godliness, in a true believer, when every

thing else is sunk from our sight, in ignorance and error. With all his imperfections, he is an earnest and honest man. So, it must be with a church, that has the smallest claim, to be considered a true church of Christ. There is a bottom of integrity, somewhere, on which we can rely. But here is a system, fraught with a spirit of falsehood, which is absolutely without a limit, save the honesty and impotency of hell itself.

Where shall we begin, or end, the catalogue of his unrighteous deceit? There are the convicted forgeries, on which his wealth and outward estate are founded; such as the grant of Constantine, and the decretals of Isidore; proved to be forgeries, even by papal historians, before the great Reformation, and acknowledged to be such ever since: not to speak of many a minor fraud, in snatching his fortune, advancing his throne; such as a letter from St. Peter in heaven, through Stephen of Rome, to Pepin of France, exhorting him to rescue the Pope, from the hands of the Lombard. There are

the pretended miracles, with which he imposed the worship of images, on the reluctant empire even of the Franks; their weeping and sweating, and moving, and speaking, to persuade a scrupulous world, to bow with reverence before them: his legends of fable, to establish the worship of saints, and relics, and bones, beyond all power of speech to number, and much more describe, in their falsehood and folly: his pitiful lies in behalf of the wafer-god, which he has palmed on the faithful, instead of the one sacrifice of Christ, ever since the days of Gregory I.—how it has actually bled at the altar, in the hands of the priest—how it turned to a boy, in a beehive, and made the adoring bees build it a shrine with their wax—how it made a company of asses fall on their knees, as it passed; and a hungry mule turn from the oats to adore it; and a ravenous dog turn on the nose of his master, an infidel Jew, for throwing it down, with the crumbs, to be eaten: his affectation of superior holiness, in abstaining from meat, and forbidding to

marry, and the whole bondage of fear, to which his *religious* are consigned, in violation of the first principles of Christian piety: his claim to exclusive solemnity of worship, in the pomp of processions, and glare of habiliments, and show of pantomime action, that impose so much on the sense of the multitude: his pretence to infallibility, and power of the keys, and prevalence with God, visions, and revelations, and miracles, performed at his pleasure: and, above all, the pretension, that he has all the truth which we possess, and much more besides: so, that his votaries are safe, heretics themselves being judges; when he cannot but know, that the immense extent of his adding, has buried the truth, mountain deep, from the eye and heart of the people—can we believe, that such unfathomable depths of deceit, so unrighteous in the wilful invention, and so unrighteous in the debasing effects, may be predicated of a body, that has Christ in it, to any degree; and not rather, a body which his wrath has entailed, as a monument and

minister of judicial abandonment? "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." Take from his thralldom, as many as you please to call "a remnant according to the election of grace;" he himself is false as Sodom, and equally doomed, without redemption, to an awful and perpetual end.

IV. *The manner of continuance.*—As the man of sin came on at the first, so he has continued till this day; with one remarkable difference, which essentially indicates a reprobate mind—malign exertion to resist the truth, to pall it with perpetual night, and quench with blood its resurrection. It is a mistake to allow, that Augustine's theology, was ever the standard of divinity, at papal Rome; any more than the epistles general of Peter, were the model of encyclical letters, among his pretended successors. Though, for many a reason, which cannot now be stated, that eminent father

had vast authority of a nominal kind in papal dominions, it were easy to prove, that his evangelical system of doctrine, was always at war with the heart and hand of this reprobate power. And, though he succeeded, by the force of ancient formulas, and the influence of African Synods, to convert a Pelagian Pope, so far as to obtain a formal condemnation of Pelagius himself, yet, his views of divine grace were impugned by almost all the monks, and most of the clergy, during his own life; and, in less than twenty years after his death, the Semi-pelagian Vincent of Lerins, gave a cast to Western Catholicism, which it has ever retained. The innumerable *Summas* of stupidity, compiled from Augustine, through subsequent ages, utterly failed to embody the life of his system. And one thing is certain, that, after the man of sin was fully revealed, the name of Augustine lived to be sainted, for his arrogant dogmas respecting the church; but the scheme of faith he had written, was doomed, as often as it dared to appear.

