

b028**CONTENTS****LIGHTS
AND SHADOWS**

IN THE
PRESENT CONDITION OF THE CHURCH.

TREATISES ON CHRISTIAN TRUTHS
PECULIARLY APPLICABLE TO THE AGE WE
LIVE IN.

BY THE LATE
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LIGHTS AND SHADOWS IN THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE CHURCH

1. ON THE DECLINE OF THE CHURCH.

1.1 The History of the Jewish People acted over again by the Baptized.

“SO Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle,” Exod. XL. 33-34 When the tabernacle was finished, and when it was filled with the glory of the Lord, then had God completed the emancipation of His ancient people, and perfected their preparation for their high and holy calling. With an outstretched arm He had brought His elect out of Egypt; and on the mount had He shown to His servant Moses that heavenly pattern according to which the tabernacle was to be built; and had made the people willing to bring more materials than enough for the erection of the appointed sanctuary. Exod. XXXVI. 5. He had found instruments whom He could fill with His Spirit, and prepare with wisdom and understanding to accomplish all according to His will and commandment, Exod. XXXV. 30-35, and through Moses who had been with Him [010] on the mount and had seen the pattern, could He bear witness to the whole work that it was done “as the Lord had

commanded.” Exod. XXXIX. 43. Thus then the people stood there, freed by God’s hand from the shame and reproach of their bondage, having in the midst of them His sanctuary wherein He would dwell; called and appointed, if they would obey His voice indeed, and keep His covenant, to be a “peculiar treasure” unto Him, “a kingdom of priests, an holy nation.” Exod. XIX. 5.6. Above all people on the earth would He love and bless and multiply them. He would take away from them all sickness, and would put upon them none of the evil diseases of Egypt. So mightily should He manifest Himself on their behalf, that all the people of the earth should see that the true God was in the midst of them and with them. Deut. VII.13-15; XXVIII.10. Thus gracious was the commencement of God’s dealings with His ancient people; and had Israel remained faithful to Him, had His people kept His commandments and laws, and continued in obedience to the living God, every promise He had given would have been fulfilled. All Israel would have come into undivided and complete possession of the promised inheritance; and in the wondrous and manifold blessing resting on the chosen people, all the families of the earth might have seen and learned where the true God was to be found, and where He was to be worshipped and honoured.

But what became the fact? Already in the Book of Judges we read, "I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break My covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars [011]; *but ye have not obeyed My voice.*" Judges II. 1-2. Farther on in the same chapter, verse 7. it is expressly said, that the people served the Lord only so long as Joshua and the elders lived who had seen the great works of the Lord that He did for Israel. And along with these accounts of the early turning aside of the people of God, we have the innumerable testimonies borne by all the Old Testament writers to their continual unfaithfulness and disobedience. No wonder, therefore, that God could not fulfil His promises; no wonder that He was constrained to pronounce a curse instead of a blessing on His elect, Deut. XXVIII.15; that Israel had to experience the wrath of the Lord instead of His love and goodness. Not, indeed, as though God had at any time finally cast off His people and chosen another in their room, for He says by the Prophet, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the Lord." Jer. III.1. But He was constrained by their sins to deliver them into the hands of their enemies; so that the history of the Jewish people, instead of presenting to us the spectacle of a holy and priestly

kingdom, exalted above all the nations of the earth, affords on the contrary an almost unbroken detail of defeat, servitude, captivity, external and internal distresses and corruption. And though God did prevail in the days of David and Solomon to give among them a most wonderful exhibition of His power and goodness, even the conclusion of Solomon's time bears testimony to the prevailing corruption in Israel; and it was only of God's special grace that the great division in the twelve tribes did not take place during his reign. 1. Kings XI.31-34.

The fact that God at the end of the Jewish dispensation did accomplish His design whereby that dispensation [012] should serve as a preparatory school for the reception of Christ and His Gospel, does not contradict the undeniable fact that the chosen people of the old covenant were scarcely called and admitted to their peculiar privileges when they fell away from God, and continued, down to the final destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple, to withstand God and grieve His Spirit, and to frustrate the purposes of His grace and mercy.

That to which the *whole* of the Circumcision were called, and which, as a *whole*, they might have attained, they did not attain; but only a few found grace to give ear, to the voice of the Baptist calling to repen-

tance at the close of the Jewish dispensation, and this faithful remnant escaped the judgement that overtook the rest, through the promises which God had given to their fathers being then brought by Him to their accomplishment.

Similar to the history of the Jewish people has been that of the Christian Church.

At its commencement also we see a mighty interference of God, to bring about a new epoch in the fulfilment of His plan with the human race. In the Church the commencement made by God was also good; but here again appeared the unfaithfulness of man, whereby God was as it were hindered and delayed in the full and rapid development of His gracious purposes; Divine chastisement and humiliation commences, amidst which God never indeed forsakes His Church, nor entirely deprives her of His grace; but makes her during centuries, to experience the bitter fruits of her unfaithfulness, the visible success, and the ever-increasing predominance of her spiritual enemies - the world, the flesh, and the devil - till, at the end of the Christian dispensation, according to the declarations of prophecy, He will fulfil to a small [013] remnant of His children who hear His voice, and repent, and allow Him to raise them up again, the

promises of the new covenant - the coming again of Jesus Christ and the glories of the resurrection.

1.2 The Primitive Christians.

THAT which corresponds in the New Testament history to the deliverance out of Egypt by Moses, and the erection of the Tabernacle among the ancient people of God, is the spiritual deliverance accomplished by the work of Christ in our flesh, and the bringing of the Church, the true Tabernacle, into existence by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost. Heb. III. 1-6; VII.; and IX. Through the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and through fellowship with Him - the crucified and risen Man, the true Paschal Lamb - believers under the New Testament become dead as to the old man and free from the law of sin and death, through the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Rom. VIII. 2. A spiritual deliverance was accomplished through Christ, in order that God might dwell in man, Eph. II. 22; 2. Cor. VI. 16; 1. Cor. II. 16, and His Church offer to Him spiritual sacrifices. 1. Peter II.5. The Tabernacle was built of materials that had before been in the service of Egypt; in like manner, it was the same men, with the same spiritual powers and properties, who had hitherto been in the service of sin and the flesh, who now, redeemed and saved through Christ, the

true Moses, were ready to God's hand for the building up of His Church.

And as Moses, who alone ascended the mount, Exod. XXIV.2, was enabled by God to build the earthly tabernacle after the pattern He had shown him; so did the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Heb. III.1, having entered [014] into the Holiest of all, into the presence of the Father, receive the Holy Ghost, through the shedding forth of whom He commenced the building of His Church, the true Tabernacle. Moses, the servant of God, looked upon the tabernacle when completed, and he found it made as God had commanded it to be. The New Testament bears witness to the not less perfect work which, through Christ, as through "a son over his own house," Heb. III.6 was at the beginning accomplished among the faithful. Not only were those gifts perfect which came down from above, when He who had ascended above all heavens gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the edifying and perfecting of His Church, but that which God then, in the newly-founded Church, consisting of living men, prevailed to accomplish, presents to us a perfection which, in its later history, never again appears. Of the first Christians we read, in the second and fourth chapters of Acts, that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking

of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Acts II.42-47. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with [015] great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." Acts IV.32-33. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. In the midst of our fallen race, torn and divided by envy, hatred, ignorance, and darkness, a unity was brought about such as the world had never before seen; a unity of the inmost life, proceeding from the one Divine fountain of life in the risen Head, whose life flows into all His members; and amidst the manifoldness and diversity of human character and human relations, still manifests itself as a life in God and from God. The love which, through the Holy Ghost, was shed abroad in the

hearts of all believers - love to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; to Christ the alone Lord and Head of His Church; to the brethren, members of His body, joint heirs with Him of the same glory; love to all men, as to those for whom He has shed His blood; - this love it was which effected and preserved such a unity; and that this unity of heart and soul consisted with the fear of God and the discipline of His house, and was accompanied with subjection one to another in the Lord and the setting of the members of the body each in its place, we learn from the position which the Apostles held from the commencement in the Church. It is said, "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine" - "fear came upon every soul" - "and they brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet." The same spirit which, being shed forth in the hearts of believers, filled them with the love of Christ, wrought in them also a willing obedience - obedience to men for God's sake. The Apostles were the leaders and guides appointed by God Himself for the Church at the first [016]; in them believers saw the faithful witnesses who had been with the Lord from the beginning, and by whom their risen Lord manifested such power and grace in the midst of His Church as filled them with veneration and holy awe, and made more easy to them the wholesome subjection to which they were called. And not only did they yield subjection to the

Lord in His Apostles, and received at their hands the pure doctrine and holy truth committed to them, but they continued in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. As God had quickened in them the new and Divine life, so they knew that He alone could maintain it, and bring it to full development, and that He would do this by the means that He Himself chose; the public worship of God, set in order as it was by the Apostles, 1. Cor. XI.23 wherein they showed forth the death of Christ, and were nourished by His body and blood, formed the centre of their existence as a Church; and in the continual celebration of these holy mysteries they were filled with heavenly joy, and received that hidden strength which manifested itself in their holy, peaceful, and self-denying conversation. There is one feature in the description of the primitive Church at Jerusalem which is too indicative of the glorious commencement of the Church of God, and of that Divine power that was manifested in it, to be passed by in silence. It is twice over related to us of the early Christians, that "they had all things common." We are told that they "sold their lands, houses, and possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need;" that they brought "the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the Apostles' feet." Although we should not be justified in concluding from these statements that there was an entire equality in earthly things [017] among them all,

yet it cannot be denied that the rich, at least to a great extent, renounced their earthly possessions, and consented to a voluntary poverty, in order to raise the poor and needy into more easy circumstances. When we consider what a mighty power of Divine grace must have been present, not only in those who brought the offerings, but in the needy who received them, to bring about anything like an approach to equality of goods, and yet to preserve from the many dangers and errors to which such a state of things exposed them, we may well wonder at that measure of sanctification and moral purity which God had wrought in the early Church. What strength must the love of heavenly things have had in those who could so easily part with their earthly possessions? - how must they have been dead to the world and all its glory, and alive to God? - what a measure of humility, self-denial, willing renunciation of earthly dignity, might and pre-eminence must they have attained to? - how strong must have been their faith, that they could so divest themselves of the visible, and cleave only to the invisible? - and what purity of heart, what self-discipline, what moderation, what holy awe, what modesty must have distinguished those whose earthly condition was so greatly improved on their entering the Church, if no evil to their souls resulted from this favourable change in their outward circumstances? - and how must the holy

earnestness and the severe moral purity in the Church have served to hold in awe, and to drive back all that was unholy, unclean, or untrue, if with such tempting earthly advantages, the impure elements without, and those within be separated and cast forth? Acts V.1-11.

No wonder that this Church which stood thus as the [018] living body of the exalted Head, the God-Man enthroned in heaven, full of unity and life, could bear such a testimony to the risen One as all the powers of darkness and of hell could not resist. "And the multitude of them that believed," it is said, "were of one heart and of one soul," Acts IV.32 and thereupon, verse 33 "with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." - "When the Comforter is come," said the Lord, "He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness." John XV. 26-27. A *double* witness, John VIII.17-18, was to be given to the world of the redemption accomplished by God in Christ - that of those in whom the risen Son of Man so truly saw His own members and instruments that He could say of them, "He that heareth you heareth Me," Luke X. 16; and the testimony of the Holy Ghost personally dwelling in the Church, who, as the living God, bare witness through the word of prophecy, and through divers signs and wonders, to the Son of the

eternal Father made flesh. Through this testimony should the children of God be gathered out of the world; through it should be manifested the unbelief and hardness of heart of those who withstood it and would not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. John XVI.7-14.

Thus was the way to be prepared for the return of the ascended Lord; for His return, and the gathering of His saints to Him was the *one hope* of those who received the Apostles' testimony. In their inner hidden man they were already dead and risen with Him; their conversation was in heaven; and though their bodies were on earth, they looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who should change their vile bodies, that they might be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Phil. III.20-21 [019].

This hope which Christians then had of the speedy return of their Lord, and the resurrection and glory of all the members of His mystical body, as we find it expressed in the first testimony borne by the Apostles, and throughout all their epistles, was intimately connected with that place which God gave to the Church in His Son. She was not referred to an unseen region of the dead as the place of her future perfecting, or future reward, or promised glory. But God had provided all for her, and given her all that

was needful to prepare her while in this mortal body and in this fallen world for the sudden change of the body and the union with her glorified Head, and for a participation in the rule of His future kingdom. "I am jealous over you," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, "with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Cor. XI.2. It was not beyond the grave that the bride of Christ was to be sanctified and adorned for her espousals; it was not for death and the laying aside of the body that God waited in order to crown His elect. Here, on this earth, should the work of cleansing and sanctification be completed, through the power of Christ in the Holy Ghost; through His mighty operation in all His members; and here, on this earth, should His bride expect Him from heaven, when, together with them that sleep, in glorified bodies, she shall go forth to meet Him.

1.3 Christendom in its Present State.

Such was the Church when it came forth from God's hand; such was the glorious commencement He made with His people, when He delivered His spiritual Israel out of the bondage of sin and Satan, and bestowed upon them their heavenly position and exalted calling in Christ. *What, then, has become of this*

Church – of this [020] spiritual Israel? Christendom - as it now is - that is what it has become.

The Church consists of the whole body of those who, through an act of God, have, in holy baptism, been made members of the mystical body of His Son; for the Church of Christ is no abstraction; no definition of it, however correct, according to the schools, which has not regard to the condition of living men, can hold good. It does not come within the sphere of human judgement to determine who belongs to the Church and who does not. *God has determined that;* He has made the great separation between baptized and unbaptized; and, as under the Old Testament circumcision distinguished the covenanted people from the rest of the nations, so those who have partaken of the baptism of life in Christ Jesus are the covenanted people now, and the condition of the baptized is that of the spiritual Israel chosen in Christ.

The question, therefore - what has become of the Church? - whose commencement and primitive character we find described in Holy Scripture, can only find its true answer in the present condition of all Christendom. And what is the answer that it affords?

Alas! who would not rather be silent than speak of the present condition of the baptized? Who would

not rather cover than help to disclose the shame of the people of God? And who can disclose it in the way in which it should be done? For is it not of our brethren - is it not of the members of the body of Christ, of our spiritual mother, that we must speak? Better, in truth, would it be that those should be silent who are not called of God to speak; and let those whom He does call to witness for Him, pray for His grace that their testimony may be in His fear, to His glory, and to the salvation of His children [021].

What, then, is become of the UNITY of the primitive Church, which was “of one heart and of one soul”? It is gone; that which was *one* is rent in pieces, not only by the great divisions of Greek, Roman, and Protestant, but by countless smaller divisions within these great sections of the baptized. Instead of the original Divine unity, unity by the life received from one source, unity in the truth, unity in love, in the Holy Ghost, instead of this unity we see those who were baptized into one body, and made to drink into the one Spirit, 1. Cor. XII.13, who should have loved one another as brethren, full of envy, hatred, discord, condemning one another as heretics, disunited, hard-hearted, dogmatical. And this sad condition scarcely known or acknowledged by many; often denied or cloaked; men boasting in their shame, giving God the blame, declaring such a condition to be according to

His will, considering it to be as good, or, at least, unavoidable. And when the evil is felt and lamented, when men are weary of strife and of mutual recriminations, have they not too often made a false peace at the expense of truth, and are they not hopeless of a true healing of divisions? And, alas, how lukewarm and indifferent are we all become, that we can endure the sight of this rent and divided condition of Christendom without being continually humbled, ashamed, and cast down by it, as the open sin and shame of us all as one.

It is said of the first Christians that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine." Acts II.42. Among them it was but *one* doctrine, and the living source of this doctrine was CHRIST, and under Christ those men whom He had set first in the body, 1.Cor. XII.28, to be the guides and leaders of His Church. To them believers were subject; in and through them, and not in a dead [022] letter, or in a shut-up human system, believers received the one truth from Christ and as it is in Christ. From Apostles believers received the one doctrine; and the Holy Ghost, which they had all received, instructed their hearts, and confirmed and unfolded to each according to his gift, and to his individual character, the one Divine truth received from the Apostles. But what has now become of the *one* doctrine, and the *one* truth? We would not exag-

gerate, but surely none can deny that difference of doctrine among Christians is greater than ever, and that all the attempts of later times to restore unity of faith have only brought the want of unity to light, without coming one step nearer to its restoration. Not only do the old differences of faith in the great divisions of the Christian Church remain in fixed and established forms, but within the bounds of each division the keenest opposition, the most entire differences, spring up. We do not mean the difference between truth and the denial or perversion of truth, such as determines a man to be a Christian or no Christian; but even among those who have kept their faith in the Divine origin of Christianity, the greatest variations and distinctions in dogma appear so soon as they have opportunity to express their sentiments. And as to what yet remains of symbols, or confessions of faith belonging to the different parties in Christendom, while their very existence bears witness rather to division than to unity, are they not much more proofs of the measure of living faith that existed in a bygone generation than any proof of what exists now?

The first Christians were so freed from the love of the world and of earthly things, through the love of Christ shed forth in their hearts, that they voluntarily made [023] themselves poor in this world, to be rich in Christ alone. They sold their goods and posses-

sions, their lands and houses, and laid their money at the Apostles' feet. In nothing, perhaps, does the contrast between Christendom, as it now is, and the primitive Church, appear in a stronger light than in this. While Christendom now, in consequence of a long peace, and God's blessing, is loaded in an unexampled measure with earthly treasures, and the luxury and superfluity of the rich have reached an appalling height, all power of self-denial and self-sacrifice for God's sake seems to have disappeared from among us. There is no earthly undertaking, however rash and however gigantic, for which in the present day means will not be found. But while the populations of the great towns have been doubled and trebled, means can scarcely be procured even to maintain the existing church buildings; and the care and support of the poor being more and more thrown into the hands of the civil authorities, shows that the constraint of a law must make up for the decrease of love. The payment of tithes, by which the Christian Church acknowledged the Lord as possessor of heaven and earth, scarcely now exists; the few and scattered traces of it that do remain are with difficulty maintained. And whoever is at all acquainted with the religious societies of the present day knows how difficult it is for them to procure the means which their active exertions demand.

And what is become of that FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT which was in the Church at the beginning? "When they had prayed," it is said of the first Christians, Acts 4,31, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The fullness of the Holy Ghost in the primitive [024] congregations is indissolubly connected with the internal condition of the faithful; it seems a continual and ever-repeated Divine response to the faith and fidelity of the Church. Only a Church like that first Apostolic Church, which was of one heart and one soul, walking in the fear and discipline of the Lord, and in all holy obedience before Him, could pray as she prayed; therefore only of the Church in that its primitive condition do we read that she received such an answer. Christendom in the present day, however great its need of the Holy Ghost in His original fullness, cannot so pray - it cannot pray in the unity of the one body, and for the one body. It is at best but the broken parts of the one body that pray for the Holy Ghost, each for their own part, for "*their Church*;" while the Holy Ghost mourns and laments over these divisions, and cannot impart Himself to one part to the rejection of the rest.

And not only is the *unity* necessary for such a prayer as that of the first Christians wanting, but also that *strength of faith* which was in the Church at the

beginning. The first Christians believed in a Personal Comforter (Paraclete), believed in the present, living, personal God, who descended at Pentecost; and when they made supplication to the risen Lord, they not only expected quickening and sanctifying operations of His grace, but they knew that He, as the living Lord, and the perfected Head of His Church, was present by the Spirit in the midst of them, and could manifest His power among them for sanctification and chastisement, for the advancement and perfecting of His Church, for the revelation of His glory in all the ministries of His house, in the gifts of the Spirit, in signs and wonders wrought by Him for the confirmation of the truth through His [025] members. In these days men are almost frightened at the thought of such a revelation of His power and glory, as was exhibited at the beginning; and for centuries it has been determined in the schools that such deeds as believers then witnessed are never to be manifested again.

And if we would pray again with the same success that Christians did at the beginning, must we not yield ourselves to be cleansed from the guilt of many generations, which burdens and defiles our consciences? The first Christians had not grieved and resisted the Holy Ghost as we and our fathers have done; they had not defiled and laid waste His temple; they had not so dishonoured and disowned the Name

of the risen One, as have the many generations of the baptized, through their sin, unfaithfulness, infidelity, and all manner of perverseness and ungodliness.

They hoped for the speedy return of Christ and for redemption of the body, Rom. VIII.23, that in glorified bodies they might ever be with their risen Lord. And they had this hope because they were dead to the world and walked in the Spirit; for it is the Spirit that says "Come," Rev. XXII.17, and where the life of Christ is, there is also the longing for resurrection Rom. VIII.23. But what is become of this longing, of this hope? Has it not disappeared from the Church? Not only has death during centuries exercised dominion over the bodies of those who are members of Him who has risen from the dead, but men have become so used to its dominion, nay, so reconciled to it, that they scarcely remember that it must have an end, and even shrink from the thought of the resurrection, and of the sudden change of those who shall be alive in that day [026].

1.4 Historical Sketch of the Decline from the Apostolic Age to the Present Time.

However, we will not carry further at present the comparison between the first Apostolic Church and

the Christendom of our day. What has been said is sufficient to call forth in all whose hearts God has prepared the consciousness how deeply we have fallen. And there are probably few of those who in any measure feel and acknowledge the spiritual condition of our time, who have not often, with shame and sadness, made the same comparison. But do we feel this spiritual destitution in which we are as we ought to feel it? Is the loss which the Church has sustained acknowledged in its whole depth and extent, mourned over and lamented before God day and night?

“Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day.” Ezra IX.7. “O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee. .” Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey Thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.” Dan. IX.8-11. “We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgements, which Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses.” Neh. I.7.

Such is the language with which the men of former times approached God, for they saw in the afflic-

tions and perplexities of their people God’s chastening hand, and humbled themselves under His chastisement in lowliness and penitence of heart. Have the afflictions and distresses of the baptized wrought like fruits in us? And are we so freed from selfishness and self-righteousness, that we give up all self-justifying, whether of individual members [027], or of the whole body, or parts of the body to which we belong? Do we see the beam in our own eye, and not only the mote in the eye of our brother? Do Protestants feel their guilt to be greater than that of Roman Catholics? And do Roman Catholics feel in like manner as regards Protestants? Have we ceased to justify any party in the Church before God; and do we acknowledge and feel that when we compare ourselves with what we were in the beginning, and with what the Church of God should have been, and might have been in all ages, we can only smite on our breasts, and confess before Him our common sin?

The children suffer on account of the sins and unfaithfulness of their fathers. The present condition of Christendom reveals, not merely the sins and errors of the present generation, but those of all the past generations of the baptized. Whoever would trace to its commencement the present sinful condition of the Church, must go far back in her history - even to the first apostolic times.

In God's Word there is no inaccuracy and no exaggeration. When the first chapters of the Acts give us so fair a picture of the condition of the Church in the beginning, we may be sure that she in reality corresponded to this glorious description; and instead of seeking to deny her condition, or to lessen its excellence, we should rather recognise in the measure of inward perfection then attained to, and the power then manifested, the faithfulness of God and the fulfilment of His promises, and give Him glory for that good beginning which He accomplished in His people. It is, however, undeniable that, as with Israel in the wilderness, so also early in the Church, the germ of sin and of apostasy showed itself, whereby God was constrained to visit His children with [028] chastisements, instead of leading them to the speedy possession of the promised glory. The Apostles, who were the greatest gift of God to His Church, and through whom the greatest measure of blessing was imparted to her, had, in the guidance of the spiritual Israel entrusted to them, to go through a like experience with Moses, the servant of God, in the wilderness. The Churches continued not in their first love, nor in longing for the return of their Lord; and the Apostles, instead of attaining to that which was the aim of all their activity on earth - the second coming of Christ - became witnesses of a coming apostasy, and fell

asleep warning and prophesying of those perilous times to which the Church of God should come.

The same Peter who, in the beginning of his apostolical career, in the belief and joyful hope of the speedy appearing of the glory of the kingdom of Christ which had been before predicted, called upon his people to repent and put away their sins, that God might send Jesus the second time, who now was preached unto them as having been received up into heaven. This same Peter we find, at the close of his labours, beholding in spirit and predicting the falling away of the Church. Not only did he know that he himself would not live to behold the return of his Lord, 2 Peter I.14, but he saw beforehand how this hope would disappear among Christians; that the mockers in the last times would be bold enough, through the delay of its fulfilment, to cry out, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2.Peter III.3-4. He foresees that time of darkness which the Church would have to pass through after his departure, when she would [029] especially need the "word of prophecy." 2.Peter I.15-19. He declares, that as in Israel destruction came through the unfaithfulness of those who spoke to the people, but not in God's name, Jer. II.8; Ezek. XXXIV., so would destruction come upon Christen-

dom, through the unfaithfulness and earthly-mindedness of those who occupied the place of teachers and leaders of the people. 2.Peter II.1-3. He holds up the warning example of those who in former times fell away from God and His ways, and were visited by His judgments, 2.Peter II.4-9, and describes the condition of the last times in characters which we recognise but too exactly in the licentiousness and lawlessness, in the apostasy from God and rebelliousness, the life of pleasure and impurity, the seducing doctrines and false liberty of our day.

And St. Paul who, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, calls upon believers to comfort themselves, in regard to those who had been removed from among them by death, with this assurance, that when the hope of those who remained alive was fulfilled in the coming of Christ, the living should not prevent, or go before, them that sleep; "for the dead in Christ shall rise first; then those which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," 1.Thess.IV.13-18; in his second epistle speaks of an apostasy which must be revealed before the coming of Christ can take place. 2.Thess. II.3. And while in his second epistle to the Corinthians he expresses his own earnest desire, and that of all the faithful, not to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of

life, 2 Cor. IV. 1-4; and in his later epistle to the Philippians speaks of waiting for the Lord from heaven, "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body ;" we find him [030], shortly before his departure, in a similar condition with Peter, as he writes in his second epistle to Timothy. He also has come to know that he shall not be among the living to present the bride to the Lord at His second coming, but that he shall be among them that sleep - among those that wait in the grave - and, like Peter, he beholds in the Spirit the apostasy of the Church in the latter times. 1.Tim. IV.1-3; 2.Tim. III.1-9; IV.3-4. He takes leave of the churches in Asia Minor, bound in spirit, knowing that they shall see his face no more; and while he admonishes the bishops to be faithful, he warns them beforehand that the destruction of the Church will not come from without, but from the midst of themselves. Acts XX. 22-30.

While to Peter and Paul it was thus made known that death was before them, 2.Peter I.14; 2.Tim. IV.6, and they saw with prophetic eye the perilous times that were coming; that Apostle, concerning whom it was believed that he should not die, John XXI.23, was preserved in life, not, however, to behold the return of the Lord, but to receive at the close of his labours, in prophetic visions and images, a more detailed revelation of the fate of the Church of God,

down to the last judgement of that apostasy which should have its rise in her.

We can thus trace in the three chief among the Apostles, and in the character of their testimony before their departure, the course which already in their time the history of the Church had taken.

That generation of the children of Israel who came out of Egypt, and were destined to enter on the possession of the promised land, never entered it. Thus in the New Testament - the first Christians who had received the promise that that same Jesus whom they had seen taken [031] up into heaven, should so come as they had seen Him go into heaven, and who were provided by God with everything needful for their being, as a bride adorned for her husband, that in glorified bodies they might be led forth to meet Him - obtained not the fulfilment of the promise, but fell asleep, and still wait for that voice of the Son of Man which shall call them forth from their graves.

The fear which the Apostle Paul felt that he might not attain the highest object of his labour, even the preparation of the Church for the coming of her Lord, he expresses in the second epistle to the Corinthians in the following words: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one hus-

band, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." 2.Cor. XI.2-3. He therefore not only thought it possible that the Church might be led aside from the right way which would lead to her full development and speedy perfection; but he had grounds for thinking that this would be the case. Nor does he leave us in uncertainty as to the grounds for so serious a fear; he declares distinctly that his fear concerning the Corinthian and other churches arose from the experience which he had had among them in the exercise of his apostolic office. He saw and felt in them an increasing inclination to reject him, the Apostle of the Lord, and the Lord and His truth in him; a determination no more to endure the purifying power, the holy discipline, the godly training which the Lord, especially through Apostles, then exercised towards His children; he saw and felt how ready men were to prefer other ways to the ways of God, and instead of abiding in [032] the truth and in the Holy Ghost, to allow themselves to be seduced and led astray by false doctrines and false leaders.

In Christ God found perfect obedience, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God," Heb. X.9. Thus He spoke from the depth of His heart, and He became obedient

unto death, even the death of the cross, Phil. II.8. And as He Himself as man had yielded perfect obedience, so He sent His Apostles that the obedience of faith might be wrought in His Church. "By whom," says the Apostle, "we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name," Rom. I.5. And at the end of the same epistle he says that the mystery of the Gospel is made manifest "for the obedience of faith," Rom. XVI.26. The obedience *of faith* (ὑπακοή πίστεως) was that which was to be wrought in the Church; not a servile obedience to outward ordinances, but a perfect obedience, an obedience of faith, proceeding from an inward change of heart, from the renewing of the Holy Ghost, from entire surrender of ourselves to Christ, and from love to Him shed forth in our hearts. Nevertheless it must be a true *obedience*, a true denial of our own will, and of all that proceeds from our own will; an entire renunciation of all independent working of our own, and such a subjection to Christ that He can work all things in us; and this obedience must be to Christ the Incarnate One, and to Him not as absent, but as the present God and Lord, present through the Holy Ghost, in all the offices and ordinances of His Church. Obedience to the Lord in those whom He has placed over His people was therefore the test of the obedience of faith, and as He had set His Apostles first in His Church, 1.Cor. XII.28, all disobedience

springing up towards the Divine Head [033] would show itself first and principally by turning away from apostolic doctrine and apostolic guidance.

Of the Church at first it was said, "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine," Acts II. 42. And St. Paul bears testimony as to how unreserved was the submission to the Lord as present in him, when he first entered on the apostolic office. He writes to the Galatians, "Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus," Gal IV.14. But what need had the same Apostle, who thus writes, afterwards to contend for his apostolic authority, and the place which God had assigned him for the benefit of His Church! Not only does this whole epistle to the Galatians show us the Apostle in a position in which he must condescend to defend himself and his office anew before the Church, Gal IV.16-20, but the epistles to the Corinthians also testify a disposition to reject the Lord in His Apostle, and to follow after false apostles and self-chosen leaders. "If I be not an Apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord," 1.Cor. IX. 2. And in his second epistle, the eleventh and twelfth chapters, he is constrained to undertake the unwelcome task of comparing himself with others, and showing wherein he excelled them, in order to maintain his authority in opposition to the false apostles and deceitful workers

who were obtaining entrance into the Church. In the tenth chapter of the first epistle he holds up to the Church the warning example of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. He shows Christians how, although all the Jewish people had the same Divine calling, yet most of them perished in the desert, because God had no pleasure in them. He warns against like sins whereby the people of the new covenant might [034] prepare for themselves a like fate; and points out the typical meaning of the Jewish history for the Church, not as predestinating her fate, but yet as giving her warning. And the second epistle to Timothy, which he writes in view of his own approaching end, testifies plainly of the contempt for and rejection of apostolic grace of which the Apostle must have had experience. "This thou knowest," he writes in the first chapter, verse 15, "that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes;" and in the fourth chapter we read, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." 2.Tim. IV.16.

And as we thus find the Apostle Paul in a condition which reminds us of what Moses suffered in the wilderness from the children of Israel; as we find him disowned, and his authority contemned and rejected by the very churches which he had himself founded; so other apostolic epistles bear witness that in conse-

quence of the condition of the churches, the apostolic office could not obtain that freedom of operation which was necessary for the attainment of the object in view. Heb. V.11-14; VI.1-3; 3.John 9. As the position of faith which God assigned to His people in the wilderness soon became unbearable to them, and they longed to return to Egypt, Exod. XVI.3; XVII.3, so we have the testimony of the Apostles that the primitive Church did not abide in the Spirit, but that, having begun in the Spirit, they sought to be made perfect by the flesh. See Gal. III.3; IV.9; 1.Cor. III.1-3. An internal halt, or a return to the old ways of the flesh took place; the more advanced and deeper teaching of the Apostles, by which the Church should have been led forward from one step of Divine knowledge to another, was neither sought nor desired. Errors in practice, false spirituality [035], legal formal piety, and, on the other hand, false liberty and entire lawlessness, bear witness to that struggle which the Apostles had to encounter in the churches, and throw light on the dark question, why God did not continue His Church in the possession of all the ministries and gifts with which she was so amply endowed in the apostolic times and by which she obtained such mighty victories.

We have brought forward the dark side of the condition of the Church, in the later period of the ap-

ostolic age, certainly not with any intention to exalt ourselves above our fathers, or to give to any still later period in the Church the preference over that; but only in order to show, that if we would acknowledge that common guilt, under the load of which the whole of Christendom groans, on account of which God hides His face from us, and visits us with His judgements, and threatens to visit us yet more fearfully, then we must go back to the commencement of the Christian Church, to the time when God made a covenant with us, and poured forth on us the full riches of His blessing. The germ of that sin and apostasy from God, which is ripening with such fearful rapidity in our days, reaches back to the apostolic times, and only when we have recognised and understood it, will our eyes become sufficiently enlightened as to the later condition of the Church. A mighty difference undeniably exists between the apostolic period and all succeeding periods.

The original fulness of the Holy Ghost, Acts IV.31; X.44-46; XIX.6, the manifoldness of the gifts, 1.Cor.XII.7-11; XIV.5; Rom. XII.4-8, the variety of offices and Divine ministries, not ordained of man, but by a Divine call, and with the conferring of a Divine grace, the unity and purity of doctrine, the [036] presence of men sent direct from God, not only to maintain pure doctrine, and to heal divisions, but to

lead the Church on from one degree of knowledge to another; the exercise of a spiritual paternal discipline, for the cleansing and salvation even of those who were most severely chastised; the simplicity and purity of Christian life, and its preservation from illiberality and enthusiasm; all these things, even in the period immediately succeeding the Apostles, we either find not at all, or in a far inferior degree.

Shall we then first seek the beginning of the sin where we find the beginning of God's judgement? For only as such, as punishment, chastening, humiliation from God, is that disconsolate condition to be viewed in which the Church found herself after the apostolic times.¹ Shall we not much rather go farther back, even into the apostolic period, and labour to search out the first cause of the fading of the original glory of the temple of the Lord, and of that decay which had come over His house? And if we are seeking to trace

¹ The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. All that He gave to His Church at the beginning, He gave for the whole period of the present dispensation. We do not find a single trace in Scripture of an especial endowment of the Church merely with a view to her foundation. On the contrary, it is expressly said that apostles and prophets, as well as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, were for the building-up and perfecting of the Church, "till (μεχρι) we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The same holds good of the gifts of the Spirit. See 1.Cor. XII.

the sin of the Church - of the people of the new covenant - to its earliest beginnings, it is not that we would spare the sins of later generations, least of all our own sins, or those of our own generation. If the Christians of the first times may be likened to that generation that came out of Egypt, and [037] their conduct toward the Lord in His Apostles likened to the conduct of that Jewish people toward Moses, and their rejection of Divine guidance through him; so does that remarkable passage in the book of Judges find its full application to the later generations of the Church, where it says, that when all that generation were gathered to their fathers who had seen the mighty works which God had done for Israel, there arose another generation which knew not the Lord, who had done such great things for their fathers, and had led them out of Egypt, who followed other gods, and provoked the Lord to anger. Judges II. 10-22. For although the remembrance of the apostolic times, and the longing after its glory, runs through the history of the Church like a golden thread, yet it is certain that the more that period retreats into the dimness of distance, this longing shows itself more and more in the form of idolatry of those departed instruments through whom God had done such great things, and in human efforts to make up for what has been lost, rather than in a clear consciousness of the loss that has been suffered, or in the hope of a restoration by

God Himself of that which the Church possessed when she had Apostles

“It was after the holy Apostles had in various ways and at various times fallen asleep, and that generation who were honoured to hear with their own ears the words spoken by Divine wisdom had quite passed away, that a combination of deadly errors through the seducing of false teachers had its commencement. These teachers ventured boldly *when* Apostles were no longer there, to proclaim a knowledge, falsely so called, in opposition to the preaching of the truth.”² Such and similar voices [038] sound from the very earliest days after the departure of the Apostles and of their disciples, and they give token of the necessities of the Church, and the insufficiency of the means then present to uphold her in any measure in that condition in which she had been left by the Apostles.

But while men felt their necessities, did they acknowledge their guilt? Who does not know and admire those venerable men who, as the chief teachers and leaders of the Church in the period immediately succeeding that of Apostles, were patterns of piety and of fidelity in holding fast that which the Apostles

² Eusebius (according to Hegesippus), Church Hist. III.32.

had committed to them? Who, in our present worldly and weak condition, does not feel himself put to shame and condemned by the joy with which these martyrs and confessors of the first centuries sacrificed themselves, and by the strength of their faith? Who does not admire the earnest struggles after the maintenance of holiness in the Church among the bishops of the early times? But while we cannot enough acknowledge God's grace in these our brethren, or sufficiently thank Him for the measure of faithfulness wrought in them; yet we seek among them in vain for a right acknowledgement of that guilt whereby the full measure of Divine grace which was present in the Apostles' time became straitened; and the desire of the Lord for the gathering out and perfecting of His Church remained unfulfilled.

The rejoicing over the conversion of the Roman Emperor (Constantine), the place which was given him in the venerable assembly of the heads of the Church, and the influence which as worldly head he obtained in all the internal affairs of the Church, indicated rather a longing after outward rest and worldly greatness, than after the return of Christ or the glory of the resurrection [039].

Undervaluing of the unspeakable riches of Divine grace, unthankfulness, satiety as to spiritual bless-

ings, standing still, cooling of the first love, disinclination for and rebellion against Divine guidance through Apostles, and the wholesome discipline of God in His holy ordinances; these were the sins which, according to the testimony of the Holy Scripture, came to light during the Apostles' days. The much scantier measure of Divine grace in the succeeding period, the want of a sure, Divine means of guidance in unity, as well as of prophetic light, the decrease and gradual disappearance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the narrow-mindedness, the spirit of bondage, the increasing diversity in doctrine, the rise and widespread influence of dangerous false teachers; these were all the Divine punishment and recompense of the common sin and transgression which had neither been acknowledged nor repented of.

And while men did not acknowledge the sins of their fathers, but continued in them, they increased the existing sin by not knowing how to save the honour of the Lord and the purity of His bride from the hands of the rulers of this world. However different the motives may have been, and the measure of guilt among those, who, in the first connection between Church and State, did not know how to maintain the independence of the Church against worldly authority; how great soever may have been the temptation to call for the apparent help of a powerful earthly ruler

under the then existing circumstances, when internal discord threatened divisions; and however much, during their long-continued sufferings under heathen rulers, men may have naturally longed for rest and reconciliation; yet certain it is that the guilt of the Church both in her heads and members was very [040] great, when, disowning her Heavenly origin and her Divine Head, she threw herself into the seducing arms of earthly potentates. And as the sin was great, so heavy and undeniable have been the Divine judgements that have followed upon it. Worldliness, earthly-mindedness, giving up the heavenly hope of the coming again of Christ, and of His saints reigning with Him, bondage of the Church under the powers of this world, dependence on them in all their vicissitudes, quenching of the Spirit, destruction of the spiritual life, complete cessation of the development of Divine doctrine and Divine knowledge - these are the features that characterize to this day that part of the Church (the Greek), where the sin of an unholy connection with the worldly power was especially committed.

And while the Greek Church bears the chief guilt in this respect, the way in which the Western Church more or less escaped this snare was not that she repented and turned to the Lord to set her free, but she betook herself to a means of help and defence, which

became only a new sin, and one which drew after it equally dangerous and destructive consequences. She made use of the historical importance of the Romish See, and its favourable situation owing to its distance from the new capital of the empire, to exalt the bishop of a single diocese to be the head of the whole of Christendom. The especial sin of the Western Church may not be found so much in the place which the Romish bishop, after the death of the Apostles, and indeed in consequence of outward circumstances, gradually had gained in the Church, as in the later attempt to make good this position as one of Divine appointment and ordination, and to demand for it the unreserved acknowledgement of all Christendom [041].

Through this attempt - (although the thoughts and views of those who took part in it, at least in many cases, may have been very different from the judgement passed upon them by later generations) - through this attempt was the great sin committed of making an untruth of the highest spiritual authority in the Church, in that men raised a bishop to the place of an apostle; and in order to be able to make this bishop an absolute ruler over his brethren, gave to that especial apostle whose place he was to occupy, a position over his fellow-apostles, which according to the Scriptures he never possessed. While men thus

founded the highest authority of the Church on a basis which could neither be maintained from Scripture nor from the oldest tradition, they did violence to truth, and therewith opened the door to every untruth, to every exaggeration and misrepresentation of what is true and Divine, and to every mingling of what is of man with what is of God within the region of the Church. So we find that while stagnation and the fading away of spiritual life are the bitter fruits which the Greek Church has reaped, nothing is more characteristic of the Church of Rome in the history of her system, and the laborious development of her doctrine and practice, than just this mixture of truth and error, of flesh and spirit, of Divine and human. So deeply seated is this evil, that its sad operation manifests itself in innumerable ways in the life and in the activities of this important part of Christendom. And if the Romish Church, through the unity of her rule and her well organized hierarchy, has made effectual resistance to the usurpations of worldly power, yet the question may well be asked, whether this advantage, accompanied as it has been by a spiritual tyranny, unexampled in the world's history, has not been bought too dear? [042].

As to those parts of the Western Church which have protested against the claims of universal authority on the part of Rome, and the consequent hiding

and setting aside of the Divine Head and His alone merits, they are guilty of desiring the Head without the Body, and of seeking the Lord elsewhere and in another manner than in and through His Church. If in the Romish Church men forgot the Head in looking to the Body, it may well be said that the contrary has happened among Protestants. And let us not be too ready in determining which sin is the greatest. "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." Luke X.16. These words of our Lord show us that the test of true faith in the invisible Head will ever be our conduct towards His visible Church on earth. And if the obscuring and setting aside of the Divine Head has in the Romish Church led to superstition, and bondage to human ordinances, it is equally clear that in these days the denial of the presence and authority of Christ in the offices and ordinances of His House, and the partial emphasis laid upon the immediate and direct relation in which every individual believer stands to the Lord has led among Protestants to unbelief and to the dissolution of the body. It is in the body alone, and by means of all the members and organs of the body, that the individual member can be preserved in life, and the whole body be led on to the stature of a perfect man. Eph. IV.15-16. And as the Protestant scarcely knows his position in the body, and never

practically takes it, so spiritual impoverishment, and decay of strength, and, in the masses, more or less complete extinction of faith and the fear of the Lord, mark the condition in which we find Protestant countries.

We have seen how the apostasy of the ancient covenanted people of God closed; the close of the apostasy in Christendom we have not yet seen; but, as was remarked at the beginning, from all the signs of the times, and from the prophetic word of Scripture, we may expect a termination similar to that which closed the Jewish economy; not a general conversion and restoration of Christendom, but the saving of a remnant, through the fulfilment of that promise given at the beginning to the Church, of the return of Christ, to gather His saints unto Himself, 2.Thess. II.1; 1.Thess. IV.17; Matt. XXIV.40-41, and upon the rest the execution of the judgement of God.

2. WHAT IS THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS IN THE PRESENT TIMES?

2.1 True Repentance, in the Consciousness of the Oneness of all the Baptized, coupled with Faith in the Living God.

THERE were periods in the history of God's ancient people in which the eye of faith alone could discern His gracious hand; but during which, nevertheless, Divine faithfulness and love still guided and ruled over the chosen race. When the temple lay in ruins - when the holy city was trodden down of enemies - when the holy vessels of the temple were in the hands of strangers, and the children of God sighed in bondage - that was such a period. To the greater part of God's people these conditions might seem hopeless; but the penitent, believing Israelite saw, in the humiliation of his people, the hand of Him who chastens His children indeed, but never forsakes them. Dan. IX; Neh.I.

Such a period have we lived to see in the Church of God. However great the ruin of the spiritual Temple and of the Holy City of the New Testament, and however much ground, we have to see God's chastening hand in the general decay of the Church, when He

takes from her “the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water,” as well as all the strong and the wise, Isa.III.1 &c., yet only unbelief would give place to the thought that the Lord has forsaken His Church. Not only does such a thought contradict the express promise, from His own [045] mouth, Matt. XVI.18; XXVIII.20, that the gates of Hades (πυλαὶ αἰδου) shall not prevail against her, and that He will be with His Apostles to the end of the age; but in the prophetic Scriptures, where the Holy Ghost, in the condition of Israel after the flesh depicts beforehand the future corruption of the spiritual Israel, God has also given us such wonderful assurances of His unshaken faithfulness and love, that we cannot for a moment doubt, that in all the evils and punishments with which He visits us, He has no other end in view than to bring His children to repentance, and to cause them to return to Himself; that as a Father His heart may be softened towards us again, and that He may replenish us with His goodness.

This is, indeed, the intention of God, and we greatly err if, through unbelief and a fleshly mind, we would impatiently judge and reject His Christendom, while *He* yet has patience with it, and waits for its conversion; but we sin not less if, amidst all God’s chastisements and visitations (and we speak not only of outward and bodily distresses, but more especially

of the internally decayed and forsaken condition of the Church), if, in such a condition, we will neither hear nor see, if we will not acknowledge the decay; or, at most, only allow the falling away in those of another confession, while we cannot see it at all in our own. “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more,” Isa. I.5, are the fearful words which God speaks at the very time when His eye sees no sound part in His people, and when He is constrained to say of them, “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.” And do not the threatened judgements of God, as they are declared to us in the book of the Revelation, hang over the head [046] of the Church just when she is boasting of her perfection? - as it is written, “She saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day.” Rev. XVIII.7-8.

It is not only possible to unite a full and joyful faith in the presence of the Lord in his Church, and the most genuine reverence for all the Divine ordinances yet remaining in her, with a true perception of, and godly sorrow for, the low and decayed condition into which she has fallen; but in the union of these apparently contradictory sentiments alone is the whole truth contained. Only those who see in the Christendom of the present day both the Temple, the

house of prayer which God built at the first, and the den of thieves which men have made of it, can recognise the true condition of the Church.