How was it persecuted in the person of Goteschalc—tangled in the chicanery of Schoolmen—tortured in the disputes of Dominicans—slurred in the Council of Trent—burned in the book of Jansenius! And, let the myriad martyrdoms over all Western Europe—let the massacres of France, the Inquisition of Spain, the murders of Ireland—let the plots of England, the wars of Germany, the butcheries of Savoy, attest, how atrociously hated have been the doctrines of grace, wherever they have risen in spite of her frown! What, then, can we see in the church of Rome, like a “pillar and ground of the truth?” What do we not see, like “a pillar of salt;” or rather, like the gates of hell, ever raging to prevail against it?

V. *The place of his continuance.*—The region of primitive preaching in Christian Europe, is almost exactly the map of his benighted territory, until this very day: Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, and portions of Germany. Every country, which claims the honour of apostolic planting, with any

colour of historic probability, inherits, pre-eminently, the curse of apostolic reprobation. The purer the light, originally shed, the longer the darkness, which has followed its forfeiture. Better than all the legends of Spanish tradition, that claim the bones of an Apostle, in St. James of Compostella; better than all the whimsies of Parisian antiquity, which claim Dionysius the Areopagite, in the story of their own St. Denys—better presumption, by far, for both these vaunted claims, is the fact of judicial dereliction; that these ancient and beautiful lands, have been given, so long, to the misery of Popish delusions: for the depth and durability of the curse, that ushered Popery into being, are just in proportion to the original purity of the truth, and power of its demonstration, with which any country was favoured.

Later evangelical countries of Europe, where a corrupted Christianity did little more than baptize the Paganism it came to supplant, have all been, more or less, redeemed from the power of Romanism, and

blessed with the light of the Reformation, established among them; such as England, Holland, Saxony, Prussia, Denmark, &c. There, little or no gospel truth had been known, before the Reformation had dawned; and there little or no reprobation from God, had infused its terrible death, into the slumbers from which the people awaked. Just as we descend the stages of Popery, towards the Council of Trent, we find its conquests less durable, its overspreading delusions less infrangible. And ever since that epoch of finished apostasy, how transient have been the triumphs it achieves! how quickly all its missions are blasted! how soon overthrown, in Africa, and India, and China, and Japan! There, it has had no commission, from the wrath of a rejected Saviour, to execute; and consequently, no power to establish its yoke. And, as if the instinct of reprobation were taught by this experience, as if the sagacity of Rome had fully discovered the damning destiny in missions, to which the wrath of a righteous heaven has consigned her energies,

she does little more, at present, than prowl on the pathway of light and life—little more than follow, in the track of Protestant missions, to batten on the death, which neglected or repudiated truth will ever be leaving, on the highway of her progress, among the nations.

VI. We turn from nations to *individuals*. Proselytes to Popery from Protestant ranks are mostly reprobate men; by which we mean, reprobate towards God: men of intellect, learning, and taste, it may be; and men of unblemished morals too, conformed to the average decency of social life; and men of enlarged observation also, who have travelled into many countries, and compared many creeds, and actually tried, perhaps, many professions; but whose hearts all the while have disrelished a religion of conscience, and failed to “receive the love of the truth;” and, on that account, are given over of God to “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

We trust not ourselves to speak of living examples. We go back to the great restoration of Papal authority, on the continent of Europe, in the 17th century, sent to revenge a slighted and abused reformation; and which teems with striking examples. From the Queen of Sweden, Christina, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, whose restless mind early turned, with disgust, from the truth as it is in Jesus, and passed through all the depths of virulent unbelief, into the arms of passive and pleasurable confidence in Rome—down to that notable preacher of Brunswick, Henry Julius Blum, who engaged, for a pension of 2000 a year, to bring over himself and his prince together, every proselyte, whose history we read, gave anterior evidence of judicial abandonment; for infidel hatred, or fantastic abstraction, or tasteful disgust, or immoral aversion, or venal indifference to the truth of the gospel. “If you except from among them,” says a standard historian, “all such as we are abundantly assured, were led to this

change by their domestic misfortunes, by their desire to advance their rank and glory, by their inordinate love of wealth and worldly advantages, by their fickleness of mind, by their imbecility of intellect, or by other causes of no better character, you will reduce the whole number to a few persons, whom no one will greatly envy the Roman Catholics.”