Without consciousness of sin true repentance is impossible; and as there is a self-righteousness which makes the acknowledgement of individual sin and corruption impossible to a human heart, so there is a self-righteousness in the Church as a body which keeps us ignorant and impenitent in regard to the sins of the Church. And yet it is just these sins - the sins of the whole people of God - the sins of *the Church*, if this expression be rightly understood - that must be felt, mourned over before God, and acknowledged, if a real restoration of the Church is to be brought about.

When Daniel, Dan. IX., set himself, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes, to seek God by prayer and supplication, it was not the sins which he as an individual had committed that afflicted his soul so deeply, and the burden of which bowed him in the dust before God. No doubt he was at heart a humble and penitent man [047]; and just because he was such, God could bestow upon him that grace by which he could feel the common guilt of his whole people, and confess it before God. But this common guilt it was which he felt as his own. Nor did he feel it sufficient

to confess the guilt of the generation among whom he lived; but, conscious of the unity of the covenanted people from the beginning, he says, "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee." Dan. IX.8. He remembers the wonderful deeds of God at the beginning, when He made a covenant with His people, and in the light of what had been conferred upon them he sees and in the depths of his troubled soul he feels, the great declension, the sin, unfaithfulness, and disobedience of his whole people.

Such repentance as we find in Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, God now seeks from us; and the first desire of every true Christian should be that God would work it in him.

We say, that God would work it in him, for He alone can do so. He alone can give us grace to become free from all party and sectarian spirit; so that amidst all the divisions of Christendom we can recognise the unity of the people of God - that unity which, from the commencement, God accomplished by baptism. Only when we feel ourselves one with the whole of Christendom, by means of one Divine life, of which we have all been made partakers by baptism, can we feel all the sin which has been committed from the beginning as our own. Then only shall we cease to accuse our

brethren and justify ourselves; then only shall we learn to see the guilt of the Church, not only in those of this or of that confession, but in all, not only in this generation, but in [048] all generations. When God so enlarges our heart, and gives us such a consciousness of the unity of His people from Pentecost until now, then we shall not fail to see our common guilt. We shall feel that neither we nor our fathers have kept the commandments and laws which He gave to us at first through His Son; that we have not obeyed His voice, nor followed those who have spoken to us in His name. We shall feel that neither we nor our fathers have continued steadfast in that grace into which God has brought us; that we have not had our conversation in the power of the resurrection of Christ; that we have not crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts; that we have from the beginning quenched and grieved the Holy Spirit; that we have withstood the Lord in His servants - in His Apostles first, and ever since; that we did not love the holy, fatherly discipline of God in His house; that we have abused, despised, and disowned the gifts of His Spirit; that we have not loved nor longed for the appearing of the Lord, 2.Tim. IV. 8, nor sought cleansing and preparation for it from Him; that we have not kept our first love; that we have been weary of the fight of faith, have turned to the love of the world, have courted earthly potentates, and denied Him the alone Lord

and Head of His Church, have not abode in the truth, have set up human institutions and ordinances instead of those originally given from God; that we have added new sins to those of our fathers, instead of acknowledging and putting away those which they had committed; - all this, and much more, which the eye of God sees in us, we shall acknowledge and confess as our common guilt; and in this, our common guilt, we shall recognise the cause of our present degradation, why the One Holy Church of [049] God, from such as she was at the beginning, has become such as Christendom now is.

The Lord waits for such a repentance, in order to have compassion on His Church, and to stretch out His hand in the midst of her. For God deals with the whole body according to the same law by which He rescues individual sinners. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." James IV.6. God can only help us in the measure in which our sin is recognised and confessed, although the acknowledgement of it be His own first help; yet it must be there. A thorough conviction must be wrought in us as to the sins of all the baptized, from the very commencement, if things are ever to go better with the Church. We must learn to feel those sins as our own - to mourn over them before God - to hate them - to

sigh under their burden, and not to cease to lament this our condition before the living God.

Such repentance, though it be only wrought in individuals, is the first beginning of true amendment in the Church.

Daniel did not wait with his prayer till his whole people turned to God; but so soon as he received light from the word of the Lord, Dan. IX.2-3, "he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." - But his prayer, though it was only that of an individual man, proceeded from a heart which God had so prepared, that every good emotion which stirred in the whole people could be expressed by the mouth of Daniel. By Daniel the sins of the whole people were felt and acknowledged before God. God had found an instrument through whom the penitent supplications of His people could rise to Him; and so ready, was He to lend an ear to such supplications [050], that we read, Dan. IX. 23, that "*at the beginning* of thy supplications, the commandment came forth," by which a Divine answer was sent to him,

And no doubt much would in our day be gained if God could find in Christendom men in whose hearts He could work a repentance like that of Daniel.

Greatly were it to be wished that the heads of the Church would lead the way by their example. The chief responsibility for the present condition of the Church rests on them, and in them should be found the deepest and most comprehensive feeling of her decay, and the liveliest sense of the necessity of repentance; but, alas! of many among them the eyes are blinded that they cannot see: others, perhaps, the Lord would humble, in that He has commenced His work in our days, not with them, but with those who have no honour among men.

If we acknowledge that in order to any real reformation penitent confession must be made in the name of the whole Church, we must not the less lay to heart the truth that such penitence must be united with faith that the living God is a hearer of prayer. Psalm LXV.1-8; Heb. XI.6.

The men who in Daniel's time cried to God out of their people's necessity were men who believed in the living God. They remembered the covenant that He had made with their fathers, the mighty deeds which He had wrought among them, the holy laws and ordinances which He gave them by the hand of His servant Moses. Their hearts longed for the restoration of the ruined sanctuary, and the building again of that holy city, upon which the Lord had put His name,

and where He sought to reveal his honour and glory. They did not seek the Divine blessing or restoration from their fallen condition by means and ways of their own, but, while they felt and [051] acknowledged that only God could help them, they knew likewise that His ways are unchangeable, and that His help could only be expected in the restoration of all that He had given at the beginning.

So must we also have faith in that God who at the beginning made His covenant with us through Christ; and in that Lord who, as Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, by the sending forth of the Holy Spirit, built His sanctuary in the midst of us, founded His Church and established in her the worship of God in spirit and in truth. We must believe that the risen Lord lives at the Father's right hand; that His Spirit is yet in the midst of us ; that His arm is not shortened; that the time of wonders and mighty works is not yet past; that He and He alone can help His Church, and that His ways in His sanctuary are the same which He revealed at the beginning. We must abstain from all hope of helping ourselves, and perceive the insufficiency and nothingness of all means and ways of Church reformation devised by men; we must cease from all our own will and working, and with faith in our living Head, and unreserved submission to Him and His holy unchangeable way,

expect all from Him through the working of His Holy Spirit.

The pious Jews who returned from the captivity, brought forth the book of the law of Moses and read therein from morning till mid-day, in order to learn therefrom the ways of God, as they had been made known to them at the beginning. God has in His wisdom and grace taken care that we also should have an infallible witness of His ways with us in the first days of His Church. The canonical books of the New Testament contain this witness; and if we expect help from God and His Christ for His Church, we shall do well to search [052] diligently after the ways of God in the beginning, as declared in these books; that if He should again begin to work in the midst of us, we may recognise His hand and be ready to follow Him.

We expect, and rightly, any revival of the Church from the Holy Ghost alone, who came to us at Pentecost, and has never since forsaken the Church. But do we sufficiently consider that *the full operation of Christ by the Holy Ghost is inseparable from those ministries and ordinances which at the beginning He established in His house?* It was through diverse ministries, as well as through manifold gifts and powers, that the One God would work all in all. Indeed, in the fourth chapter of that epistle, in which the counsel of

God in Christ and in the Church is most gloriously unfolded to us, Eph. I.10,18-23; II. 6,7,19-22; III.10-11; IV.4-16; V.32, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, are designated alone, without mention of other gifts and powers, as the gifts bestowed by the risen Lord for the building up and perfecting of His body. Eph IV.8-11. If we seek, then, with penitent hearts to have Christ's full operation again in the midst of us, can we do otherwise than expect the revival of those especial gifts which He Himself has designated in His Word as the chief organs by which He would work in His Church? And how can we expect those gifts in any other sense than that in which the Holy Ghost speaks of them, and in which they were actually present in the Church at the beginning?

When *apostles* are spoken of in the Holy Scriptures, men are meant, such as Peter and Paul; men who were constituted apostles, "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father," Gal I.1. And if *prophets* are spoken of, such men are meant as those [053] spoken of in Antioch, Jerusalem, and elsewhere in the primitive congregations. Acts XIII.1; XV.32; XX.23; XXI.10. So also the Scriptures recognise as *evangelists, pastors and teachers*, only such men as had been invested with these especial ministries by God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is all the more necessary to point out that we have to expect the help of Christ for His Church, not merely in general revivals and quickening of the Holy Spirit, because most Christians are ready to acknowledge the present need of an outpouring of the Holy Ghost, but few have seriously considered that with the outpouring of the Spirit at the beginning was indissolubly connected Christ's presence and operation in the ministries of His house, and that just through these ministries the gathering and edifying of the Church took place. This it is which explains how in that passage of the epistle to the Ephesians, which speaks of what the ascended Lord had given to His Church, it is not said, He gave the Holy Ghost, or the gifts of the Holy Ghost, but "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Eph. IV.11. The Lord had promised the Holy Ghost as another Comforter, who should abide with His disciples for ever, John XIV.16, but as He could say of Himself in the days of His flesh, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father, that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works," John XIV.10; so the Holy Ghost was not to speak of Himself. "When He, the Spirit of truth," it is said, "is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me; for He

shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.” John XVI.13-14. The Holy [054] Ghost is therefore to testify of Christ, to glorify Him, to take of His things, and show them unto us. John XIV.26; XV.26. But just on this account, *because* the Holy Ghost is to glorify Him who has become Man, does He yield Himself to the ordinances of Christ, working in and through such men as are called and sent of Christ, organs of His mystical body, 1.Cor. XII. 28, who, in His name and with His commission, perform the functions of His body. He yields himself to be ministered through, and in the name of Him who has become Man, not merely immediately from Christ as at Pentecost, and on the conversion of Cornelius, but also through the interposition of men, as is clearly to be gathered from many passages of Holy Scripture. Acts VIII.17.19; 2.Tim. I.6. And the apostle John knows no better test by which to recognise Him, than that He is the Spirit who confesses Jesus Christ come in the flesh. 1.John IV. 2.

While, therefore, we must steadfastly believe that the Holy Ghost is God with the Father and the Son, that He is a Divine Person, and as such dwells in the Church, we must beware of separating Him and His operations from Christ and His ordinances, and of making Him the Head of the Church. We are in danger of this, however, when, as is often the case among

Christians in these days, we expect everything from the immediate operation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and nothing from Christ and His ordinances: or, when we expect that the Holy Ghost will operate through organs and instruments not ordained of Christ, which stand without any commission from Him, and owe their existence only to the will, and choice, and endeavours of pious men. We do well when, with penitent and believing hearts, we bring in remembrance before God the promise of the latter [055] rain, and of the pouring out of the Spirit in the last times, Zech.X.1; Joel II.28; Acts II.39, and plead with Him for the fulfilment of that promise; but if we thereby imagine to ourselves a general stirring and revival of Christendom, without the re-awakening or restoration of the original Divine ordinances, whereby the risen Lord at the beginning wrought in the midst of His people, then we do not understand the position which the Holy Ghost takes in relation to God and to Christ. If the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of order, whose delight it is to glorify the God-Man, and whose freedom it is to be subject to the will of God in Christ - if He is to have His free operation among us, and to develop in the midst of us the fullness of His grace, then the Church, which is the body of Christ, must be constituted and ordered according to the mind of Christ. The members and organs which Christ has set in His Church must be found there; the Divine build-

ing which is to serve for a temple of the Holy Ghost must be erected according to the Divine plan; and the longing and desire of our hearts, if we are seeking the glory of God and the salvation of His people, and expect the restoration of His sanctuary, must be directed as much to the restoration of the original Divine ordinances as to a return of the original fullness of the Holy Ghost.³

But where is such a faith? Where is such a hope? If it be difficult to bring us to acknowledge the guilt which lies upon the whole Church, and to feel it as our own sin, and the sin of our fathers - will it not be yet more difficult to work in us faith that the Lord both can and will restore His house again in the midst of us, as it was at the beginning? At the sight of the general desolation [056], confusion, and helplessness; the feebleness and fewness of those who have held fast the faith; and the increasing power of the enemy - we feel as those men did who, in a like position, desisted from the great task which God had then assigned to them as a people, and satisfied themselves with each one caring for his individual interests. The Jews who returned from Babylon, rendered timid by their adversaries, ceased to build the temple; and the Lord was constrained, by His prophets, to re-

³ Dr. Thiersch, Kathol. und Protest. i. s. 70.

prove the lukewarmness and unbelief of His people, and to stir up their zeal for His house, before they returned to the building of it again. Ezra IV.24; V.1-2. And yet every blessing of God stood connected with this work. "Consider your ways," are the words of the Lord by the prophet Haggai. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? said the Lord of hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands." Haggai I.5-11. God makes the blessing which is to rest upon [057] the labour of our hands to depend upon whether or not we do His will. And we may be zealous for God, and take part in all manner of pious works,

and yet not do His will, because we do not recognise His purpose in His people. Yet we shall be as little able to excuse ourselves on the plea of ignorance as the Jews of those days; for as they could and must have known that God required something else and something more from them than the mere return from Babylon, and the care each for their individual welfare; that He sought the restoration of His sanctuary, where that common worship of His people, ordained for all the twelve tribes, could be offered to Him, and from whence He could bless His people. So we can and must know that God seeks among us something more than the awakening and deliverance of individual souls from the bondage of the spiritual Babylon - something more than the advancement of this or that, however well meant, pious undertaking; that He seeks the restoration of the one temple, the One Holy Catholic Church, such as it was at the beginning; and that only when we enter upon this His plan, and yield ourselves in this to His holy will, shall we receive His full blessing, and the heavens shall open to shed down upon us the dew of His Holy Spirit.

And as the Lord saw no excuse for the unbelief or lukewarmness of His people, in those great hindrances, which the small band that returned from the captivity must have experienced in so mighty an undertaking as the building of the temple; so will He

now, in the present condition of Christendom, see no ground why we should not seek from Him the restoration of the Church in her unity and catholicity. If the reason why [058] God, in the days of the prophet Haggai, was hindered in the manifestation of His grace and power among His people was this, that His children did not acknowledge the great end which He had in view, while they wearied themselves in labouring after devices of their own; so have we good ground in our days gravely to consider, whether a like reproach does not in God's sight attach to us. Have we sought the restoration of His one house - His one temple? Have we acknowledged such a work as the peculiar task of our time? Or, have we only been intent upon caring for individual souls, and winning them for the Lord? Have we been content with that section of the Church to which we belong, and have we considered the revival of *its* forms and ordinances as the end of all Church perfection? Or, have we sought, in the going over from one Church division to another, that mode of healing the Church's wounds which all ought to follow; or have we seen, in the many societies for religious purposes, the right means of obtaining a true reform of her condition? In all these cases we may have been pious Christians, who sought uprightly, and according to the best of our knowledge, to serve God - but the building of the One Temple we have not sought.

The one temple is not the Roman, nor the Greek, nor the Lutheran, nor the Reformed Church. These are rather but the ruins that remain of the one temple - the One Church which God built at the beginning. And that temple at the beginning was not an invisible community of believing souls, who were scattered and hidden among various parties of diverse creeds; but it was a visible spiritual building, consisting of living men, and erected of God according to His own plan. It was a [059] visible society, with manifold organs and members, which, through the operation of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, had come into existence and was maintained in unity. And it is only when we have learned, with true contrition of heart, on account of the fallen condition of the whole Church, and with firm faith in the living risen Lord at the right hand of the Father, to seek from Him the restoration of His Church as it was at the beginning, that we can be said to seek the building again of the One Temple. But it does not follow from this, that when we seek from God the restoration of His Church, we should cease to take our part in the yet existing ordinances in Christendom, and limit ourselves to faith and prayer alone. We must, indeed, cease from all our own working, and must effectually learn in God's school, that all working which is not the working of Christ in and through us, has no worth in the sight of God. And were this test truly and conscientiously ap-

plied in this day, perhaps much of that great religious activity which is now displayed would be found wanting - although God will never leave any one unregarded who labours for Him in faithfulness and uprightness, according to the measure of his light. But if much of the activity of Christians at present may not be able to endure a searching trial on the part of God, and that not so much on account of the unfaithfulness or frailty of the instruments which, in regard to ourselves, we must all lament, as because men work in self-devised ways, and by means of their own choosing. Yet there remains in Christendom work enough which is according to the will and ordinance of Christ to give us all opportunity for serving God aright, in a way well pleasing to Him. Indeed, only those who have been found faithful and active for God [060] in the place which He has already given them, and according to the measure of the grace already bestowed, can, with a good conscience, join themselves to those who are entreating the Lord that a larger measure of His grace may be poured out upon His Church.

2.2 The Restoration of the One Temple, and the Deliverance of a Faithful Remnant of the People of God at the Second Coming of Christ.

The restoration of a fallen sanctuary is what we have to seek - not the founding of a new Church. The second temple was the rebuilding of the first, which at the beginning was built according to the mind of God - not a building erected where one had never been. However different may have been the circumstances and events which accompanied the original erection, from those which accompanied the second, yet it was the same building that rose again out of its ruins. The *One Church*, such as it was at the beginning, is what we should seek; and that not through a new Pentecost, or through a repetition of that which the Lord did at the beginning, when He gathered from among Jews and Gentiles the materials for His spiritual house, and founded His Church once and for ever. God never repeats over again what He has done; but He restores to a penitent and believing people all that which we and our fathers, through sin and unfaithfulness, have wasted and destroyed. The ruins of the original building still exist. Baptized Christendom, with its divisions and in its sad decay, is the wreck of the One Temple - the One Church which God founded at the beginning. Out of this ruin, and out of it alone, have we to expect the restoration. And when God Himself undertakes this work, He will, as the original master-builder of His house, be well able to discern between the real remains of the Divine work, and the many human corruptions and perversions which have

taken place in it. He will [061] reject nothing in the diverse doctrines and usages of Christendom which is His work and that of His Spirit. And those who have His mind, and have learned of Him, will labour to recognise, honour, and care for every remaining thing that is good and true, and to serve the Lord therewith. For this, patience and faith are necessary.

The indiscriminate reception and acknowledgment of all existing ecclesiastical ordinances, doctrines, and customs, betrays quite as much of the fleshly mind as their indiscriminate rejection. He who receives everything at present existing in the Church as Divine, is as far from the truth as he who rejects existing Christendom entirely as wholly apostate. The spiritual eye, the believing, humble, loving mind, sees and seeks in the existing ruin every remnant of the Divine thing which God's grace and faithfulness have still preserved. Who ever has this mind seeks to know his own place, as that which is assigned to him of God, and which God will recognise; and he knows that what God will first require of him is faithfulness in this place. He remembers our Lord's words of warning, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance," Matt.XIII.12; and he would not, through unfaithfulness in that which he already professes, close the door against the new and more abundant measure for which he hopes. But he

likewise acknowledges and feels, that if the condition of the Church is ever indeed to improve - if she, and we in and with her, are ever to reach the Divine end of our calling - if she is ever to be healed of her divisions, and cleansed of her sins and impurities - if she is ever to attain to "a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," Eph. IV.13 - if she is ever to be [062] prepared and adorned for Him, as her heavenly Bridegroom, in order to be presented to Him at His coming - then something more is needed than a bare acknowledgement and faithful use of whatever good and Divine thing may yet remain to us.

In the light of the Divine Word, and of that testimony of the primitive Church which God has allowed to be preserved to us, the truly believing Christian acknowledges what the Church - the whole Church - has lost and been deprived of. And because he believes that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," Rom. XI.29; and that all which He bestowed on His Church at the beginning, He gave for the whole period of the Christian dispensation, and until His Divine purpose in her is fulfilled; therefore he seeks the cause of her decay in the sin and unfaithfulness of men, and hopes and believes that if the children of God turn to Him, and seek His face in sackcloth and ashes, He will restore that which is

lost, and pour out again the full measure of His grace. And he sees the true means of healing and safety for God's children, in our day, in nothing else than the complete restoration of all the organs and members of the spiritual body which God Himself ordained, and whereby He promised to perfect His Church. 1.Cor. XII.; Eph. IV.

We learn from the prophet Jeremiah, XXVII.; XXIX.1, that the same God who at one time commanded His people that they should be subject to the rule of Babylon, at another required them to flee out of it. Those Jews, therefore, who, in subjection to the dispensation of God, served the king of Babylon and his people, sought the good of the city whither God had caused them to be carried captives, prayed for it, built houses and begot children in it, and prepared themselves for a long abode [063] there, did the will of God as truly as those who, when God's time for their liberation was come, recognised the very opposite as their duty and calling. Nor was there any inconsistency in this diversity of God's procedure. He commanded His people to remain in Babylon for their chastisement and humiliation; and when He had thus accomplished His purpose in them, He delivered them again from that sad condition. And at the same period in which God found His chosen people prepared for their deliverance, He found their oppressors also ripe

for judgement. The calling of God's people at different times is different; not because God has changed His purpose, or given up the original end which He has in view, but because, in His fatherly wisdom, His original plan is wrought out only in the end of His people's history, and through diverse and manifold Divine dealings and methods of training. We err, therefore, if we maintain that, because Christians in past times - perhaps in the sixteenth century, or at any other period in which a great movement in the Church took place - did not seek the full restoration of the original ministries and gifts of the Church, therefore we do not need any greater measure of Divine grace than that which satisfied them. The past judgement on our brethren who have gone before us belongs to God. They may have been faithful according to the measure of grace bestowed on them, and that measure may have been sufficient for their time and calling. We live in other times, and require another measure. "Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God." Isa. LXVI.9.

Is the present period one in which standing still is not permitted in any region of human existence - in which [064] all human powers, both mental and physical, are developed with such a gigantic velocity as to produce almost daily revolutions in the external

and internal condition of all Christendom? And, in such a period, can the Church stand still, and that measure of Divine operation still remaining in her be declared sufficient? Has God abandoned Christendom, and do we attain to the right signification of the rapid development, the restlessness and the stir of our times, when we say that God has no hand in it, nor any object to accomplish by it? Should we not rather see in it all a sure indication of the approaching end of the present age (αιων) and, therefore, also a speedy bringing to its completion of the Divine purpose in the Church? If the baptized are the covenant people of God, then Christendom must be the special scene of His operations; and nothing can happen in Christendom - least of all, a spiritual movement, such as is taking place in our days - without the Lord's having something very especial to accomplish in His Church. Not only the Sadducees, but the Pharisees also, were unable to read the signs of their times, Matt. XVI.1-3: the first, because they had fallen from the faith of their fathers; and the others, because they were so full of their own piety, and the blind zeal of their party, that they had no eye for the true condition of the whole covenanted people, nor for a work of God which did not proceed from themselves. Let us take heed that we do not close our eyes to the signs of *our* time. "And when these things begin to come to pass" - the signs which the Lord had given - "then

look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Luke XXI.28. We should give heed to the very first beginnings of the fulfilment of those signs given us for warning; and if we are [065] spiritually minded, we shall not so much turn our bodily eye to the visible heaven above us, to see there the signs of the times, as give heed to the signs in the spiritual horizon of baptized Christendom, where the light of life more and more ceases to shine in those who, in the name of Christ, are the leaders of His people - where spiritual death and worldly-mindedness extend their dominion more widely - where men are held in continual disquiet and uncertainty by anxious forebodings of a future big with disaster; so that while they vainly endeavour to forget the past, new messengers of evil awaken yet greater fears for the future.

Yes; whoever can enter into the deep and full meaning of the Word of God, will see already, in the present condition of Christendom, more than the commencement of the fulfilment of those words of our Lord when He said: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be

shaken." Luke XXI.25.26. The powers of heaven shall be shaken; for, indeed, the true source of the great spiritual movements of our time is to be sought in that one movement, the region of which is not this earth or material things, but heavenly and spiritual things - we mean, in that last and decisive struggle between faith and unbelief, between Christ and Antichrist, between Michael and his angels, and the Dragon and his angels. Therefore the great present political and social contests do not limit themselves to one country or some one portion of Christendom, but, like electric shocks, they convulse all the lands of the [066] baptized; because they are the harbingers, or indeed the very commencement, of that great struggle throughout all Christendom with which this present dispensation shall close. Are we, then, already engaged in this struggle? Has it already reached dimensions such as never were witnessed before? And no one who is acquainted with the history of the past, and who studies the present state of Christendom, can deny this. Then, if we are to come off as victors in the strife that is begun, we need another and a larger measure of Divine grace than the generations that have gone before us. And we need this all the more, because we must confess that the measure now existing is not even that which our fathers some centuries ago possessed.

Further. If we are now hastening to the conclusion of the present dispensation of God, then not only will the apostasy reach its full development, but the Divine purpose in the Church must attain its accomplishment; and therefore may we expect to see in the midst of us such Divine acts as bygone centuries have not witnessed. Every new dispensation of God has its root in that which preceded it, or rather it is the ripe fruit gathered from that tree which God had planted, but which He has been constrained to give up to judgement. Thus the upright Noah and his house were the ripe fruit found amidst that general corruption which brought the flood upon the old world, and on their preservation the peopling of the new world depended. Gen. VII.1. Thus also the holy Virgin, upon whom God bestowed such faith, that she became the mother of the Lord; and not she alone, but the first Apostles and disciples along with her, were taken from among God's ancient chosen people, then hastening to judgement, to be the commencement [067] of that new dispensation which has lasted to our days; and, however great may be the decay in Christendom, and how general soever the apostasy of the baptized, and the prevalence of the principles of Antichrist; yet is Christendom still the womb from which the new and future dispensation of God shall go forth. In it God has His faithful remnant, in the midst of whom He shall accomplish His gracious purpose. See

Isa. I.8,9; IV. 2-3; VI.13; X.20-2I; XVII.6; Jer. III.14; VI.9; Zech. VIII.11-12.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Math XXIII.37. The fault does not rest with God if but a remnant of His people are saved in the last days. If He in bygone times often desired to gather His children to Himself, can His fatherly love have any other or less gracious purpose in regard to baptized Christendom? But will Christendom - Christendom, as a whole, permit itself to be gathered by God? Has it shown any readiness for this during the many centuries that His patience and long-suffering have waited? Does the history of the Church testify that when God raised up faithful men in the midst of her, who bore witness to the sins and prevailing errors of their time, and called the children of God to repentance, such messengers found a ready ear, or were received with joyful acceptance by the heads of the Church? Do we not rather find the sad history of the ancient people of God repeated over again? And does the present condition of Christendom leave any room for the hope of a general conversion and restoration? It is not to be denied that our condition, in comparison with that at the close of

the last century [068], gives in many respects cheering tokens of improvement. Without flattering oneself too much as to the motives or intrinsic worth of such improvement, we may safely admit that in most of the countries of Christendom, the higher classes, and the very highest, have advanced in morals and religion; or at least that they shun more than formerly taking the lead in infidelity, or in open transgression of God's laws. Yet no one can avoid seeing, if they will, that the corruption of the middle and lower classes has fearfully increased. Among them the seed of infidelity and sin, sown by unfaithful pastors and heads of the people of God, has sprung up as never before, and the powers of darkness and of the lie have obtained an influence among the masses which is truly fearful. Stripped and emptied of all that is Divine, of all higher consolation - without faith, without the fear of God, without discipline, chastity, or moderation, without obedience, without reverence for authority, often without natural affection, without any hope of eternal life; full of love of pleasure, of eagerness after earthly gain, full of disquiet and discontent; without love or desire for the truth, but ready to receive every error, every lie whereby man feels himself flattered and at peace in his self-love, his pride, and his life of sin - the great masses of the baptized stand ready to become the prey of the coming Antichrist.

And while the evil is thus universal, the existing means of contending with it are utterly insufficient. With spiritual weapons alone can it be overcome. But the masses, at least in towns, have already long turned their back on the Church. And if it were possible to bring the truth before them, would they receive it? Is it not said in Scripture that because men receive not the love [069] of the truth, therefore God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie? 2 Thess. II.10-11. Can we strive against God? Shall we be more merciful than He is? Shall we insist that Christendom as a body must be converted, when He has declared the contrary in His Word? Has not the Lord said that the condition of the world in its corruption before the flood shall be seen again at the period of His coming? Matt. XXIV. 37. Does He expect to find faith on the earth at His coming? or did He not rather foresee that unbelief would be prevailing? Luke XVIII. 8. How do the Apostles Peter and Paul describe the last times? The existing state of things corresponds too exactly with the prophetic descriptions which we find in the last epistles of these men of God? 2 Tim. III.; 2 Peter II. and III.

Let us not be misunderstood. We would be far from seeking to quench the zeal or love of those who yet hope to stay the general corruption in Christendom. But there is such a thing as zeal without under-

standing; that is, without a knowledge of the way of the Lord with His people. And there is a love which, instead of rejoicing in the truth, fears the truth, and increases her activity, in order thereby to conceal from herself and others the terrors of our present condition. We cannot be enough on our guard against such deception of ourselves; and the true defence against it is, not lukewarmness and inactivity, but that activity which accords with God's plan and His holy will - which is indeed the fulfilling of His purpose in His Church. This plan, as it is revealed to us in His Word, has been from the beginning, to prepare for His Son a Church on earth; which at His coming may be presented to Him as His bride and helpmate - the sharer with Him of the rule of His future [070] kingdom. It was with the promise of His return that our Lord comforted His disciples when He was about to part from them, John XIV. 3; yea, after the cloud had received Him out of their sight. Acts I.11. The first Apostles, and the churches with them, hoped and waited for the fulfilment of this blessed promise. They recognised it to be their calling in this world, and the aim of their faith and their labours, to be prepared for the appearing of Christ, and to have the Church ready for it. 1.Cor.I.7; 1.Thess. I.10; II.19; 2.Cor. XI.2. They fell asleep without obtaining the fulfilment of this hope; but what was not fulfilled in their day shall have its accomplishment in the last time. And if we

would be of the number of those who believe in God, and in the word that He has spoken; and who seek from their hearts to know what is His will and purpose with His Church; we must allow this hope of the appearing of Christ to be awakened in our hearts. And above all things, as His people to whom it belongs to receive Him, seek that preparation which is needful in order to receive Him with joy. This we do, if in faith and with penitent hearts we seek from the Lord, as the Head and Saviour of the whole body, those means which He gave at first for the cleansing and perfecting of His Church.

And if we entreat the Lord for this full measure of His grace, not with sectarian narrow-heartedness, not for us, or for "our church," but in a truly catholic spirit, for the whole Church of Christ - for all the baptized - in order that God's will and plan may be fulfilled, and His name be glorified in Christ Jesus, He will not allow us to ask in vain. Whether the number of those who thus petition be great or small - whether they be honourable in the sight of man or not - whether they be poor or [071] rich, learned or ignorant, God will acknowledge their faith, and will fulfil in and through them all the purpose which He had with His whole Church from the beginning. They will be the true "remnant," on account of which His judgements tarry; the true intercessors who, like

Abraham of old, approach the Lord pleading for impenitent Christendom, threatened by a doom more terrible than that of Sodom. And will they not, just because they have recognised God's will and obeyed it, be able to accomplish greater things for the whole Church, yea, for all mankind, than those who, without any deep understanding of the spiritual wants of the present times, yield to the fallacious hope of restoring and quickening with new life that Christendom which is sunk so low, by means chosen and sanctioned by men's unenlightened piety alone?

Is there any means by which the apostasy in Christendom can be destroyed, 2.Thess. II.8; by which all the members of the one body of Christ, not only the living but those that sleep, can be gathered together and perfected, 1.Thess. IV.15-18; by which the devil can be bound and deprived of his power over men, Rev. XX.1-2; by which the ancient people of God can be brought to the acknowledgement of the true Messiah, Zech. XII.10; Matt. XXIII. 39; and the rest of the nations of the earth be led to faith in Christ. Rev. XX. 1-3. Is there any means, I say, by which these mighty ends can be accomplished, save the coming of the Lord alone, and the fulfilment of His purpose with His Church? if there be no other means, why are we not seeking this one? The Apostle Peter has exhorted us not only to be looking for, but hastening the coming

of the day of God. 2.Peter III.12. The Apostle Paul strives earnestly in faith, if by any means he may attain unto the resurrection from [072] among the dead, Phil. III.11 (compare the Greek); that is, the first resurrection, which takes place at the coming of the Lord. Our Lord teaches us to pray that we may be accounted worthy to escape the things that are coming on the earth, and to stand before the Son of Man. Luke XXI.36. According to the book of the Revelation, the Church, the bride has made herself ready when the marriage of the Lamb is come. Rev. XIX.7. The Apostle Paul is jealous over the Church, that he may present her a chaste virgin to Christ. 2 Cor. XI.2.

The day or the hour of the Lord's coming we do not know, but it by no means follows from that, that this great and glorious event stands in no connection with a previous and preparatory work of God among His saints on earth, Mal. IV.5-6; or that this precious promise - the crown and perfection of all the promises of God already fulfilled - shall be accomplished, without the hope of such an accomplishment being awakened in the hearts of the faithful. And not only the *hope*, but such a measure of *faith* as shall correspond to the Divine act, even as God has at all times made the fulfilment of His promises depend on the faith of His people. When the fullness of the appointed time was come, God sent His Son into the world; but not

without having prepared individuals of His ancient covenanted people for that event; who by faith were active in bringing the Divine promise to its fulfilment, and formed the link on earth for the putting forth of the Divine activity, and accomplishing the heavenly deed. Those few individuals, whose names it were unnecessary to mention, were alone found faithful to the calling of the whole circumcised people. In them alone had God wrought that measure of repentance and faith to which all the children of [073] Abraham might and should have attained ; for they all were called to wait for the Lord in His humiliation, and to be ready to receive Him as the promised Messiah.

So those Christians who in this day wait for the second coming of Christ, and prepare His way, while they seek and obtain from Him the needful preparation to receive Him, do no more than all the baptized should do. They have recognised the Divine will, and the calling which belongs to the whole body. And we may venture to say, that God will send His Son the second time, not only because the time has come, but also because He sees those conditions fulfilled in His Church for which He waited - that measure of faith, maturity, and perfection of the inward man, which is necessary for accomplishing the resurrection or translation of the body in ourselves and our brethren. We say, because He sees these conditions fulfilled in

His *Church*; for the baptized, those that sleep as well as the living, are one body before God. What God works among the baptized, He works for the whole body. Those ripe fruits of the Divine operation which appear in diverse parts of the Church, are the fruits of the whole Church. The question is not, whether in our days all the baptized on earth have laid hold on the hope of the coming of Christ, and are allowing themselves to be prepared by Him for the future glory; but rather, whether this hope and desire have at all been revived again by God in the body of Christ? As by far the greater number of the members of this body have fallen asleep; and, according to Scripture, the apostasy shall be almost universal among them that remain alive, the number of Christians living on earth may be very small in whom what God is working in the body of Christ shall appear, and who shall be caught up [074] together with the risen saints when the Lord comes. 1.Thess. IV.16-17. Whether their number, however, be small or great, other means of preparation for the coming of Christ, save those given at the beginning, there are none. It is said expressly in Holy Scripture, that the Lord gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, as the Divine instruments for the edifying and perfecting of His body; and that He gave them “*till* we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of

God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Eph. IV. 11-13.

This maturity and perfection of the inward man, or, in other words, the full measure of sanctification, is the alone sufficient preparation for meeting Him, who shall change our vile bodies that they may be like unto His glorious body. If we have indeed laid hold of the hope of the return of our Lord - if this hope has become a living principle in us - then are we come into a different condition from those who in past times prepared themselves for a Christian death, or who in these days look to death as the only and inevitable close of their present life. We hope rather to be found alive when the Lord comes. And the question which we have to ask ourselves is, Are we ready to be changed suddenly, in a moment, and to be caught up to meet the Lord? 1.Thess. IV.17; Matt. XXIV.40,42. Are we so dead to the world, and so alive to God and to Christ - are we so crucified with Him - have we so mortified our members on earth - that we are ready for this mighty act of God, whereby He shall suddenly snatch us, like Enoch and Elijah, from this earthly life, and transfer us to the full glory of the presence of Christ and His risen saints?

The Apostle exhorts us to “follow after holiness [075], without which no man shall see the Lord.” Heb.

XII. 14. But how is this holiness to be obtained? We answer, not by ways or means of our choosing, not by isolation, and as little by any association which does not possess that full measure of Divine operation which we find in the Church at the beginning. In the first epistle to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul compares the Church to the human body, 1.Cor. XII.12-28; and teaches us clearly, and in detail, that as God has so formed and ordered our bodies that the health and nourishment of each individual member is made to depend upon the diversity of the many members, and the various operations of all, so it is with the body of Christ, the Church. If the individual Christian is to thrive in the inner man - if the Divine life in him is to have its right nourishment, fostering care, support, and advancement - if we are each to be found faithful, according to our calling and position, and reach that stature and proportion to which God has appointed us - then this can only happen when the Church of Christ is in possession of all those ministries, gifts, and powers ordained for her by God. It is in vain that we vex and torment ourselves in striving after a piety that shall consist in the observance of human ordinances and rules. Nothing but Christ working in us can sanctify us; and He works in us only according to the measure in which the ordinances of His Church are restored among us; and we, as members of the one body, can be so knit together,

that His full operation in all His members can be effectual for the benefit of each. This is the way of obedience and of faith, by which we abide in quietness, and allow God to operate in us; by which the flesh and all the glory of the flesh is put to death; and God is glorified, and His will accomplished in us, as the members of His Son [076].

In conclusion, let us sum up, in a few words, what we have pointed out as the calling of all Christians in our day.

- We must receive a spirit of penitence on account of the sins of all the baptized from the commencement.
- We must believe that the Lord at the right hand of the Father only waits for the penitent supplications of His people, in order to manifest Himself in His Church in the last days as the living God, who is the hearer and answerer of prayer.
- We must, in sackcloth and ashes, before Him acknowledge the sins of all the baptized as our own, and entreat the fulfilment of His comforting promises concerning the outpouring of His Spirit and the restoration of His sanctuary - the One Holy Catholic Church - in order that His plan and purpose in us may be fulfilled, that we may

be prepared to receive Him from heaven; and that He may come to save His elect, to judge the apostasy, and to reveal His kingdom in visible glory.

If we do this, we obey the voice of the Lord through the prophet, when he says, at the period of Jerusalem's visitation, "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein." Jer. VI.16. May the Lord help us to acknowledge these His ways, and to follow Him in them. Amen [077].

3. HOLY BAPTISM.

3.1 Introductory Remarks.

"RABBI, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God." These words, with which Nicodemus accosted our Lord, John III.2, showed that neither he, nor those Jews in whose name he spoke, understood the deeper signification of our Lord's mission. And the incapability of Nicodemus to understand His reply concerning a new birth, testified that, as yet, he neither understood man's ruined condition by the fall, nor the Divine plan of salvation. If the misery of fallen man lay merely in a darkening of the understanding - in a want of knowledge of Divine things - then perhaps "a *teacher* come from God" would have been sufficient for his help. But if his ruin reach to the inmost well-spring of life - if it have its deepest seat in his

heart and spirit, Matt. XV.19 - if the life of the natural man is a forfeited life, judged and condemned by God, a life in which none can appear before God - then it is clear that something else is needful for sinful man than a new doctrine, however exalted or Divine. He needs a *new life*; and as its commencement, a *new birth*. And if man cannot confer upon himself his natural life, which is a life of sin and death, how much less can he invest himself with that new life which comes from God! God alone can make him partaker thereof; and as He has appointed the natural birth for the bringing forth of the natural life, so has He [078] likewise ordained the new birth by water and the Holy Spirit to the bringing forth of the new spiritual creature in Jesus Christ.

In His conversation with Nicodemus, our Lord pointed out the way by which man must obtain this new life; even as He afterwards, in the midst of those who were witnesses of His miraculous feeding of the multitude, pointed out the manner in which it was to receive its mysterious nourishment. John VI.51-58. Thus, while He yet dwelt on earth, and before He had instituted the two chief sacraments of holy Baptism and the holy Supper, He prepared the way by instruction for the introduction of these holy rites into His Church.

But before man, conceived and born in sin, can become partaker of a Divine life, he must be brought into reconciliation with God. And this was brought about by God Himself, in the person of His Son becoming Man, and in man's stead fulfilling the law of God, and suffering the punishment of death.

Then, after the atonement was accomplished, was the way opened, by which God could confer upon sinful man eternal life; or, as St. Peter says, make us "partakers of the Divine nature." 2.Peter I.4. After Christ had died for all men, God could invite and exhort men to believe in the accomplished reconciliation, and could direct the eyes of those who did believe to that Divine act, whereby we are buried with Christ into death, and in Him made partakers of the new and Divine life. That Divine act upon the soul of the individual man who, having received faith, yields himself to the ordinance of God, and allows God to operate in Him, whereby God, in a manner hidden and imperceptible to the human mind, but not the less real and efficacious, accomplishes in us the [079] mystery of the new birth - that act takes place in holy Baptism; and this is what that great sacrament signifies and contains.

3.2 The Baptism of John.

In order to come to a full perception of the value of Christian baptism, we will first consider a little the baptism of John.

In the third chapter of the gospel of Matthew we read, that "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And, verses 5,6, "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." In ver. 11, John himself declares that his baptism was a baptism with water unto repentance; and the Apostle Paul, having found some of John's disciples at Ephesus, to whom he afterwards imparted Christian baptism, speaks also to them of John's baptism as a baptism of repentance. Acts XIX.4. John's baptism was therefore no empty ceremony, no mere outward sign of grace already received in another way and by other means; but it was the Divine means by which those Jews, who believed God's message through John, received that grace which was needful in order to do what John required of them, namely, to believe on Him who came after him. John was sent by God to prepare the Jews for the reception of our Lord - the Lamb of God who should take away the sins of the world. The grace that they needed in order to receive the Lord in His hu-

miliation was a broken heart, a contrite spirit because of sin; and this grace was what John's baptism contained. "They were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." This baptism contained nothing greater. It was a baptism of repentance, but not a baptism of regeneration; for God's means of [080] grace correspond to the necessities of His people, and contain neither more nor less than what is requisite for the fulfilling of that calling which His people at that period have received from Him. The calling of the Jews was to receive Him who was the fulfiller of the law; and who, as the true paschal Lamb, was to save them from the death of sin: and for this a penitent heart, longing for salvation, was necessary. But the calling of the Christian is to walk as Christ walked, 1.John II. 6; to overcome as He has overcome, Rev. III.21; and to be prepared to receive Him in His glory; yea, to be glorified with Him. For this another larger measure of God's grace is needful; and as the difference is great between the calling of the Jew and the calling of the Christian, so great is the difference between the baptism of John and the baptism in the name of the triune God.⁴

⁴ On this subject Tertullian says, in his Treatise on Baptism, ch. x. xi., "John baptized indeed according to a Divine command; but his baptism conferred neither forgiveness of sins, nor the Holy Ghost. It was only a preparation for the heavenly things. It was for repentance, which is within

It is probable that the baptism which our Lord's disciples practised during His abode on earth (He Himself we know did not baptize), John IV.2; III.22, was of a like character with the baptism of John; for the baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity was instituted by our Lord only after His resurrection. Matt.XXVIII.19; Mark XVI.16. And if in Christian baptism we are made partakers of the power of the death and of the resurrection of Christ, then must our Lord have died and [081] risen again before that baptism could be made effectual. And, in Matt. XXVIII.18-19, He seems to ground the commission which He gave to His Apostles, and which extended to all nations, upon that position which He was to occupy when His work of redemption was completed. He gave, indeed, His body and blood to His disciples before His Sacrifice on the cross was finished; but they were not permitted to administer these holy elements then; and He did it only once, and that on the evening before He suffered.

The testimonies in Holy Scripture as to the signification of Christian baptism are clear, and are to be found in various passages of the apostolic epistles.

man's own power (?), and was a preparation for that forgiveness and sanctification in Christ which followed after The power of Christ's baptism was not yet procured, being obtained only through His sufferings and resurrection."

The words of our Lord in His conversation with Nicodemus, to which we referred at the commencement of this treatise, have from the commencement of the Church been considered as referring to baptism; and any impartial commentary, in which truth alone is sought, will always acknowledge this as the only true signification. Our Lord has instituted no other rite in which water and the Spirit operate but baptism. There can therefore be no other means whereby a birth of water and of the Spirit can be brought about save this sacrament. It is mere sophistry to refer water in this passage to baptism, and the Spirit to the operation of preaching, or to conversion. Our Lord has connected the two together, and ordained that the new birth shall proceed from their simultaneous operation. If in baptism water alone is operative, then it ceases to be a sacrament, and sinks down into a mere symbolical act, less effectual than even the baptism of John.

3.3 Christian Baptism according to Holy Scripture.

The Apostle Paul teaches us, as follows, concerning [082] baptism: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up

from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For He that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom.VI.3-11.

Further, in another passage: “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. And you,

being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.” Col. II.8-11. [083].

And in the epistle to Titus: “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Titus III. 3-5.

And the Apostle Peter, 1.Peter III., speaking of the waters of the flood whereby judgement came upon the old world, while they bore up in safety Noah, and them that were with him in the ark, says, “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

3.4 Its Practical Import.

From these important passages of Holy Scripture we clearly gather, that through baptism, a twofold operation is accomplished in us - a putting to death of

the old man through the power of the cross of Christ, and the quickening of a new life through the power of His resurrection. A mysterious work is accomplished by the Almighty hand of God in the hidden depths of our being: the old life, polluted at its fountain by sin, is condemned, and spiritually put to death, and a new life, the life of Christ, begotten in us. "For if we have been," says the Apostle, "planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." It is the death of Christ (that [084] death which He, the holy and sinless One, died unto sin once, Rom. VI.10), whereby our old man is crucified, Rom. VI.6, and sin condemned in the flesh, Rom. VIII.3. It is this mysterious death of the God-Man, in which God's condemnation on sin was declared for ever, Gal. III.13, whereof we become partakers in baptism, whereby we become dead to sin, and the old man is condemned in us. Circumcision in the old covenant, when blood was shed, was a sign and type of the future judgement of God on the natural life. The true circumcision is that performed by no human hand, the spiritual circumcision whereof we become partakers in holy baptism, in which we are in a spiritual and sacramental manner buried with Christ. And as He did not remain in the grave, but was raised again by

the power of the Father; so in baptism we do not remain in the grave, but we rise with Him by the same operation of God. Through the same sacrament (as formerly in the type through the same waters of the flood) the old thing is judged, and the new creature comes forth to the glory of God in Christ Jesus.