VII. This Popish religion itself, is obviously *congenial* with the character of reprobate men, whether within or without the pale of Popish communion. They love a *religion of ease*: one that will save them the trouble of investigating themes which they hate, and themes with which the unsanctified, and much more the derelict mind, will always grapple, in painful incertitude and bondage of terror. For such, the Papal delusions are a haven of rest. The authority of the church relieves them from searching the Scriptures; a vicarious priesthood, from offering spiritual sacrifices; a charm in the sacrament, from examining themselves; in-

dulgence for money, from all uneasy agitations of conscience; and olive oil at the last, from the hard-won victory of faith. And yet they love a religion that will exalt the *pride of their nature*. It is not humiliating ease they would purchase, at the cost of private judgment, the great birthright of man; but one which will flatter the bondage that such a barter has left—works of merit in the alms and abstinences, the inflictions, the exploits, the supererogation itself, of which they feel their nature to be capable, even in the arms of licentious indulgence.

They love a religion of *sense, imagination, and taste*; one that will excite all the diversified affections of our nature, save the sentiment of dealing directly with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. And, in Popery, they have a system, which has been for ages adapting itself to this very demand. A gorgeous ritual, and magnificent ceremonial, pomp, and tinsel, and pageantry without end; music and painting, statuary and architecture—all the treasures of art lie in

her lap. And then, imagination—what riot has it taken among her *religious* in every age! There is not, under heaven, a form of human activity, mental or physical, solitary or social, civil or military, that she is not willing to incorporate with her movement, and promise it salvation. Crush but the life of your moral nature beneath her wheel, and you may turn the residue of the man or monster into any possible line of endeavour, and she will indulge it.

They love a religion of *cherished antipathies*: for the dereliction of God, will always convert the ground-work of a human heart to essential malignity. Inveterate spitefulness, from the aboriginal hate of Satan himself, to the meek-eyed wish of a modern *sister of mercy*, pervades every bosom that is cast away for refusing to receive the love of saving truth. And what a magazine of hatred is old Papal Rome!—all sorts of venom, antique and modern, open and concealed, documentary and spoken, temporal and spiritual: dungeons of inquisition, daggers of

assassination, and medications of poison without end. What words of calumny; what volumes of anathema; what galas of *auto-da-fe!* What iron heels for the strong; what treacherous lips for the weak; what vengeful pursuit when she is plaintiff at law; what cruel evasion when she is defendant at law; what cursing, by bell, book, and candle, does she enjoin in the priest; what maledictions, in the house, and by the way, and with the mob, and at the polls, does she allow in her people! Surely, the greatest miracle of grace, if such a thing be possible, is to inspire with true benevolence, a soul that is steeped in the bitterness of that common sentiment, which the Papal religion engenders.

Thus might we go on to evince, that, in every thing peculiar to the reprobate mind, Popery meets it with a genial conformation; and, of course, we are furnished from this point, with strong corroboration of the truth we have asserted. But we return, to close

the series of our positions, with another point or two from the context.

VIII. The manner of his *overthrow*: “Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” However suddenly that destruction may come, in some respects, as we are told in the Apocalyptic visions of John, the language here imports a gradual demolition. By “the spirit of his mouth,” we understand the preaching of his word; which ceased when the man of sin was fully revealed, except in the obscure retreats of the wilderness, where the true Church fled from his violence; which returned, with signal power, at the great Reformation; and which has continued ever since to spread, with regenerating influence, among the nations. This mighty breath of the gospel comes on this wicked opposition, not to reclaim, not to reform it, as would evidently be the case, if it were a backslidden church merely, but to *consume*

it; evoking from the midst of its thrall, a people reserved from its spirit, to consign the system itself, with all its wilful abettors, to remediless doom. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Let this awful and portentous admonition be collated with our text, and considered to adumbrate the corporate apostasy, of which we speak, and the difficulties of its exposition will vanish away.