Through the death of Christ on the cross, our sins, and the sins of the whole world which God laid upon Him, are taken away. John I. 29. God has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, 2.Cor. V. 21; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1.John II.2. Hence it follows, that God for Christ's sake forgives all our sins; but neither from the announcement of the love of God in Christ Jesus, nor from the believing reception of the forgiveness offered in his Word does it follow that we are in a condition to walk as Christians; that is, to walk as those who are dead to sin and alive unto God. If through the mere proclamation of the Gospel, and its [085] believing reception, the renewal of our nature were accomplished, so that men were free from sin and able to serve God in a new life, then baptism were superfluous, and our Lord might have given His Apostles a commission to preach, but not to baptize. In the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul announces in the fullest, freest manner, the love of God, as it is

manifested in the death of Christ to sinful man, estranged from God, and shows how the justification of life, through the righteousness of One, has come upon all men. But when, in the following chapter, he points out why Christians dare no longer live in sin, he does not say, because they have believed the Gospel preached to them, but because they have been baptized. What God has done for us in baptism affords the ground on which He can require of us that we should not sin, but with all the faculties and powers of our whole being, wherewith we had hitherto served sin, should now serve Him and His righteousness.

3.5 Its Relation to Faith.

The work of God in baptism rests upon the Redemption accomplished by Christ; it implies that this redemption has been completed - without this redemption it were a thing impossible. But still it is by the act of God in our baptism that we, as individuals, are made partakers of Christ's death and of His resurrection. Therefore it is also by this Divine act that we are enabled to walk as Christians, and receive that endowment which marks us as members of Christ and children of God. In other words, it is by the incarnation of His Son, by His death and His resurrection, that God has accomplished the cleansing of our

nature, Heb. I.3, and the making it again a perfect instrument for Himself. But it is in holy baptism that the individual man is cleansed [086], and made an instrument of the righteousness of God. "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin," says the Apostle. Rom. VI.11. The work of God in baptism is like all the other works of God, a perfect work, wherein that unto which God has ordained this sacrament is really performed. He is true, and cannot deny Himself; what He promises that He also performs, whether men believe in its performance or not. And to put to shame the pride of the human understanding, He in His wisdom chooses the most insignificant means for the accomplishment of the mightiest operations of His grace. These operations are not to be reached by the human understanding; they are only discerned by faith; but faith receives them in their full extent. The believing Christian does not judge after the outward appearance, or according to human experience; he does not measure what is contained in a sacrament ordained of God by that scale which human infirmity and frailty furnish; but he believes God more than all outward appearances or pretended realities - holds God to be true and faithful, and all men and all appearances to be deceitful. It is in this faith that the Apostle speaks to the Churches, when he speaks of baptism as an act of God, whereby we become free from sin and servants of God - able

also to serve Him in righteousness and true holiness. Rom. VI.18-22.

Faith in that act of God accomplished in our baptism is the commencement and spring of all true holiness of life. Whosoever does not begin with believing that God has condemned sin in him - that his old man, that the life of the flesh and of sin, in its root and all its ramifications, is spiritually put to death in his baptism, and that being crucified with Christ in this sacrament, he is made free from the dominion of sin and all the power of [087] Satan; whosoever does not begin with believing this, will never be able to live a truly Christian life. He will never feel conscious of that power which the Christian really possesses, when he does firmly believe in the act which God has accomplished. And instead of considering it his calling and duty to believe in the freedom conferred on him, he will consider it the task of his life to struggle against an enemy that he believes beforehand can never be overcome. And whenever he commits sin, instead of seeing in it a defection from the grace conferred on him in baptism, and humbling himself before God on account of his unfaithfulness and unbelief, he will rather see in it a lamentable, indeed, but an unavoidable evil, from which in this world there is no escaping.

Much mischief has arisen in Christendom from separating things that never should have been separated. The *truth* is One in Christ and in the Holy Ghost; and whosoever abides in Christ, and walks in the Spirit, does not divide or separate the truth. But if we do not abide in Christ, or in the unity of the Spirit, we run the risk of disconnecting some truths from the rest, and giving them a position which must have evil consequences on our life. The life of the Christian should be a life of faith; for the true Christian has ceased from all his own works. But just because his life is a life of faith, the truth and the strength of it will depend on whether he believes aright or not. And only then, when he fully and firmly believes all that God has done, and does, for his final and complete redemption, can he be said indeed to believe aright. If, for example, he believes what the incarnate Son of God accomplished on the cross for all men, but does not believe what God the Holy Ghost has accomplished for each individual man in baptism, or accounts [088] it of little value or effect, then his life will be imperfect just in the measure that his faith is defective. He will walk as one who believes in the forgiveness of his sins for Christ's sake, and who has the wish and inclination to forsake sin, and prays to God for His Spirit, and strength for his sanctification. But he will not walk as one who believes that by an act of God a work has been accomplished in his inner man -

whereby he has become dead with Christ and risen with Him - whereby he has received strength to overcome sin and to walk according to a new life. He will walk as one who believes in Christ *for* us, but not as one that knows Christ *in* us; and His power - a power that is sufficient not only to struggle in us, but to overcome. Col. I.27-28; Gal. II.20.

The work of Christ *for* us, that is, His work on the cross, is the alone ground and absolute pre-requisite for all operation of God in us. And in a time when this work of Christ for us was obscured, forgotten, in fact denied and withdrawn from the eyes of Christendom, then it might be the especial calling of the true soldiers of Christ to awaken faith in that reconciliation, once and for ever completed. But if, as is now, alas! too much the case in some parts of Christendom, men, holding this one truth, forget and neglect all other truths; and, because the foundation of all Divine operation has been recovered and recognised, are satisfied always to point to this foundation, instead of striving to awaken in the Church faith in that sacramental operation of God in us, which was made possible by the reconciliation accomplished on the cross: then an evil course has been adopted, and the one-sidedness and defectiveness in doctrine will be manifested by a corresponding failure in Christian life. The work of true sanctification, the [089] growth of the

spiritual man in God, the proper depth and full power of faith will never be attained to. On the contrary, a superficial Christianity that does not penetrate the daily life, will, with all its dangerous and ruinous consequences, be unavoidable.

The sacramental operation of God in us is only recognisable by faith. It presupposes faith. And not only is faith indispensable; but just in proportion as our faith grows and strengthens, will our knowledge of what God has done in us increase. But our faith is not the *cause* of the Divine operation. That operation of God, which He has indissolubly connected with the ordinance which He Himself has given, is not dependent on our faith. It does, however, depend on our faith, whether what God has wrought in us shall be for our everlasting salvation or for our condemnation. "I am the vine," says our Lord, "ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." John XV.5-6. Those only who are already *in* Christ can be called upon to *abide* in Him; but we may be of the number of those who have been grafted into Christ, and yet be unfruitful. We have not made ourselves branches of the true Vine. We were not by nature

branches of the true, but rather of the wild vine. We were by nature in the first, but not in the Second Adam. The Father who is the Husbandman, the Vine-dresser, John XV.1, has given us to the Son, John XVII. 6,9,12, has by baptism grafted us into His Son. In this sacrament we become members of the body of Christ, 1.Cor. XII.13, have put on Christ, Gal III.27; but it does not follow that the efficacy of baptism [090] shall under all circumstances be manifested in all the baptized. Of the new life it is said that it is "hid with Christ in God," Col. III.3; and in another passage, that "our old man is crucified with Him," Rom. VI. 6; and in the epistle to the Colossians, that we are circumcised with the circumcision of Christ. Col. II.11. That grace conferred upon us in baptism is not conferred upon us apart from Christ, as existing independent of Him. The grace is ours - God has bestowed it upon us. His work is truly and indeed accomplished in the inner man of every baptized person; but it stands on this footing, that only so long as we abide in Christ, and in the measure in which we abide in Christ, who is the fountain of all baptismal grace, can the power of that grace be manifested in us. Whosoever abides not in Christ - and they only do abide in Christ who believe in and faithfully use those means ordained of God for such as would abide in Christ, comp. John VI.56 - whoever abides not in Him, though he may be baptized, and being baptized

is a branch of the true Vine, yet will he bring forth no fruit of the new life, and will have no power to overcome sin or to walk in holiness; he will be as a branch that has no connection with the vine, and as such will wither, and be gathered and cast into the fire. But as the branch which was cast into the fire, was nevertheless a branch of the true and not of the wild vine, so the baptized man, who through unbelief and unfaithfulness constrains the Father, the Husbandman, to separate Him from Christ, the true Vine, John XV. 2, yet remains one on whom the grace of baptism was conferred, and who was called in Christ Jesus to eternal glory. As such an one will he be judged; and his condemnation will be great, even as the grace conferred on him by God was great [091].

Whether therefore we experience the power of our baptism or not depends upon our faith; and only that individual can bear witness against the full efficacy of baptism, as it is declared in Scripture, who can declare with truth that he had full faith in it, and yet never felt its efficacy. But we must not wait for our experience of the efficacy of this grace, before we believe what God has done for us - that He has conferred on us a new birth of water and of the Spirit. Experience should not go *before* faith; on the contrary, they only will attain to the experience who, without experience, have believed. Faith has to do

with what one does not see, and is itself the evidence of things not seen. Heb. XI.1. Whoever requires to see or experience the Divine life in himself or others before he will believe, or who will only believe so much as he or others may experience, manifests the weakness of his faith, or rather, his unbelief.

3.6 The Baptized Man in his Dependence upon the Condition of the whole Church.

The sad condition of by far the greater part of the baptized at the present time, gives fearful proof of the unfaithfulness and apostasy of those who have received the Divine gift in baptism. Alas! it not only proves the unfaithfulness of individual Christians, but as ill brought-up children not only manifest their own guilt but also that of their parents, so the present condition of Christians, that is of the baptized, not only shows the unfaithfulness of individuals, but the evil condition of the whole Church; wherein those who in baptism receive the new birth, as children of God, ought to be duly fostered and cared for, and be subjects of a Divine training.

We will examine this subject somewhat more closely. It is the same God who is the author of the first visible creation, and of the second spiritual crea-

tion in Christ [092] Jesus; and in order that, for the right understanding of spiritual and invisible things, we might have analogous relationships in visible and sensible things, He has made the first creation a type of the second. Comp. Rom. V.14. The conditions of the new or second birth in baptism resemble, therefore, those of the first natural birth. Our birth is of God, the ordained commencement of the creature's life; so that every one of us at his birth, receives what is essential to his being as man. Though a new-born child is the most helpless of all beings, yet from the hour of its birth it possesses all those gifts, faculties, and powers, which are developed in the full-grown man; but it possesses them as an infant, not as one arrived at maturity; they are there, but they are there in weakness - concealed, undeveloped.

Further; though no one can reach maturity without being born, yet it does not follow that every one that is born must necessarily come to full years. On the contrary, we know that mortality is greatest among infants. And although the new-born infant is in possession of every part of its being, yet in order to the support and development of its life and to the attainment of its destination as man, it requires nourishment, care, training and education. If it do not obtain these, however perfect it may have been at its birth, it fails and never becomes a man.

All this is true, in a higher sense, of the new man in Christ Jesus. His life also must commence by being born. If no man can confer on himself his natural life, how much less his spiritual life! God alone can confer this; and as He has appointed the way by which we are born to our natural life, so has He appointed the ordinance for our spiritual birth. This ordinance is holy [093] baptism. But the new birth “of water and of the Spirit,” is only a *birth*, neither more nor less. It is not the new man in his maturity; it is the new creature in its infancy, in its first beginning. It is a full and perfect birth. The renewal of our whole inner man actually takes place in baptism; the whole Christian, so to speak, is there. Thus Paul introduces his instructions concerning baptism in the second chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, in these words: “And ye are complete in Him.” But the Christian in his baptism is there as a child, not as a grown man. And if he is ever to attain to maturity - if the Divine life conferred on us in baptism is to flourish - if every part of our renewed man is to grow up in Christ - if we are to attain that calling set before us in Him - if we are to be preserved from the manifold dangers which in this evil world beset the new man - if we are to escape spiritual sickness and weakness and the many paths of falsehood and error, yea, spiritual death itself; then does this new creature require as much, or yet more than the natural life, the nourishment, care, disci-

pline, education and development, appointed for it by God,

And where is the Christian to seek and find all this? Where, but in the Church? The same God who appointed baptism for the imparting of the new life, has appointed His Church, as He set her at the beginning - with all her offices, gifts, and powers, with her holy worship, her parental discipline, her Divine light, and the heavenly food which she presents to us - to be our Father’s House, in which the children born to Him in baptism are to grow up, and to be trained for Him, and for their future glory. He makes her the heavenly Garden, in which the tender plants of our heavenly Father’s planting are to spring up and flourish. The [094] holy City, firm and secure, a building of God, in which those who are to be citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem are to learn and practice God’s holy laws. The holy Temple, in which those who are born in baptism to be kings and priests, should dwell and grow up, like the child Samuel of old, devoted to the service of God.

Now, if this spiritual mother, the One Holy Catholic Church, through man’s unfaithfulness, has come into a condition in which the possibility of her spiritually caring as she ought for her children has long been lost if by far the greater number of them

have long turned their backs upon her; while those who remain faithful to her, through want of nourishment and fostering care, are tempted to wander about and seek to satisfy their spiritual hunger with all manner of food gathered according to their own device: if such be the state of things, can we wonder if the number of those who are spiritually lost through neglect increases? If, notwithstanding that the sacrament wherein we become partakers of new life in Christ has been preserved to us by God, Christendom yet presents so unspeakably melancholy a spectacle of spiritual destitution and neglect - of spiritual disease and death; truly, we cannot throw the blame upon God, as though His sacrament were but an empty form; neither are we to cast the blame on individuals alone, though God does hold us all responsible for preserving the purity of our baptismal garment. But we must see and acknowledge, in the sad condition into which the Church has come, the chief cause why Christians do not abide in baptismal grace, nor bring forth the fruits of the new life.

3.7 The Teaching of the Primitive Church about Baptism.

While Holy Scripture is so clear and distinct as to the [095] signification of Christian baptism, and the reality contained in it, the testimony of the ancient Church is also unanimous in regard to this important sacrament. From both the doctrine and practice of the first centuries, it is evident that holy baptism was considered a means of grace ordained of God, whereby man born in sin was washed from his sins and renewed in the inner man.⁵ "Something great is before you in this baptism," says Cyril of Jerusalem (bishop, A.D. 350), in addressing the candidates for baptism; "it is a setting free of prisoners, a forgiving of transgressions, a death to sin, a new birth of the soul, a shining garment, a holy seal not to be broken, a chariot that leads to heaven, a restoration of Paradise, a reception into the kingdom of heaven, the gift of adoption." Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), says in his *Pedagogue*: "This operation," namely, baptism, "has received many names - the gift of grace, the illumination, the perfecting, the bath. A *bath*, because

⁵ Compare Justin Martyr, I Apology, s.79; Tertullian, Treatise on Baptism; Clement of Alexandria, *Pedagogue*, i. 6, p. 93, ed. Sylb.; Cyprian, *De Gratia Dei ad Donat.* c. 4; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procateches*, c. i6; Gregory Nazianzen, *Sermon on Baptism*, Orat. 40, p. 637, ed. Colon.

we are therein washed from sin; a *grace*, because thereby the guilt and punishment of our sins are remitted to us; an *illumination*, because we learn thereby to look upon that holy, wholesome light, namely, of Divine things; a *perfecting*, in so far as nothing is therein wanting to us.” (?)

The mode of expression of these two early fathers may appear incorrect and exaggerated to those who are little acquainted with the writings of the primitive Church; nor will we defend every expression here used, but only remark that most of the terms applied to [096] baptism in these two passages are the usual language of the first centuries in speaking of this sacrament; which proves that that deeper signification of the same which in its chief features we have pointed out in Scripture, was rooted in the life and consciousness of the early Church, and was common to all Christians of the first centuries.

We must perceive how the Christianity of the present day has diverged from the Christianity of primitive time, especially in the partial and narrow course it has taken among pious Protestants, if we more closely consider some of those expressions so commonly used for baptism by the early Christians. Baptism was among them very generally termed illu-

mination,⁶ and that not with reference to the instruction given beforehand, but to the inward enlightening of the soul through the act of God in that sacrament. This expression seems to be grounded on a deep apprehension of man's ruined condition, of his need of salvation, and of his whole nature and being. The condition of the natural man, under the highest possible enlightenment and cultivation of his understanding and spiritual faculties and properties, is a condition of darkness; because the higher Divine light is wanting whereby he may know himself and God. The darkness in which he exists has its deepest seat, not in the understanding or the soul ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$), but in the spirit ($\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha$), in the heart. It is the darkness of sin and death; and he can only be freed from it by being freed from the bondage of sin and Satan, and his inner man being renewed by the Holy Ghost. And this takes place in baptism; therefore Christians called baptism [097] the illumination - an illumination whereby we receive light in our inmost being by putting on Christ, Gal. III.27, who is the light of life. Comp. John I.4.

But in these days, if we speak, at least among a large class of Christians, of enlightenment, the only idea is of the effect of preaching - of the word spoken

⁶ No doubt with reference to that passage in Heb. VI. 4.

or read - upon such men as receive it in faith; an operation on the inner man by which the individual is awakened, converted, and instructed, is indeed understood, but nothing further. The early Christians recognised also this effect of preaching, and they used it with zeal and success; their candidates for baptism were not only converted, but men well instructed in Christianity. But with a full sense of what the Lord does by the word of preaching, they yet acknowledged that something more was necessary than that; that the true deliverance of man from the darkness and chains of sin, and the inward enlightening of his soul could only be accomplished by his mysterious union with the God-Man; by his being buried with Christ and risen with Him; by his becoming in Him partaker of the Divine nature, and so transferred from the darkness of the earthly to the light of the heavenly existence, 2.Peter I.4; Eph. II.6; and that the sacrament of baptism was the means ordained of God for accomplishing this in the individual already converted and believing in Christ.

The same depth of apprehension manifested itself in the Christians of the first centuries in their use of the words *believing* and *believer*. Cyril says, in the address to candidates for baptism which we have already mentioned: "You are a catechumen, and have heard what you did not understand. "Now," that is,

when you are baptized, "you will be a believer...." Not as [098] though faith were not required of those who came to baptism; doubtless it was required, and therefore they preached and instructed them, and required of those who should receive baptism that they should first be converted to God, and be believers in Christ. But they knew also, and much better than we do, that the life of faith in its true and full meaning is only possible for those who are *in* Christ, and in whom He dwells; who are crucified with Him, and who live that life which they live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God. Gal. II. 20. This life can only exist in those who cease from their own life and working, and in whom Christ is their life. Col. III.4. And the new birth of water and of the Spirit was to them the beginning of this new life. In their sense, therefore, and also in the full sense of the Holy Scripture, a believer was one who not only had believed in Christ, but in whom Christ the Author and Finisher of our faith, Heb. XII.2, has, together with the Father, through the Holy Ghost, taken up His abode.

3.8 Evil Consequences of Neglecting this Teaching.

As a matter of doctrine, indeed, only those Protestants who go as far as Calvin and Zwingli, or still farther, as for example, the Quakers, deny that bap-

tism is the sacrament of regeneration. All other parties in the Church of earlier or later times are unanimous in confessing that baptism is not a bare sign of an outward connection with the Church; but that this sacrament is the ordinance of God, whereby we become, in the full sense of the words, members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Luther has in this important point held fast to the doctrine of the early Church;⁷ and the English Church testifies, at least in [099] her office for baptism,⁸ that she recognises its full import. But a truth may be preserved in the standards of a church, and yet cease to have any power in the life and consciences of its members. If faith in the act of God performed in baptism were a living thing in the clergy and in the churches of this day, the preaching of the former and the Christian life of the latter would assume another form. There would be a deeper feeling of the awful condition into which the greater number of the baptized have fallen. They would not be looked upon as men for whom God has done nothing; and who, because they live as heathen, are to be considered and dealt with as heathen. But we should lay to heart the great responsibility of those who, having in

⁷ Kl. Katechismus, 4 Hauptst.

⁸ Book of Common Prayer: Ministration of Public Baptism of Infants.

holy baptism received new life from God, are held responsible for living as being dead to sin, and as having become new creatures in Christ. Men would feel the exceeding sinfulness of their sins; because, having been cleansed and freed from Satan's power, they had again polluted themselves, had denied the Lord who bought them, had grieved and resisted His Spirit, and brought reproach upon His holy name. There would not be less earnestness or zeal in calling sinners to repentance than now; on the contrary, until the preacher indeed believes and acknowledges that work which God has accomplished in the baptized, he will never be able fully to disclose their sin and ruin, nor to awaken his hearers to such a confession or to such repentance, as shall correspond to the depth and aggravation of their sins. The whole position of the preacher who does not acknowledge the significance of baptism, is a wrong and false one; and it [100] is not possible that the Lord and His Spirit can work with and by him as They seek to do. He feels himself, and considers himself rather as a missionary among heathens, whose task it is to proclaim to his hearers the joyful message of the forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood, than as one who has to show to those for whom God has done such great things in baptism, what they have become through that rite; and to set before them the awful responsibility of their situation, wherein they must either fulfil their calling as bap-

tized persons, or, as apostates - as those who are "twice dead," Jude XII, worthy of two-fold condemnation, must await the terrible fate of those who, as the Scripture says, "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame," Heb. VI. 6; who call down upon themselves the curse of God, and are at last given over to eternal fire.

If the clergy indeed believed in the work of God accomplished in baptism, would they not see in the thousands that gather around their pulpits each Lord's-day, the children of God and members of the body of Christ, for whose salvation they, as pastors, are responsible? Would not their hearts overflow with love, with compassion, with holy zeal, and godly sorrow, on account of the multitudes of the baptized who know nothing of their high and holy calling, and are far from walking in the footsteps of Him to whom in baptism they have been united? And while the pastors and teachers would thus become convinced of their full responsibility towards their flocks, would not their preaching acquire a greater earnestness, solemnity, and emphasis? Would they not also in recognising what God has done in baptism, have a much firmer and clearer foundation for their own labours, which would benefit alike themselves and their [101] flocks? It is one thing when a minister of God can say to me with fullest conviction, and in the strength of

his office, "God has done such and such things for you, and for these you are responsible - believe in what He has wrought in you, and walk accordingly." It is quite another thing when he addresses me as one concerning whom he is in doubt, whether God has wrought anything in me or not - whether I have received strength and grace to serve God or not - whether I am a child of God or not. And when the ministers of God point the baptized with confidence to a Divine act which they are bound to believe in, then will these have quite a distinct ground of confidence towards God, and of security in their struggles with the enemy, from their own feelings or experience, their own or other men's judgement concerning their having received grace and forgiveness.

Can we be surprised, when so little is taught concerning baptism - when the baptized are so seldom shown what God has done for them in that rite - that they are found wandering in such dangerous and unwholesome courses; that they are driven hither and thither in doubt, whether they are God's children or not; that having no faith in any act of God in their baptism, they catch at all manner of deceitful confidences towards God, and through laying undue weight on true, or, alas! often imaginary experiences of Divine grace, are seduced into hypocrisy or spiritual pride: finally, that a sectarian spirit, with a self-

satisfiedness and uncharitable judging of others prevail; while unpretending, quiet Christianity, having its deep root in God and His Divine acts, becomes more and more rare? It is only too true, that according to the doctrine so will be the life. If the doctrine be partial and one-sided, so will be the development [102] of life; and the longer this one-sidedness prevails, the more dangerous it is, and the more apt to degenerate into a form of truth without life - a form of godliness without the power. Preachers and hearers alike accustom themselves gradually to such a condition, till at last they become utterly unconscious of the danger in which they are. So it is with many Christians of the present day. The sermons of many of the most earnest and zealous ministers are little more than repetitions of the same truth in the same form. Their hearers go to church from one year's end to another, and hear almost always the same thing. But God's truth is *manifold*; and just because it is manifold, it corresponds to the manifold necessities of our being, and its operation extends to every part of our inner man. It is good and necessary to bring men to a deep sense of sin, and to direct them to the Divine love and mercy; but still if this be done partially, and to the neglect or denial of God's operation in us by the sacraments, then we shall have what we now see everywhere - feelings and religious talking taking the place of the quiet but deep working of a life hid in God; and

the neglect and contempt of the ordained duties and relationships of daily life going often hand in hand with all manner of self-devised religious activity.

Alas! we know well that man can turn all the grace of God, even that received in baptism, into lasciviousness; and that the sad condition of Christendom in the present day is not to be healed by the revival of any one truth, be it ever so important. But we know also that the neglecting or rejecting of that which God has done for us in baptism, must have the most evil effect upon the Christian life; that we thereby deny the hour of our [103] spiritual birth, the covenant which God has made with us, the great wall of partition which He has set up among men, the one deep and only foundation of unity for all Christendom; and therefore cannot avoid falling into all manner of errors in doctrine and in life.

In the present neglected condition of the spiritual life of the baptized most Christians do indeed need a powerful awakening out of their careless and worldly condition in order to be brought to a deep acknowledgement of their sin and a living faith in the Lord. But are these awakenings whereby, through the marvellous compassion of God and the power of Divine grace, baptized men, sunk in sin and ignorance, are snatched from destruction and brought back to God -

are they to the honour of Christendom? Should they be necessary? Do they not testify of deep decay, or even falling away? Should we not mourn, and take shame to ourselves before God, that the touching words of the prophet have their accomplishment in us: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me, The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider"? Isa. 1.2-3. Is it an honour or a shame for a man who in childhood received baptism, and therein received grace and strength from God thenceforth to serve Him in newness of life, if he spend the half or the greater part of his life in the service of sin, without God or Christ? And if God during this sad period of his existence exercises patience and long-suffering towards him, and by an awakening requickens the life He at first bestowed - what should be the penitence of such a man, and what should the ministers of Christ require of him? [104].

We know that the early Church made a great distinction between sins committed before and after baptism. We willingly concede that there was much that was wrong, and that went beyond all proper bounds, in dealing with those who had been guilty of heinous

sins after baptism.⁹ But the principle from which this flowed, namely, that there must be an immense difference in the sight of God between the same sin committed by a baptized and an unbaptized person is correct, and deserves to be very deeply considered. If it be not recognised both by pastors and penitents, then it is impossible that an effectual healing and restoration can be accomplished in those who, having been baptized, have lived in all manner of vice and wickedness.¹⁰ One cannot but be shocked at the ease and levity with which converted Christians in these days speak of what is their own and their Lord's disgrace, when they, in order to show the great contrast between their condition before and since their conversion, disclose to any or every one the heinousness of their early life. If they had only the least idea of what it was for baptized members of Christ's body to have given themselves to such sin and pollution, shame and sorrow of heart, and deep concern for their salvation, would cause them to lie in dust and ashes before God, and make them willing to subject themselves to all the discipline and humbling ordinances of His house; and rather, according to the early custom of

⁹ As for example, the exclusion during many years, or for life, from the holy communion.

¹⁰ The proper and effectual use of confession is inseparable from the acknowledgement of the difference between sins before and after baptism.

the Church, take their place at the entrance of the sanctuary [105] among the penitents, and those who had fallen away, than account themselves among the peculiarly favoured and justified, or claim, to their own great loss and danger, an eminent position among the believers of the day.

It is an evil thing, when - in order to feel assurance of our adoption and acceptance with God, or perhaps also to deliver others from doubt about our being believers - we have no better means than to bring forth our inward experiences, and especially the experiences at the period of our conversion, to the first hearer who may chance to offer. This custom, so general in certain religious circles, testifies, alas! too surely of the decay or dissolution of the life of true Church-membership, whereby the individual feels and knows himself to be a member of the one body, in which no member is "to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith," Rom. XII. 3; in which no member is to behave himself unseemly, or to follow his own devices in seeking to serve God. But in which, on the other hand, every individual is upheld, comforted, and sustained, by the faith and love of the whole; and, as a member, grows up to perfection with the one body,

through the co-operation of the grace of God in all the members.

3.9 The Baptism of Infants.

In conclusion, we must say somewhat upon infant baptism. The question whether infants may be baptized can naturally be decided by God alone. He alone understands the spiritual condition of a little child; what may or does take place in the spirit of a little child. He alone knows how far a child is accessible to His operations or not. He alone, as the author and ordainer [106] of holy baptism, has to determine whether or not children are to receive this grace. And had He not Himself determined this great question, no human authority could have sufficed to guide us securely in a matter so important and of such serious consequences. But just because it is so important, and because no human power can or dare determine it, we may feel assured beforehand, that the Lord did not at the commencement leave His Apostles in uncertainty as to a matter which in their office they must immediately have had to decide. They were to exercise their office, in the first place, not among heathen, but among Jews, who, as such, were already, with their children, in covenant with God; whose children, indeed, when only eight days old received circumcision, Lev. XII.3 - a type of baptism according to

Col. II. 11. The first question, therefore, which must have arisen in the hearts of those Jews who had received faith in the blessings and promises of the new covenant would be - Can our children enter into this new covenant? It was natural and probable that the parents would expect an affirmative answer to this question; for it was no new God who sought to make this new covenant with them; it was no other than He who had already entered into the covenant of circumcision with their fathers and themselves; and why should He in the new covenant be less gracious in His intentions towards their children than in the old? The Apostles, however, did not leave the believing parents, thus anxious about their children's salvation, long in doubt as to God's intentions towards them, for Peter concludes his first address to the assembled Jews after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with the express assurance, Acts II.39, that the peculiar gift of the new covenant - the gift of the Comforter - was to [107] them and their children.¹¹ And the Apostles knew no other mode of receiving this gift, which should supersede that which St. Peter had just before declared, when he referred his hearers to the sacrament of bap-

¹¹ That the Apostle in the words 'καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν' should mean "posterity," is contradicted by the fact that the Apostles expected the return of the Lord in their own lifetime; and could not therefore mean to speak of the continuance of the Christian dispensation during several generations.

tism. If, therefore, not grown-up persons alone, but children are to receive the gift of the new covenant, it is clear that the children must also receive baptism. It would have been most extraordinary and incredible conduct on the part of St. Peter, if he had first given the parents the assurance that the high gift of the Holy Ghost was for their children as well as themselves, and afterwards had refused baptism to the children, though he had declared it to be the sacrament ordained for the obtaining of this gift.

The question as to whether children were to be included in the new covenant was therefore decided by the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost in the name of the twelve. If it be asked, how did he and the other Apostles attain to certainty that it was the Lord's will to allow children to participate in the promise of the new covenant, two passages of Holy Scripture will suffice - even if we suppose that the Lord gave His Apostles no more direct instruction or revelation on the subject - to show us that their conduct in this matter was according to the express command of Christ. In the Gospels we are informed that little children¹² were brought to our Lord, that He might touch them, or lay [108] His hands on them.

¹² In Luke (XVIII.15) βρεφῆ, "new-born children," is the word used.

Mark X.13-16; Matt. XIX.13-15; Luke XVIII.15-17. The disciples, caught in the error of the rationalists, as though little children could not be subjects of God's gracious operations, rebuked those who brought them. But what did our Lord do? Not only was He much displeased with the conduct of His disciples, and fulfilled the hopes of those who in faith brought their children to Him, but He used the opportunity to determine for ever the question as to little children being capable of receiving the new birth. And so far from allowing this to be questioned, He declared, to the shame and humiliation of His grown-up hearers, that they themselves were fit subjects for God's gracious operations only when they became as little children. Matt. xviii. 2-6.

We speak with all due deliberation when we say that our Lord, in those comprehensive words which He spoke on this occasion, decided the question as to whether or not infants could receive the new birth. For if He declares on another occasion that the new birth, by water and the Spirit, is the only way to enter into the kingdom of heaven, John III.3-5; and if He says there that to little children the kingdom of heaven belongs, He has then clearly declared that they are legitimate candidates for that new birth. Or can there be two ways for entering the kingdom - one for those of mature years, and the other for children?

Surely our Lord would not, in that case, have said concerning the former, that they could not enter the kingdom of heaven except they became as little children. Or do we intend to imply that little children enter the kingdom on account of their supposed innocence? But they are conceived and born in sin; and flesh and blood, even that of a little child, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. 1.Cor. XV.50. They must be [109] born again, if our Lord's words to Nicodemus stand fast. And if this question is decided - if the new birth is also for children, because to them also belongs the kingdom of heaven - then, shall not baptism, which is the means of the new birth, likewise be for them? They may and ought to receive that which baptism conveys; and shall they be shut out from the rite itself? Is it not the same Lord who has opened the kingdom of heaven to children, who has ordained baptism to be the door of it? Where is the faithful servant, who, after having heard from the mouth of his lord that this or that individual shall have free access to his house, would bar its entrance to the very persons so urgently recommended to him? How can we suppose it possible that the Apostles would refuse baptism to children after they had heard from the Lord's own lips that children were the most fit for the kingdom of heaven, and that the new birth of water and of the Spirit was the way of entrance. It is not inconsiderately, that the Church has from the

beginning viewed these passages concerning children in the Gospels, as affording the chief authority for infant baptism. Taken in connection with the words of our Lord to Nicodemus they are to every unprejudiced Christian decisive.

The opponents of infant baptism, in earlier and later times, set out from the gratuitous supposition that little children cannot believe; and as faith must be taken for granted in every candidate for baptism, they would debar children from this rite. But who has informed us that little children cannot believe? Who can determine this point? Can a man to whom in his mature years his own being is, and will always continue to be, a mystery; can he pass judgement upon the spiritual life of [110] a little child? Or will it be maintained that an infant has no spiritual life? What! is man created after the image of God, and yet shall there be a stage of his being in which he is shut out from all intercourse with God; when he shall be incapable of either believing or hoping in Him? Shall God have cut off from Himself all power of drawing near to a little child in order to manifest His grace and mercy? Is faith then something that comes with years, with the development and cultivation of the understanding, with the power of acquiring knowledge? Or is not faith much rather a gift of God; and, if it be a gift of God, shall He not be able to give this gift to

men at any age? Those who would deny to little children the possibility of believing must, to be consistent, deny to them likewise the possibility of being saved; for without faith shall no man be saved, whether he be eight days or eighty years old. But if it be conceded that children can be saved, then must it likewise be conceded that they can believe.

Or does Holy Scripture favour the idea that man must first come to years of understanding before he can begin to believe or hope in God? What becomes then of these words - so true and so full of human feeling that no human heart can hear them without responding - "Yes, thus it should have been with me: ah, would that it had been so with me!" Do they not stand in that book of books, the Word of God? We mean the words in Psalm XXII.: "Thou art He that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother's belly." And if these precious words had their fullest accomplishment, when the Child of Mary first saw the dim light of [111] this pitiful world, yet that does not cut off other children from the possibility of the same experience; for what then do we make of that article of our faith - "very Man" and "very God"? Should not we see in Christ the pattern for every age and every period of human life? Are only those of ma-

ture years to walk in His footsteps? Or was He not a child like other children, only without sin? Do not we read of Him that He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”? Luke II. 52. Again, from whose mouth came those hosannas which greeted our Lord in the temple, and refreshed His heart at a time when the unbelief and hard-heartedness of the chief priests and scribes pierced His soul? Were they not from the mouths of babes and sucklings? Matt. XXI. 15-i6. And what will those who deny that little children can believe say concerning that child which leaped in its mother’s womb for joy, when the salutation of the blessed Virgin, the mother of our Lord, sounded in its mother’s ears? Luke I.44. Whom shall we then believe, when the question is concerning so deep a mystery; shall it be weak, limited, short-sighted man whose reason has never yet attained to any satisfactory conclusions concerning the hidden depths of his being, or God, who is the Author of our being, who knows us as the workman understands the work of our hands? And if He testifies in His Word not only that children can hope in Him from their mother’s womb, but that even the child in the womb could rejoice over the fulfilment of the promise concerning the salvation of the world, how shall we doubt that little children can believe?

The fact that the Lord makes little children free to possess the kingdom of heaven, proves not only that [112] they can believe, but also that God gives faith to such little children as are brought to Him. “Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not,” was our Lord’s command to His disciples. How then shall this command be fulfilled? It can no more be so, in the way in which it was in the days of His flesh, for He is no longer present in the body on earth; He is, however, no less truly and actually present on earth. And He has appointed a way by which we can as truly and actually come to Him as then, when He was present in the body - when He had not yet suffered for us, and was not yet ascended to His Father. The Lord is present in His Church, and *there* must infants be brought to him; and those who have authority from Him to act in His name, through whom He at present acts, His ministers, must receive those who are brought. And because the Lord has ordained holy baptism as that sacrament by which, in the highest sense, we come to Him - are made members of His body - are brought into the closest union with Him - by which we obtain access to all the blessings that are in Him, and the kingdom of heaven is opened to us; therefore the ministers of God baptize those little ones whom the Lord Himself so especially commended to them. The sponsors answer the questions put by the minister, not because the children

cannot believe, but because they cannot speak. Faith in the triune God, which is and must be required of them, is in the children, not because they are born of Christian parents, but as a gift of God, which He gives to the children who are brought to Him. And if any one ask, "How do I know that God gives little children faith?" the answer is, because God always gives us what is needful, in order to receive those blessings [113] which He has to bestow. Is the kingdom of heaven for children? then God also gives them the faith that they need in order to obtain the new birth, without which no one can enter that kingdom. It is not by accident that a child is born of Christian, and not of Jewish or heathen parents; it is in God's providence, and He thereby designates this child as one destined for His kingdom. As baptism is among men the recognisable sign of God's gracious election, so is birth of Christian parents the sign of the Divine will that the child thus born shall receive baptism. The question, what becomes of Jewish or heathen children, belongs as little to the present inquiry as the question what becomes of grown-up Jews or heathens who die as such, or are found alive as such at the coming of the Lord.

Either infant baptism is the baptism, the *one* baptism, Eph. IV.5, and contains all which God has ordained holy baptism to contain, or it is no baptism.

A sort of middle thing - a baptism merely in form - the reality of which is to be attained to afterwards, through awakening or some other means - is an invention which, however convenient it may be for certain theological systems, has neither Holy Scripture nor the doctrine of the Church on its side. It is very needful for us, in order to come to the full recognition of the signification of infant baptism, that we learn to believe that nothing is wanting to it; that it is a full and sufficient sacrament; that God, because we were brought to Him, conferred upon us faith, and through this sacrament imparted to us the new birth. Only when this is acknowledged and believed shall we become conscious of the full power imparted to us in baptism - and only then will the ministers of God be able to awaken in the hearts of the children of God faith [114] in the Divine act therein performed; and we shall be able to stand out against those who, because they have denied their own baptism received as children, or have not been able to believe in it, seek to awaken doubt and unbelief in the hearts of others. Those who act thus commit a great sin, and have much to answer for before God. Yet we must pass no hard judgement upon them, for they sin generally in ignorance; and those whose duty it was to instruct them concerning the signification of their baptism, and to preserve them from error, are perhaps the most to blame. Indeed, the whole Church is to blame,

because she has so neglected the children born to God in baptism - has so little cared for or nourished them - that they by their sinful and worldly life deny the grace that they have received. And by this means many conscientious but mistaken people are led to unbelief as to God's operation in baptism.

The allegation that there is no example of infant baptism in Scripture, is to be met in two ways. First, concerning the practice of the Apostles in the use of the sacraments we have very little information given us in Scripture, and that because we should learn in another way. Secondly, such an allegation can only proceed from those who use the Scriptures, not to learn those doctrines and facts upon which the practice observed in all ages of the Church rests, but in order to subvert this practice. In other words, who go to the Scriptures not to find examples of infant baptism, but to prove that none such are to be found. For were they not beforehand determined to set aside all that does not coincide with their own views, they must see proof in passages like the following, that in the apostolic period the family was considered as a unity, in which the children had [115] access to the same blessings which the parents received from God. In the book of Acts, chap. XVI.15, we read concerning Lydia that she *and her household* were baptized; and again, verse 31, Paul speaks to the keeper of the

prison in his agitation and distress, saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" and, in verse 33, we learn that he and all his were straightway baptized. And, in 1.Cor. I.16, Paul says that he had baptized the household (*οικου*) of Stephanas. If children were not baptized in the time of the Apostles, how could St. Paul exhort them thus: "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*"? How could children obey their parents in the Lord if they were not in the Lord at all - or can we be in the Lord without being baptized? Certainly not. If our children had not been born again in baptism, and have not received grace and strength to keep God's commandments, how can we require of them that they should obey us, when we, in God's name, set His commandments before them? Whoever requires of his child, with the understanding that he is not born again, that he shall obey God's commandments, either does not know what he requires, or he demands of a child what no grown person has yet accomplished. He requires that a child *not in Christ* - consequently without grace and without the Holy Ghost - shall do good and refrain from evil. It is no wonder that the education of children effects so little in these days, and that even the children of pious parents often turn out so ill, when neither parents nor children believe what God has done for them in baptism -

whereby they are made capable of walking in His ways.

The custom of baptizing infants rests on the revealed will of God regarding them; and we can only account [116] for the universal observance of this custom in the first centuries of the Church, by concluding that it had its rise in apostolic times. Considering the conscientiousness and severity with which the bishops of the first centuries resisted every innovation and change from the apostolic practice and that they allowed authority to nothing save that which came down to them from the Apostles, it must have been impossible, in so important a matter as baptism, that so great an innovation as that of infant baptism (were it an innovation) could have been universally introduced without much contention and opposition.¹³ We hear nothing, however, of such opposition; but know, on the contrary, that in the Council held at Carthage (A.D. 256), when sixty-six bishops were assembled, the question was put whether they ought not to wait till a child was eight days old, as in the case of the typical rite of circumcision, before they baptized it; but the whole assembly declared themselves against such a delay in administering this holy

¹³ Origen says, in his Commentary on Romans, "The Church received it from the Apostles that she should grant baptism to infants." - (Rufin's Translation, 1. v. c. 9.)

rite. The baptism of new born children was already the common practice; and the novelty which was resisted was the proposal to leave them eight days unbaptized.¹⁴

As to the passage in Tertullian's treatise on baptism, to which the opponents of infant baptism so confidently refer, it affords no testimony against the general observance of infant baptism in the first centuries. For, in the first place, as being an exception, it confirms the prevailing rule: and, secondly, it only contains Tertullian's own opinion - that the delay of baptism may be profitable [117], according to the peculiar situation of each individual, and especially for little children. That this opinion arose from an over-anxiety about sins committed after baptism, and therefore deserves no consideration in determining the question of infant baptism, may be gathered from his desiring delay of baptism in the case of unmarried persons also, "on like important grounds," namely, the temptations that lay before them, until they either married, or gave proof of their temperance and sobriety.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cyprian to Fidus, Epistle 64.

¹⁵ Tertullian on Baptism, c. 18.

But, although there can be no doubt that the custom of baptizing the children of Christian parents dates from the time of the Apostles, and was universal in the first centuries of the Church, it does not follow that from the commencement this was by the Apostles imposed as a law, still less made compulsory. Probably it was left to the faith of the parents to bring their children to baptism or not. The ministers of Christ stood ready to receive the little ones in His name. But, as the Lord waited till the little children were brought to Him, so probably His disciples waited till God gave the parents the faith and the inclination to bring their little ones to Him. And this they would do all the more from feeling the great importance of the sacrament, and the great responsibility of those who received it; and seeing the dangers to which baptized children were exposed when their parents had not the needful measure of faith rightly to foster and nourish that which God had wrought in them.

Certainly it is the duty of Christian parents, and they should consider it their highest privilege, to bring their children - who have inherited from them a life of sin and death - to Him who can confer on them the new birth [118] and a new life. But the ministers of Christ have done their part when they have declared to the parents God's gracious purposes towards their children, and have pressed it upon their

hearts. Faith, God alone can give to the parents. And only when they can believe that God does and will do such great things for their children in baptism, can their presenting of their children be acceptable to Him; and the ministers of Christ can hope that they give back into worthy hands the children consecrated in baptism to God.

Certainly, in that measure in which the Church has sunk into worldliness, and been degraded to a mere worldly establishment, the sin in the administration of this holy rite has been very great. Who can calculate, or even conceive, the extent of the evil that has arisen from laxity in this matter? It is an unspeakable grace of God that He invited children to have part in His kingdom; but we must not forget that He gives them entrance on no other conditions than those on which all men must receive His blessings. If they remain faithful to the end they will inherit the glory of His kingdom; but if they are unfaithful and fall away they prepare for themselves a double condemnation. And if our Lord could say of that disciple who betrayed Him, that it had been better for him if he had never been born; of how many thousands of baptized children, who, after their baptism, have been sacrificed to the ungodliness and unbelief of their parents and sponsors, and when grown up have lived and died as enemies and traitors to God and Christ,

may one say that it had been better for them if they had never been baptized - if the Church, on account of the condition of their parents or sponsors, had delayed their baptism? [119].

But it is with the thing itself, and not with the abuse of it, that we have to do. And instead of allowing ourselves, on account of existing abuses, and the evil condition of the baptized, arising at least in part from those abuses, to doubt or contend against the efficacy of infant baptism, we ought, all of us, ministers and people, to bow down and humble ourselves before God, that we have not had faith in His gracious act in this holy sacrament, and have not manifested in our life, that we are indeed dead to sin, and are partakers of a new life in Christ.

To Him, our gracious and merciful God and Father, who can strengthen the weak, heal the sick, and awaken the dead, be all honour, praise, and glory, with the Son, and the Holy Ghost, now and evermore. Amen.

4. THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.¹⁶

¹⁶ "I believe in...the Holy Catholic Church." - Apostles' Creed.

MUCH that is erroneous has been taught and written about the Church, because men were labouring to establish a doctrine about it, an abstract theological definition, instead of being contented to know facts, and to represent them faithfully. Whoever desires to know the Church in its present condition, must be referred to its various existing confessions and divisions. And if we could trust the assertions of the Roman Catholics, then whoever has acquired a knowledge of the present Romish Church, has at the same time learned what the Church originally was; for, say they, the ordinances, doctrines, sacraments and usages, as they now exist in the Church of Rome, are essentially the same as those with which the Church came into existence when God first planted her on the earth.¹⁷

But this assertion is contradicted by the equally credible assertions of other divisions of the Church; and we are thus reduced to the necessity of looking about for historical records, if we wish to know in what form that Church, whose present condition we learn from existing facts, came forth from God's hand at the [121] beginning. It is an especial providence of God that we possess such records; and that they not

¹⁷ This is maintained even by those cautious representatives of the Romish Church of recent times, who acknowledge a progressive development in the Church.

only reach to the foundation of the Church but have this great advantage over all other and later historical records, that they belong to the canon of Holy Scripture, and therefore are acknowledged unconditionally by all Christians as true and worthy to be received. The Book of the Acts, and the Apostolical Epistles of the New Testament, are the chief sources from which we must draw a correct knowledge of what the Church was at the beginning.