But again, it is said of this ultimate overthrow, that the Lord "shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." His coming at the final judgment, does it mean? Then, here is a system, which nothing in all the tide of time can meliorate or save; which passes the power of a great reformation, and

the splendor of a glorious millennium, without alteration or amendment; and stands till the judgment day of Christ, only to dissolve with entire destruction at the “brightness of his coming:” and, of course, it must be now the forsaken of God, petrified, as it were, by his adamantine curse, and abiding for ever a monument of warning, without the least affinity or identity with the true Church of Christ. His coming at the time of the millennium, does it mean? Then is he absent from the system now, entirely absent; for the advent of this coming glory, will be the brilliant expansion of all that now enjoys the presence of the Saviour: and, of course, “the son of perdition” moves on, without a particle of interest in the promise, “Lo, I am with you always;” and consequently, without a particle of right, to all the ordination that hangs upon that promise—the institution of the ministry, the propagation of missions, and the administration of the sacraments.

IX. *The antithesis of consolation, in the*

13th verse, crowns our proof, that the church of Rome is but a doomed antagonism to the real Church of Christ: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." If the body of this vast anti-christianism were any thing less than a reprobate body, if there be in its identity a church transmitted, with a solitary ordinance of Christ remaining in force, why does the decree of grace, on which the whole church is built, utter its comfort, as the reverse of the picture? How can the deep foundations of divine redemption, deeper than the world's beginning, deep as eternity itself, roll over against this wicked superstructure, and yet receive it, as any part of the living temple, which came down from God out of heaven? To quote for consolation a promise of the gospel, might imply, that the opposite evil is no more than fearful declension; to quote for consolation the faithfulness of God to his

people in the past, might imply that the evils which threaten them, are no more than sad calamities: but to quote the earliest origin of mercy, the radical secret, the ultimate and uttermost resources of the grace that bringeth salvation, must imply, that the evil it meets, can be no less than the extremity of hostile and accursed antagonism, to the body of Christ—"the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

If then, the very names of this anti-christian power, import an utter opposition to the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ—if the original basis of his strength, was laid in the obduracy of a reprobate world—if the mode of his establishment, was the deceitfulness of hell, without a qualification or a limit—if perpetuated malice against the revival of truth has been the characteristic of his policy, in all circumstances and places—if the inveteracy of these features can be traced on the map of Europe, in proportion to the amount of primitive truth, which was resisted and rejected—if the transition to

his ranks from the knowledge of gospel truth, is still accompanied with evidence of a prior rejection of that truth—if the well known characteristics of the reprobate mind, are all met with corresponding aptitudes in this body, which has had ages to mould its genial propensities—if the appointed means for reforming the church and saving the world, come on this system only to consume and destroy it; the same waters of the sanctuary that flow out to fertilize every other spot in the waste of our nature, flow over this one only to convert it into “the miry places and marshes” which can never be healed, but must be “given to salt”—and if the sole consolation of the church against the dreary perspective, is brought from a decree of election which stands in perpetual contrast with the decree of reprobation—we conclude that Popery is *an organized form of God’s judicial wrath against the unbelief of men*—the hopeless counterpart, in revealed religion, to that dismal picture of apostasy, in natural religion, with which the Spirit of

inspiration by the mouth of Paul an apostle, introduced to the Christians of Pagan Rome, the great article of a standing or a falling church.