4.1 Apostles and Believers formed the First Elements of the Church.

ALTHOUGH our Lord while on earth gathered together the first living stones for His Church, yet Pentecost has been rightly considered as the day on which its foundation was laid. And the first description which we have of its rise at Jerusalem is in the second chapter of Acts, verse 41: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The Apostles, and that company who through their testimony had believed on the Risen One and been baptized, formed the first commencement of the

Christian Church. Two distinct parts are at once recognisable in her: those on the one hand who have received the Divine commission and are the especial instruments for administering the Divine grace - the Apostles: and on the other, the body of the faithful, for whose sake God gave these His servants - the receivers through them of the Divine blessings. Before His ascension the Lord had given His Apostles a commission to teach and [122] preach in His name, Matt. XXVIII.16-20; Acts I.2; to baptize, to celebrate the holy Eucharist, Luke XXII.19; and to remit or retain sins. John XX. 22-23. And through the descent of the Holy Ghost, for which they waited at Jerusalem, Acts I.4-8, they received on the day of Pentecost the full endowment from above for standing under Christ, the invisible Head in Heaven, as leaders and guides of the spiritual Israel. They were willingly from the beginning acknowledged as such; not only by those who had been witnesses of their intercourse with the Lord in the days of His flesh, but also by the larger company who now through their testimony believed, and by them were admitted to a participation in the blessings of the Church.

The Church came into existence as a spiritual building, a heavenly organization, whose Head is in heaven, and whose chief organs are Apostles. One life flows through all the members, the life of the risen

Head; they are all anointed and sealed with the same Spirit. But the Apostle and High-priest in heaven, who is the source of the one life, and the dispenser of the Holy Ghost, He, the Divine Master-builder, gives to every member its place, and works through every member according to its measure. He it is who set the Apostles first, 1.Cor. XII.28; they are the master-builders under Him, 1.Cor. III.9-10; and through them the further development and perfecting of the Divine building is accomplished. This appears, in the first instance, at the choice and ordination of the first deacons. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," John XX.21; XVII.18, said the Lord to His Apostles. The Apostles are from the Lord; they have their commission from Himself directly; by Him are they sent forth; they cannot therefore be chosen or ordained by men. Comp. Gal. I.1. [123].

4.2 Deacons

It is otherwise with the office of deacon. The Apostles did not convey to the deacons any of their own peculiar spiritual charge. On the contrary, in order that they may give themselves wholly and undividedly to this, they divest themselves of those functions that do not lie within the sphere of their spiritual office. "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables," was the language of

the twelve. Acts VI.2. It is not spiritual concerns which they devolve on the deacons; but they are to be the stewards of the earthly goods of the Church. Acts VI. 1-3. They are to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." Men who possess the confidence of the people, and appear as their best members; who, as representatives and heads of the congregation, can let the light of their Christian virtues and of the fruits of the Holy Ghost shine brightly before both those within and without. 1.Tim. III. 8-13. The Apostles charged the brethren to choose seven such men from among themselves. But although the choice of these men was to proceed from the congregation, yet the Apostles retained to themselves the ordaining them to their office.¹⁸ Those chosen were placed before the Apostles, who prayed, and laid their hands on them. Through the choice and ordination of the seven deacons of the Church in Jerusalem, a new member was developed in the Church as an organized body; and it seems as though this internal development and perfecting was accompanied by a proportional efficacy in the Divine testimony borne to those without. At least, immediately after the ordination of the deacons we learn "that the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples [124] multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests

¹⁸ Acts VI.3: "Whom we may appoint over this business."

were obedient to the faith.” And in Stephen, one of the newly-appointed deacons, the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost manifested themselves so mightily as to attract the wonder and admiration of the people. Acts VI. 7- 8.

4.3 Presbyters or Bishops.

So long as the Church was limited to Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, the Apostles themselves seem to have acted as the pastors and teachers of the faithful; at least it is only at a later period, after the scattering abroad of the Church, related in Acts VIII., when the truth was spread more widely, and believers were gathered together in other towns and regions, that we read of the ordination of presbyters or bishops. Acts XI. 30; XIV.23; XV.4, &c. These were, it may be easily shown, the pastors and teachers, the overseers of the various congregations; and each church possessed several such ministers, Acts XX. 17,28; 1.Tim. III.1, and following; V.17; Phil. I.1; 1.Peter V.1. They exercised over the newly-erected churches that care and supervision which the Apostles themselves had done at the commencement over the Church at Jerusalem.¹⁹

¹⁹ Afterwards elders were also appointed in Jerusalem, Acts XI.30.

We see then that, while the Apostles devolved on the deacons no spiritual function, they called on the presbyters to be partakers in their own spiritual office; but with this great distinction, that the presbyters were limited in the exercise of their office to an individual church, while the Apostles had to care for all the churches, 2.Cor. XI.28, and their office extended to all. The Apostles were a collegiate body, Acts II.14; V.29; VI.2; VIII.1; no individual among them stood as the visible head of all believers; on the contrary, the fact that not *one* man [125], but twelve men held this office, which extended over the whole Church, testified that the Lord, the alone Head of His Church, though invisible, was not absent. He is the one ever-present Bishop and Chief Shepherd of the whole Church, 1.Peter V. 4; Heb. XIII. 20; Matt. XXVIII.20; and the Apostles are under Him for the whole Church what presbyters under their bishops are for individual churches.

4.4 The Office of Angel

For the individual church represents, on a small scale, what the whole Church is under Christ and united to Him. And in the further development of the Divine order in those churches founded by the Apostles, each church received, besides presbyters and deacons, an angel or bishop, whereby the order of

each was completed and perfected. That the presbyters were also called bishops at first, Acts XX.17.28, and that it was only at a later period that this title was limited in the language of the Church to the head or angel of the individual church makes no difference as to the facts. So long as we can show from Holy Scripture that in the time of the Apostles an office existed, whereby the body of believers in each church with their deacons and presbyters were gathered up together into one, it is evident that the three degrees (*ordines*) of office, afterwards universal in Christendom, are of Divine origin.

Leaving out of account that the two passages, Acts XII.17 and XXI.18, testify to the correctness of the declaration of Hegesippus, and also of the generally received tradition concerning "James the Just,"²⁰ that he was the first bishop of Jerusalem, we know from the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia, Rev. II. and III., that these churches, besides the other offices existing in them, comp. Acts XX.17, [126] possessed an office corresponding to that of bishop - an office occupied by a single individual, who, being placed over all other ministers and brethren, was responsible for the condition of all, was commended for what was good, and rebuked for what was evil or

²⁰ Eusebius, *Church History*, ii. 23.

wanting in the congregation intrusted to his care. He was called "angel,"²¹ as being in the individual Church, which, as in miniature, represents the universal Church - an emblem of the Lord, the Angel of the Covenant, Mal. III.1; and as being, in the highest sense of the word for that congregation over which he is placed, the angel, the heavenly messenger, one of the stars in the spiritual firmament of the Church, Rev. I.20, which the Lord on His throne in heaven holds in His right hand.

But although the office of bishop reaches back to apostolic times, it does not thence follow that the Episcopal Church of the second and third centuries corresponds to the Church under Apostles. That this could not be the case will be clearly shown in the further examination of the condition of the Church, during the apostolic period.

The Church of Christ is one, as the Lord is one. There is only *one Head*, and consequently only *one Body*. 1.Cor. XII. 12-13; Eph. IV.4; Rom. XII.5. This one Church, so long as her members are in mortal bodies and scattered over many lands, must consist of many individual congregations, which are fed and

²¹ About the name of "Angel" for the Bishops of the Churches, compare Bingham, *Antiquities*, ii.2; and Thiersch, *Church in Apostolic Age*, i. 258.

cared for by the ministries and ordinances in each. We have seen that these ministries arose, and necessarily arose, so soon as the [127] Apostles no longer sufficed to feed the sheep of Christ themselves, and to care for the souls of the faithful. But so long as the Apostles were alive, the individual Churches scattered among different nations had among them an unspeakably important part of the organization of the Church, which was wanting in the Episcopalian Church of later times. The Apostles were from the commencement, as also they continued to be - after churches with angels, elders, and deacons were established - the one bond of unity for the whole Church; the living centre whose gracious and salutary influence extended over all; the highest organ in the Lord's spiritual body, whereby He can accomplish the most, not only in upholding and preserving what exists, but also in carrying forward all the Churches.

4.5 The Position of the Apostles towards the other Ministers and towards all the Churches.

It is a good service done by Protestants, that they have contributed to the unveiling of that error upon which the extravagant and presumptuous claims of the Episcopalian system rests; as though the Apostles at the beginning had no other position in the Church

than that afterwards occupied by bishops. But, if it be erroneous to suppose that the Apostles at the first were nothing more than bishops at the head of individual congregations intrusted to them,²² we err no less if we suppose that the Apostles of the Lord were only great and powerful preachers, whose activity was directed merely to the conversion of Jews and heathens. The Lord gave His Apostles a commission, not merely to [128] preach, but to make disciples of all nations, and to teach them to observe all things that He had commanded them. Matt. XXVIII.19-20. Their first task was, by their testimony to Jew and Gentile concerning the Risen One, to gather together the stones whereof the spiritual temple, the Church, should be built. 1.Peter II. 5; Eph. II.19-22. But so soon as a company of believers was gathered, the proper work of building the Church began, and the Apostles then appear as the chief master-builders under Christ. The gathered company are ordered and knit together as a Church; the various offices and ordinances are appointed; the spiritual gifts distinguished, and each turned to its proper use; the worship, the discipline, the doctrine, not only the milk of

²² We will not deny that cases might occur in which an Apostle for a time acted as Bishop of an individual church; because at all times he who possesses a higher office can fulfil the lower. But most of the traditions in regard to this are unworthy of credit, though the way in which they arose is not difficult to trace.

the first principles, but the strong meat of higher and deeper truths; all this the newly-founded Church had to receive through Apostles.

And after churches had been thus ordered and founded in various places, the care of the Apostles for all the churches commenced. Of what do the apostolic epistles testify to us, if not of this care of the Apostles and their guidance, which was so rich in blessing to the primitive Church? Was not this the chief advantage which the apostolic period enjoyed as compared with the period that succeeded, that the individual churches had, in the apostolic office, a universal organ bestowed by God, and therefore filled with His grace, whereby all churches were cared for, and all offices and gifts in them were strengthened, disciplined, cleansed, and promoted?

When deacons were necessary in the Church at Jerusalem, the Apostles caused them to be chosen and ordained therein. When the company in Samaria, who had been gathered and baptized by Philip the evangelist, were to be anointed and sealed with the Holy Ghost, it [129] was the Apostles who came down from Jerusalem and laid hands upon them. Acts VIII.14-17. When God opened to the heathen in Pisidia and Lycaonia the door of faith, and the believers among them were to be knit together in churches, it

was the Apostles who ordained elders over them. Acts XIV.23. It was the Apostles who, at Jerusalem with the elders and brethren, decided the difficult question as to the position of the heathen in regard to the Mosaic law. Through whom, but through Apostles, did the Lord, as by the highest authority, use that wholesome spiritual discipline by which the churches were cleansed? At whose word did Ananias and Sapphira fall down dead, when they had lied to the Holy Ghost? Acts V.1-10. Who resolved to deliver the sinners at Corinth unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh? 1.Cor. V.3-5. Or who passed the same judgement on Hymeneus and Alexander? 1.Tim. I.20. Who instructed the Romans in the foundations of Christianity? Who was able to show to the Galatians, when they stood in danger of being brought into bondage under the law, the true road to perfection? Who could teach the Corinthian Church, when filled with spiritual gifts, the right use of those precious gifts, and steer them clear of the disorders that threatened to come in through the abuse of them? 1.Cor. XIV. Who ordered the celebration of the Holy Communion among the Corinthians, and promised that what was yet wanting should be set in order when he came? 1. Cor. XI. Who was able to unfold to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, the depths of Christian doctrine? Who had power to preserve the Thessalonians from error and fanaticism in their lively hope of

their Lord's return, without quenching in the hearts of the faithful this true Christian and apostolic [130] hope? Who was it that understood how to foster sound Christian life in the churches, and to distinguish it from false spirituality and self-devised piety, to distinguish between true liberty in the Holy Ghost and false liberty in the flesh? Col. II.16, &c.; 2.Peter II. 19, &c. Who possessed the necessary Divine light to open up to the Hebrews, whose hearts clung to the Mosaic ordinances, the typical signification of these ordinances, and to point out to them the spiritual fulfilment of them in Christ and the Church? Who had power from God to instruct and exhort a Timothy and a Titus - to give to them their important commission and their widely-extended authority? *All this was through Apostles.*

And the Apostles in all this activity appear as the leaders and guides of all the churches, as those to whom the highest and most universal rule in the Church belonged. In this their position in the organization of the Church, we recognise the signification of the words of Paul, when he says, 1.Cor. XII., "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular: and God hath set in the Church, *first* Apostles." Apostles, indeed, have nothing to do with Church government in a mere outward and earthly sense of this word. Their rule was neither a spiritual tyranny over the

brethren, nor an outward machinery of dry, lifeless administration. The Lord Himself, into whose hands the Father had committed all things, and who did not refuse the title of "Master and Lord," had given His Apostles, to whom He committed the highest spiritual authority, an example, which was to serve them as a rule for the manner of spirit in which they were to use that authority. John XIII.1-17.

On that solemn evening which closed His earthly intercourse with them, Jesus rose after supper, and laying [131] aside His garments, He took a towel and girded Himself; after that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet; and the signification of this most wonderful act of humiliation He Himself declares in these words, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." The Apostles were not to be lords over their brethren; but even as Christ had given Himself for them, and not shrunk from the meanest service that He could do them, so were they to give themselves for their brethren, and to be servants of all for Christ's sake. They

were not to domineer, but were to go foremost, and that not only in good but also in evil days; not to face friends only, but to face enemies. As their Lord gave His life for the sheep, so their life was to be a continual act of self-sacrifice. In nothing were they to seek their own honour or any selfish end; but the glory of God and the salvation of their brethren were to be the ends they had continually in view.

And the New Testament bears witness that the Apostles did, indeed tread in the footsteps of their Divine Master, and neither sought nor found on earth a better fate than He had done. "Giving no offence in anything," the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, 2.Cor. VI.3-10, "that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in [132] watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and

yet possessing all things." Such was St. Paul's understanding of being the servants of men for the Lord's sake. And what his experience was, and that of the other Apostles in the exercise of their office, we learn from another passage in which he writes to the Corinthians, 1.Cor. IV.9-13; "I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day."

But how immense soever the difference between the way in which the Apostles entered upon their office and used their authority, and that of the heads and leaders of the Church in later times; yet it does not at all follow that the Church in the beginning had no rule, nor order, nor difference of rank, nor those who were over and those who were under others in the Lord. Many [133] Christians indeed, especially those who boast most of their acquaintance with their

Bible, fancy the Church in the time of the Apostles as a sort of friendly chaos of pious men, which, according to the accident of the moment, took any form or no form, each member of which followed the impulse of his own heart; and where all distinction in position and sphere of activity was either entirely set aside, or at most was made a matter of human choice and human agreement; where no Divine commission, or ordination to office, no variety of calling, no organization of members, no such thing as obedience and subjection, as giving and receiving, as leading and following, are to be thought of. But such thoughts only show that, however much such men may appeal to Scripture, they have learned little from it; and that instead of being ready to bring their own theories and all existing conditions of the Church to the test of the Word of God, as the alone rule of truth, in all their examination of Scripture, they set themselves the more convenient task of proving their own views to be true. Not only did the Church in the beginning excel all that the history of any after period has to show in organization, and unity, and steadfastness of outward form; but all that we find of Divine ordinance and order in the Episcopal Church of the second and third centuries are but the feeble and imperfect remains of the manifold organs, offices and gifts which in the apostolic times existed in the Church; and whereby the spiritual body of the Lord appeared as the antitype or

rather as the prototype of the wonderful organization of the human Body.

4.6 New Testament Prophets.

Deacons, elders, who as pastors and teachers are set over the particular church with an angel or bishop at [134] their head - these were the essential parts in the original order of the Church, as we see both in the New Testament and in the Church history of the second and third centuries. But the apostolic Epistles, as well as the book of Acts, testify of other offices, and of a diversity of gifts and powers in all the congregations, which mark the pre-eminence and the peculiar character of the Church in the Apostles' times. St. Paul says, "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets." 1.Cor. XII.28. That so little attention has been given to the existence of this important office in the primitive Church, is only to be thus explained, that when the office itself had disappeared, people no longer knew what to make of the passages that alluded to it. And yet we have in Scripture examples enough of the exercise of the prophetic office under the New Testament dispensation to convince us of its high importance for the full development and bringing to perfection of the Church.

The Lord had said of the Holy Ghost that when He came He would lead the disciples into all truth, “for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come.” John XVI.13. After His ascension our Lord was no more personally in the body present on earth; He could, therefore, no more speak to His disciples, as He did in the days of His flesh. But through the Holy Ghost, who, with the Father and the Son, is God, and who at Pentecost took up His abode in the Church, the Lord could continue to speak to His people. The Holy Ghost should hear in heaven, what Christ had to say to His Church; and what He hears that He should speak. And how ought He to speak? Some examples from the book of the Acts will answer this question [135].

“Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers.....As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Acts XIII.1-2. The Lord, seated in heaven, desired that these two men should be separated for His work; the Holy Ghost heard what Christ desired, and through the prophets He made His will known to the Church.

“In these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.” Acts XI.27-28. Our Lord, who, when He was on earth, cared for the bodily wants of His disciples, was in heaven not less careful to save from bodily necessity those who were His members, who feared Him and kept His commandments. The Holy Ghost heard in heaven what was on the heart of Christ, and through a prophet gave to His Church the needful light for the future, to protect them from the consequences of the coming famine.

“And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.” Acts XXI.10-11. Again, an example of the fulfilment of the Lord’s promise that the Holy Ghost should speak in the Church, and show them things to come [136].

We should greatly err, were we to suppose that this ministry of prophets in the Church at the begin-

ning was something extraordinary, occurring in certain cases, but not belonging to the normal condition of the spiritual organization of the Church. Such a supposition is contradicted by the clearest testimony of Scripture. When Paul describes the Church as it existed in the days of the Apostles, he says, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets." 1.Cor. XII. 27-28. And in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, when he states those offices bestowed on the Church by her ascended Lord, he says, "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets." And a careful examination of the New Testament will show that in all the churches the prophetic office was in exercise along with the apostolic. In Acts XV.22, we read, "Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole Church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren." In verse 32 we find it said of these men that they were prophets. And when we find in the apostolical letter which was sent with them that it is thus written, "We have sent therefore Judas and Silas" (two prophets.), "who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:" we may well conclude that the Holy Ghost, in

the Council at Jerusalem, had spoken through these two men words giving light, whereby the knowledge of the Divine will became clearer to the assembly on the question that was in doubt before them, and that therefore these [137] men were sent with Paul and Barnabas in order that the Church at Antioch might have a like blessing through their prophetic gift. And when Paul, in Acts XX.23, says to the assembled elders of the Church at Ephesus, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me ;" and, in chap. XXI.11, it is said that this testimony of the Holy Ghost was, at Cesarea, spoken through a prophet; it shows us that, in all cities where there were Christian churches, the office of the Prophet was in exercise. We have already seen how this office was used for the separating of Paul and Barnabas to that work which God committed to them; and there is every ground to believe that this way, namely, a prophetic word of God through a prophet, was the usual way whereby at the beginning those men were called of God who were to serve Him in His Church.²³ Paul writes to Timothy, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by

²³ We speak here of men who were to serve in the priestly office, not of deacons. The deacons to whom the administration of the earthly concerns of the Church were intrusted were chosen by the congregation.

them mightest war a good warfare.” 1.Tim. I.18. And further on in the same epistle, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” 1.Tim. IV.14. He reminds Timothy of the prophecies - that is, the prophetic utterances, words spoken in the Holy Ghost with an especial reference to his office and duties in the Church. Again, how are we to understand the words of Paul to the elders at Ephesus, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” Acts XX. 28, [138] otherwise than in the light afforded us by what is related in Acts XIII.2,4, namely, that these men received their call to their office by words of the Holy Ghost spoken through prophets.

And in the period succeeding that of the Apostles, we find it testified that the men who were to serve the Church in the ministry were indicated to the Apostles through prophetic utterance. Clement of Alexandria informs us that the Apostle John, when he had returned from Patmos to Ephesus, was accustomed to visit the neighbouring heathen regions, in order to ordain bishops, to set in order churches, and to receive into the ministry such men as were indicated by the

Holy Ghost.²⁴ And how can that expression, universally in use in Christendom, of ministers having a *call* through the Holy Ghost, have had its rise, otherwise than through the original method of designating men to the priestly office by an audible word of the Holy Ghost spoken through a prophet? A mere inward impulse experienced by the candidates for the ministry, or a nomination or choice by men, would never have given rise to such a mode of speech.

The full importance of the prophetic office for the Church, can only be learned by the restoration of this office. Yet what is said in the New Testament suffices to let us know that it must be of the highest importance for the ordering, guidance and edification of the Church. If the Apostles appear as the hand of the Lord which acts, and sets in order His spiritual body, the Prophet may be designated the eye. We have seen how, through them, light is given as to the way in which the Lord [139] would lead His Church,²⁵ as to

²⁴ Eusebius, *Church History*, iii.23; Bingham's *Antiquities*, iv.1, sect. 3.

²⁵ In addition to the testimony of Acts XIII., where the Lord, through prophets, makes known the work which He desires to accomplish by Barnabas and Saul, we may perhaps add, as an instance of the operation of the prophetic ministry in the times of the Apostles, the following: Acts XV.40, we are told that Paul chose the prophet Silas to accompany him; and in the sixth verse of the following chapter it is said, "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and

the men whom He chose to serve Him, as to the destiny which lay before the world at large, and especially before the Church; and no doubt the opening up and application of the often deeply hidden meaning of the prophetic and typical parts of Scripture lay within their sphere.

4.7 Evangelists and Pastors.

The Apostles were themselves the first preachers and teachers; but when the preaching of the Word was committed to others, this service divided itself into different branches, according to the condition of the hearers. The truth is *one*; but the unconverted Jew or heathen requires a different word from the believing and baptized disciple. The preaching for awakening and converting is different from that of the pastor who has to care for the Lord's flock, instructing, comforting, warning, and disciplining. We find, in consequence, in the New Testament, besides the office of pastor and teacher that of evangelist, to whom it belonged to bring to the unconverted the joyful tidings of the salvation obtained for us through Christ. An example of the successful exercise of this office we

the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia." How would this prohibition take place? Probably by a word spoken through the prophet Silas.

have in Acts VIII., where the Samaritans believed through the preaching of Philip the evangelist.²⁶ [140].