We learn from this subject, *in conclusion*, how to understand the boast of continuance, with which the man of sin vaunts his own superiority over all the changes that have overthrown other institutions of men. He is founded on a *rock*, indeed, but it is a rock of adamant in the human heart, which the insulted Spirit of God has left to its own hardness for ever. That rock cannot be broken by the surges of political or social revolution. It stands as firmly among freemen, as bondmen; unless it be the freemen, "whom the truth makes free." The shaking of the nations now at which we are so much astonished, is not the agitation at which Popery must crumble; we wait for another, for a "yet once more," when God will shake, not the earth only, but the heavens also, and come down, with the brightness and glory of pentecostal changes. It

may be that Popery, in its outward form of despotism, in that union with the State, which mainly reared its power at the first, will perish this very year. For, let it be observed, the suffrages of commentators, have, with perhaps a great majority, designated this year in the force of their calculations for the overthrow of him, "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." Say, that the year 606 was the epoch of his full revelation; when Boniface III. was proclaimed universal bishop, by the bloody Phocas; and add the duration through which he was to "wear out the saints of the Most High"—"a time and times and the dividing of time"—or three years and a half of years, a day for a year; and the apocalyptic month being 30 days, and, of course, the whole duration 1260 years, we have the whole number 1866; and subtracting 5 days for each year, to make it correspond with our time, we are brought precisely to the year 1848, for this grand consummation. It may

be, that the dreadful reprobation of God upon a faithless christendom, is about to shift its ancient form entirely, and take the shape of *socialism*, instead of *churchism*, in which to persecute the saints and blot the world. But, however this may be, essential Popery will remain as long as the wrath of God remains on the unbelief of men, in any organized form; long as the latter-day glory is withheld, and the preaching of the gospel is attended with no mighty revivals, and overspreading life.

And here, my brethren, in this happy land of Bibles, and Sabbaths, and pulpits, we are destined, in the light of this subject, to a conflict with Popery in its ultimate and utmost power. Here, re-invigorated by deliberate rejection of the living truth, divested of its lumbering despotism and obsolete enormities, it comes to marshal that terrible *reserve*, which has hitherto been buried from our sight, in the depths of our apostate nature. Here, unless a Pentecost shall interpose, there will be vast accession to its

ranks, from the millions whom God will leave to perish in their unbelief, long before their lives are ended. What multitudes of irreligious men among us, do already range themselves upon the side of Popery, instinctively disposed to plead apologies for her, to condemn the opening of our lips against her, and, with all varieties of outward devoir, to indicate the willing change their hearts would make of faith and love, for her form and fashion, and visible advantage! And, with all our freeness, there is no country where so many countervailing influences resist the power of Divine truth; political excitement, which absorbs the man from boyhood to old age; immoderate pursuit of gain for which we are distinguished among all the nations of the earth; passion for adventure which tears the susceptibility of youth so early away from the influences that would sanctify, to the influences that only harden and corrupt—these are peculiarities of the nation, which all tend to defeat the gospel; and, of course, to enthrone that wicked one, who

comes at once, the substitute and the avenger of rejected mercy, "in them that perish."

What manner of persons ought we to be, my brethren, in view of these things; we, the ministers of that gospel, which has such a "savour of death unto death!" How should we gird up the loins of our mind, for the mighty struggle which cannot be forborne; how contend with indigenious propensities, which, more than foreign propagandism, more than all the myrmidons of Jesuitism, that trans-atlantic states vomit on our shores, call for anxious and uttermost endeavour? Let the edge of controversy be drawn again from the armories of the great Reformation; let the tenderness of youth be imbued with saving knowledge, in parochial schools; let Bibles be scattered over all the land, like dew drops of the morning; let the volumes of our sacred literature flow on to every door that colportage can open; let the house of God go up in every township of the western wilderness; let the missionary take his station in the heart of Papal coun-

tries, before the emigrant shall come to the more hopeless perdition of Popery, as it is refined and hardened here; let the pulpit be adorned with men of faith, and love, and light, who will not taint the breath of the everlasting gospel with their own unsanctified tempers—and above all, men of zeal for revivals of religion, who will preach, and pray, and believe, and toil, and look for them, with intense yearning of soul. Here is the bane of Antichrist—here alone the potency that will send him, like a millstone, to the bottom of the sea. The man who is not for revivals, with all his heart and hand, is not the man for this country and this age: he has not proved the armour which must now be worn, and in which the battle must be won. Never, never, will Babylon be fallen, till, through every wonted sanctuary of prayer, public, private, family, and social, the unwearied supplication ascend: “Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be

glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

THE END.