The Apostle Paul mentions apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in Eph. IV. as the gifts which the risen and ascended Lord had bestowed for the edification and perfecting of His Church. This fourfold form of ministry we find exercised in the Church at the beginning. And this fourfold form corresponds to the character of the ministry as having its root and origin in our Lord Himself; for He is, according to the Scripture, the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, Heb. III.1, the Prophet like unto Moses, Acts III. 22, the Evangelist, the Preacher of the Gospel to the poor, Luke IV.18, and the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for the sheep. John X.11. And as the fourfold ministry in the Church at the beginning was nothing less than the flowing forth of that which existed in Christ, so did it correspond in a wonderful manner to the necessities of men, and embraced man in every region of his being. If the whole man is to be taken possession of for God, and to be sanctified and consecrated for Him then the understanding and the conscience must be wrought upon by the convincing and awakening word of the evangelist; the heart and affections by the pure, loving, pa-

²⁶ In Acts XXI. 8, Philip is designated an evangelist.

ternal, warning word of the pastor; the imagination, and the higher region of intellect by the enlightening utterances of the prophet; and finally, the will and the unity of man's being by the command of the apostle. 1.Cor. XIV. 37; 1.Thess. IV. 2.

But, however important this fourfold ministry was for the Church at the beginning, we are not to suppose that in the churches founded by the Apostles only those to whom these ministries belonged were used for the edification and advancement of the brethren. In this respect, as well as in others, the apostolic period differs from all later periods, and the form of the Church then from the [141] diverse forms it has taken since. Neither the extreme to which the Romish Church has gone on the one side, where office or ministry so preponderates that the clergy are in a narrower sense considered *the Church*, nor the not less hurtful extreme which prevails in some Protestant sects where the idea is that all are priests, and all members of the Church on an equal footing. Neither of these extremes characterized the Church in the apostolic age. Along with brotherly unity and equality there existed order, appointed and ordained of God. God had set in the Church, first apostles, then prophets, thirdly teachers (pastors for the faithful, and evangelists for those without).

The Apostles did not hesitate to stand forth as those into whose hands the Divine rule and Divine discipline of the Church were given; and they demanded the obedience of the churches, not only to their apostolic commands, but also to those overseers and guides, who were by them placed over the individual churches. "I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare." 2.Cor. XIII.2. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." 1.Cor. XIV.37. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Heb. XIII.17. "The elders which are among you I exhort,feed the flock of God....Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." 1.Peter V.1-5. "I beseech you, brethren (ye [142] know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints), that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth." 1.Cor. XVI.15, 16.

These examples may suffice to set aside the theories of those who profess to find the modern doctrines of liberty and equality in the Apostolic Churches. Discipline and order, wholesome limitation of ministerial activity within the border assigned to each, existed in them; but along with this there was an activity in which all members of the Church, without exception, had a part, and which was of the greatest use for nourishing the inward life, and for sanctifying the whole body.

4.8 The Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and their Relation to the Ministries.

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” 1.Cor. XII.4-7. All the members of the Church of Christ are not ministers; but the gifts of the Spirit may be manifested in all; and through the appointed exercise of these gifts each individual member may contribute by word and deed to the edification and advancement of the Church. The promise in the prophet Joel runs thus: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters

shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.” Joel II.28. The Apostle Peter declared that the “speaking with other tongues” by the assembled disciples at Pentecost was a fulfilling of this prophecy, and closed his address to the gathered multitude with this assurance: “The promise is [143] unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Acts II. 15, 16, 39. The book of the Acts contains several examples of the fulfilment of this promise to such as believed. Of Cornelius and those in his house it is said that they spake with tongues and magnified God. Acts X.46. The disciples at Ephesus, on whom the Apostle Paul laid hands, also spoke with tongues and prophesied. Acts XIX.6. And the Apostle, in 1.Cor. XIV., exhorts all believers to desire spiritual gifts, but rather that they may prophesy.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost were not therefore limited to those in offices of ministry. On the contrary, as each baptized Christian was called to experience the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and all believers in the beginning received the laying on of Apostles’ hands for sealing with the Holy Ghost (Comp. Acts VIII.17; XIX.6; Eph. I.13; and 2.Cor. I.21-22), it was to be expected that the Holy Ghost, who distributes His gifts among the members of Christ as He will,

would reveal His presence indifferently in this or that individual. "I would that ye all spake with tongues²⁷,

²⁷ The speaking in a tongue, or in other tongues, as well as prophesying, was not men speaking, but the Person of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the Church speaking. In the case of tongues He spoke to God (1.Cor. XIV.2.) - in prophesying He spoke to men. When He spoke to God in tongues, the man, as the instrument, was edified in his heart (verse 4): but what He spoke was not understood, except through the gift of interpretation. Therefore the Apostle writes, "I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied." The day of Pentecost, as the day on which the foundation of the Church was laid and the Holy Ghost came down from heaven, has its especial marks of distinction, which are not repeated again in the history of the Church. On that day the tongues were understood by the Jews assembled from all countries; but no other such case is to be found in the New Testament. Prophesying was in the tongue of him through whom it was spoken. But, as we have said, it was not the man, but the Holy Ghost who spoke. The man, however, was His instrument, not as a mere machine which a musician plays upon, but in a higher and more spiritual sense. The Holy Ghost dwells in the redeemed and regenerated man in a manner in which, until Pentecost, He had never dwelt in man. He who prophesies yields himself to the Holy Ghost in the Church, and the Holy Ghost, in direct union with him, as with all Christ's members, uses his soul and body, in order through him to be able to speak to the Church. He gives him the thoughts and the words which are to be spoken, and impels him in a sensible and manifest manner, so that the congregation can perceive that it is the Holy Ghost, and not man, that speaks. The gift of prophecy was used for the foretelling of future events, and, as already shown, for calling to the ministry. Its chief purpose, however, when conferred on private individuals, was the edification of the Church. In the assemblies of believers, quick and powerful words, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, were spoken by the Spirit through such members as He chose. (1.Cor. XIV. 3, 4, 31.)

but rather that ye prophesied," 1.Cor. XIV.5, is the [144] wish expressed by the Apostle, because he had at heart the edification of the Church, and he knew how much the gift of prophecy contributed to this. By means of such a gift, any, even the most insignificant member, might be an instrument of God, whereby all might be profited. No member was to be considered a mere receiver. Through the distribution of the divers gifts, each member had a place and function in the body, appointed him of God, 1.Cor. XII. 11, 20-27; and it may often have pleased God, for the humiliation and wholesome chastening of all the members of a church, that the greatest blessings were permitted to flow through the members who were least considered.

What we have said of the prophetic office, holds good also of the spiritual gifts. Only their restoration can give us the necessary light as to the mode of their [145] appearance at the beginning, and their full importance for the welfare of the Church. But this much is clear, that although the ministers were free to possess them, yet the possession of them or exercise of them, either in the assembled congregation or elsewhere, was not at all limited to those in the ministry. An apostle or an evangelist could do signs and wonders; but in order to possess the gift of miracles, it was not necessary to be either the one or the other. It

pleased God to do great signs and wonders through Stephen, who was only a deacon. Acts VI. 8. And the gift of prophecy, the most general, and the most conducive to the edification of the Church, was not only bestowed on men without regard to their position in the Church, but was exercised by women. The evangelist Philip had four daughters, virgins, who prophesied. Acts XXI.9. And, in 1.Cor. XI., St. Paul gives directions as to the outward appearance and behaviour of those women who prophesied in the congregation.²⁸ If through the ministries order and discipline were preserved in the Church, and obedience for Christ's sake was called forth in all the members; so the dispensing of spiritual gifts contributed not a little to maintain in them the consciousness of their living membership in the body of Christ, and their exalted calling as the temple of the Holy Ghost. The legitimate exercise of spiritual gifts in the public assemblies of the faithful, 1.Cor. XIV. 26, &c., gave to all the members of the Church an opportunity of [146] being actively engaged in the general edification; while the dependence of such activity upon the possession of a

²⁸ Women were not allowed to speak in the Church (1.Cor. XIV.34) - that is, they might not teach as men, or speak of their own mind; but if it pleased the Holy Ghost to impart to a woman the gift of prophecy, and she was moved of the Spirit, then the Holy Ghost spoke through her, who is free to speak through whom He will. Not only your sons, but your daughters shall prophesy, was the promise.

gift of the Holy Ghost, acknowledged and recognised by the overseers of the Church, precluded all voluntary and self chosen activity in ministering to Christ's flock. This co-operation of all believers, each according to the gift bestowed on him by God for the advancement and spiritual growth of the whole body, was an especial characteristic of the Church in the Apostles' times; and a chief means of hindering divisions, and of preserving all the members, ministers, as well as others, in humility and in love.

4.9 The Church in her Oneness.

For the sake of clearness we shall conclude by giving a short review of the various parts of which we have seen, from the New Testament, that the Church consisted at the beginning.

The Church consisted of individual congregations or churches. At the head of each of these stood an angel (afterwards usually called a bishop), in whom the church was united as one, and to whom the chief guidance and superintendence of it were committed. Under him was a numerous body of clergy, to some of whom the teaching and pastoral care were intrusted, to others the preaching to those without, while others exercised the office of prophet. The deacons again were the representatives of the congregation, those

who headed and went before the flock, and to whom was given the care of the poor, and of the temporal concerns of the church. But the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost were distributed over the whole congregation; and in all the public assemblies of the faithful, every individual who possessed a gift had an opportunity to use it for the common edification and profit [147].

Every such church, or congregation, with its angel at its head, was, in miniature, a representation of the One Holy Catholic Church, consisting of many such churches, and of which Christ alone is the Head. As such He is represented by no man; but, according to the perfect Divine order as it existed at the beginning, the Lord had in His Apostles and their fellow-labourers and legates (as for example Timothy and Titus) instruments, through whom He, as chief Shepherd and chief Bishop of His Church, could care for the continuance and welfare of all the churches. The individual churches were not so many isolated and independent bodies, which being brought into existence, were left to themselves, and whose preservation and growth depended solely on the ministries and gifts within themselves; but the common band which united all churches, the Divine ordinance by which many congregations constituted *one Church*, was the Apostleship. The Apostles and their fellow-

labourers, through whose ministry the individual churches were brought into existence, continued to be the living centre, from which, under the continual rule of Christ Himself, new blessings were always flowing. Through them all the churches scattered over many lands were kept in unity of faith and of the Holy Ghost, preserved from errors and heresies, advanced in the fear of God, and in holy discipline, and ever anew enriched with spiritual blessings. Each church was subject to the guides and rulers given to it of God, and these again were subject to the Lord in His Apostles, were followers of them, as they were followers of Christ. Thus was the whole body knit together by bands and ordinances given of God, and firmly united to the invisible Head in heaven. He, the God-Man, was ever the living fountain of all blessing [148]; and from Him flowed, through channels of His own appointment, streams of Divine life and heavenly grace in the Holy Ghost, even to the least and lowest member of His spiritual body.

If we believe that the Church, as it first came into existence, was a Divine creation, the accomplishment of a heavenly plan; then it follows that every change in the original Divine constitution is to be considered a loss, an injury to the heavenly organization of the Church. And her history, from the Apostles' times to our own, affords proof that every attempt to make up

for the loss of the original organization, either in whole or in part, by any human ordinance whatever only leads to a quenching of the Divine life, and a turning of the Church aside from the original purpose of her being. But to show this more particularly will be our task in the next treatise.

And may God, who alone can give us all grace and wisdom to understand His dealings with His Church, grant the light of His Spirit, that we may be delivered from all darkness, and prepared to follow Him, and to do His holy will [149].

5. THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

(CONTINUED.)

IF we would consider the Church subsequent to the Apostles' times, in the great distinguishing periods of her history, these may be summed up under the following four heads: -

1. The Church under bishops, before her connection with the State, and before the exaltation of the Bishop of Rome to be the spiritual head of all Western Christendom.
2. The Church in her connection with the State.
3. The growth and perfecting of the Papacy.
4. The Reformation, and the ecclesiastical conditions of Protestant countries which took their rise from that event.

5.1 The Condition of the Church under Bishops during the Second and Third Centuries.

In the second and third centuries, the Church still consisted, as in the time of the Apostles, of a number of individual congregations. She was not yet entangled with the organization of the State, nor did

she embrace nationalities. The individual churches had indeed their guides and overseers; and the three orders - bishops (or angels), presbyters, and deacons - were found in each church. So far, the Church under bishops corresponded to the Divine pattern which the Apostles had followed [150]. But the Church no longer had Apostles in the full and peculiar sense of the word;²⁹ and the task of the bishops came to be that of upholding and retaining what the Apostles delivered to them, in doctrine, worship, discipline and order. In the fulfilment of this duty they showed wonderful faithfulness and firmness. To the grace of God in them, and their firm adherence to the great truths of Christianity - especially to the true doctrine of the incarnation of God in Christ - the Church owes her preservation from the deadly poison of gnostic errors. But so soon as the mind of the Church was directed to the holding fast of the measure already attained, instead of as a living body growing and making advance in all things, she had sunk back from that spiritual position in which she was held by Apostles. Her original calling, to be prepared by internal growth and perfecting for the coming of Christ and the glory of the resurrection, was of necessity forgotten, and a

²⁹ The Bishops of the early Church were also called Apostles, but in a lower sense. (See Bingham's Antiquities, ii. 2.) In the New Testament also we find the term "Apostle" used in this sense (See 2. Cor. VIII. 23; Phil. II. 25; Rom. XVI 7.)

lower calling took its place - that of preserving believers as pure and unspotted as possible in this world, and of preparing them for death. But when the higher aim is left out of view, the lower is found difficult of attainment. The bishops, with all their faithfulness in holding fast what had been committed to them, could not preserve in the churches the original fullness of the Spirit, or power of Divine life. In the absence of Apostles, they, in their stead, laid hands on believers; but the disappearance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost soon manifested how great was the difference between [151] the laying on of Apostles' hands and of those of a bishop. They ordained to office, but the prophetic light whereby, in the primitive Church, those men were indicated whom the Lord had chosen to His service, no longer existed;³⁰ and the act of the bishop appointing to office wanted the full sacredness and power of apostolic ordination. While at the beginning bishops themselves received their appointment and consecration from the higher office of Apostle, they had now to adopt the feeble substitute of consecration by several of their equals.³¹ If the importance of this difference in the matter of call and ordination be dis-

³⁰ Because there were no longer any prophets.

³¹ By two or three. (See the first of the so-called Apostolical Canons. (A.C. i. Επισκοπος χειροτονεισθω υπο επισκοπων δυο η τριων.)).

puted, the fact of the lower measure of grace found in the ministries of the Church after the apostolic period cannot be denied; and whoever lays to heart the deep truth that Christ operates by the Holy Ghost through ordinances bestowed by Himself, cannot avoid looking on this fact as essentially connected with the departure from the original Divine order.

The bishops of the period succeeding that of the Apostles were deeply conscious of the necessity of holiness as an indispensable test of true Christianity; and they did great service in the maintenance of holy discipline among both clergy and people. But they were not in a position to rekindle the life of faith in the churches which had existed in the Apostles' times. The distinctive marks of apostolic holiness disappear more and more during the second and third centuries; and in their room appear many and various symptoms of diseased and ill-regulated spiritual life, leading far from the narrow path of true faith; and these, instead of [152] being contended against, and overcome, rather gain distinction and preponderance. The Apostles knew how, along with discipline and subjection, to maintain and preserve true Christian liberty in the Holy Ghost; and while giving all due importance to holiness of conversation, to remove all occasion for self-exaltation, or for attracting human admiration or praise, appreciating as they ought acts

of self-denial; they yet understood how to call all false spirituality and self-devised piety by their right names, and to set forth those relationships and ordinances given and appointed to us of God, and the duties of daily life, as the proper sphere of Christian virtue and obedience. In all these things the bishops often came short of the mark; they did not possess due discrimination; they were not in a position to keep to a perfect standard, in order to bring every good fruit to perfection. And the fact that nothing short of the purifying fire of persecution from without, which arose from time to time, was able to preserve the Church from slumbering and worldliness, proves clearly enough that the means that still existed within her for operating on the life and conversation of believers did not possess that power that was in operation in the days of the Apostles.

The gradual disappearance of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in the course of the second century, especially of the gift of prophecy,³² was a sign of the quenching of the Spirit of God, and the decline of faith in the churches. The bishops, deprived of the spiritual support which they had at first in the apostolic office, found it easier to [153] preserve order in the public

³² The exorcising of devils, and the supernatural healing of diseases, seem to have continued longer in the Church. (See Bingham's Antiquities, iii. 4.)

worship when the ministers alone were permitted to speak. It was easier to silence every spirit,³³ than to try the spirits, or to keep the persons prophesying under due discipline and in right order, as Paul did. See 1.Cor. XIV. Had the apostolic doctrine and order in regard to spiritual gifts, and their exercise by all the members of the Church, 1.Cor. XIV.5,31, been maintained by the bishops, perhaps the schism of the Montanists, with all its extravagancies and errors, would have been avoided. It was in such struggles as those with the Montanists, and later, with the Novatians - where the contest was not between Christians and those who were not Christians, but where the division was in the Church itself - that the difference between the rule of bishops and Apostles most clearly manifested itself. The Apostles had an authority from God which extended to all the churches; and because God had given them this authority, there was in them the power to care for all the churches. One of their chief duties in the exercise of this care was, in diffi-

³³ Spirits, in the apostolic sense of the word (comp. 1.Cor.XIV.32; 1.John IV.1); that is, cases in which a spirit speaks through a man, and when it must be determined whether it be the Holy Ghost, or a devil - whether the supernatural spiritual power which manifests itself be from Satan or from God. The damsel at Philippi (Acts XVI.16-18) who cried after Paul, spoke in supernatural power; but Paul drove out the spirit that spoke through her, because, in spite of all the cunning of the devil, he discerned the character of this spirit.

cult cases, to discern between light and darkness, flesh and spirit. As long as the Church possessed Apostles she might feel confident that only error and ungodliness would be separated from her. Not so when bishops possessed the highest authority in the Church. The bishop or angel was placed by God [154] only over an individual church: and all bishops had originally equal dignity and authority.³⁴ But through the loss of the apostolic office bishops were forced out of their right position. They had to come forward as judges in the affairs of the universal Church; and for this they did not possess the necessary Divine gift or measure of wisdom. In cases where men with the apostolic gift would have used patience, they interfered with well-meant but unenlightened zeal; and through over-anxiety, partiality, severity, and narrow-mindedness, occasioned evil and division. When new spiritual manifestations appeared among the believers, they had not the full apostolic illumination, so as to foster what was Divine, and rightly to put away what was of man or the devil. When divisions arose among themselves, the higher apostolic authority was lacking to give the right decision. Bishop often contended with bishop; and there were occasions when whole divisions of the Church, with their bishops,

³⁴ Metropolitans and patriarchs were only bishops. The formation of the patriarchates was subsequent to the Council of Nice.

were infected with heresy.³⁵ The coming together of bishops and other ecclesiastical teachers, in greater or lesser councils of the Church, in order to decide ecclesiastical questions, did not make up for the want of Divine guidance through Apostles. And the history of these councils proves only too plainly how great was the loss which the Church suffered, when the office of Apostle was extinguished, and she had to betake herself for the determination of difficult questions to men who did not possess the direct Divine mission of Apostles, nor the gifts necessary to its fulfilment.

But not only Apostles, in the proper sense of the word [155], were wanting to the Church of the second and third centuries; the prophetic office also was no longer in exercise. The want of apostolic guidance must have been the more felt in proportion as divisions increased, and no means any longer existed when questions of dispute arose to determine what had been delivered by Apostles; but the want of prophetic light also led necessarily to all kind of embarrassments and vain attempts to compensate for a loss, the injurious consequences of which were everywhere felt.

³⁵ As in the time of the Arian controversy.

Among these were especially the difficulties attendant on calling to office in the Church, which could not but arise when the choice of the people, or of the bishop, or some true or supposed sign from above,³⁶ was to take the place of the sure word spoken in the Holy Ghost through a prophet. And not only in calling to the ministry, but also in the interpretation of Scripture, and in enlightening the Church as to future events, did the loss of the prophetic office make itself to be felt.

When prophets no longer existed, the mysteries of Scripture must either remain undisclosed, or their interpretation be left to the penetration or imagination of men. To what a degree this happened during the second and third centuries those examples of prophetic and typical interpretations which have been preserved to us bear witness. That light concerning the future history of the Church, whereby the first Christians were kept in the lively hope of the coming of Christ, was necessarily extinguished when the prophetic office ceased to exist. If we do find the doctrine of the Apostles concerning the reign of Christ and His saints still [156] existing, at a later period, yet it was only a *doctrine*; which was often distorted, much con-

³⁶ Of which many instances are related. (See Bingham's Antiquities, iv. 1, sect. 3.)

tended against, and at length forgotten; while the *hope* of the return of the Lord and His appearing in glory, disappeared from the heart of the Church.

One cannot be surprised that those who only look at the present desolation of the Church, or at its corrupted condition during later centuries, are led to consider the Episcopal Church of the second or third centuries a pattern of perfection; but whoever has thoroughly acquainted himself from the New Testament with the Church under Apostles, will be kept from such a delusion. To such an one it must be evident not only that the Church, under bishops, had in every respect declined, and was declining more and more; but also that the chief source of this decay is to be sought in the destruction of the Divinely established order, in the absence of the higher and highest of all offices - those of Apostles and Prophets.

5.2 Her Connection with the State.

The reception of Christianity by the Roman Emperor, the then ruler of the world, was an event of indescribable importance as it regarded the further development of the Church's condition and relationships. If this event brought with it many outward advantages, yet it is quite evident that the greatest internal temptations and dangers accompanied it.

The Lord had promised His disciples no other or better fate in this world than that which had befallen Himself. "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as His master, and the servant as his lord. If [157] they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Matt.X.24-25. And on another occasion the Lord says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John XV.18-19. As long as the Church was in this world even as her Lord had been, her daily experience was a literal fulfilment of this prediction. And as it was said of Him, that "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame," Heb. XII. 2, so was it an easy thing for the Church, so long as His joy filled her heart, and the hope of the coming glory was strong in her, to bear any measure of suffering and shame for Christ's sake. But just in the degree in which her love became cold, and her faith weak, and the consciousness of communion with her risen Head was lost, and the joy in the Holy Ghost, and the foretaste of the coming glory diminished, the position of the Church towards the world necessarily changed. She wearied of her struggle with her spiritual enemies; and the

world, less stirred up to enmity by the feebler testimony borne by the Church, could afford to show itself more friendly to her and to Christianity. With God all things are possible. He can turn the hearts of all men, even of the great and mighty ones of this world, and lead them to the acknowledgement of the truth; but the world remains the world still, and the power and malice of the devil will not diminish, but rather increase as the end draws near. Had the Church remained faithful to her Divine Master and to the truth; had she always had but one language and one way of salvation for rich and poor [158], high and low, great and small, doubtless the history of her relation to the "kingdoms of this world" would have been other than it is.

Far be it from us to undervalue the faithfulness of the many martyrs and confessors during the period after the Apostles; and we are not to forget that the severest and bloodiest persecutions from without took place after the apostolic times; and that the greatest of them occurred just before the great revolution in the external condition of the Church was effected. But the more narrowly one considers what took place at that important period - the extravagant honouring

and glorifying of a yet unbaptized emperor,³⁷ and the overvaluing of his power and influence, where the question was not about earthly, but about heavenly things; the more carefully one follows the course of events after Constantine, the way in which the earthly power of the civil ruler was made use of for the extension of Christianity and the suppression of heathenism, and the influence which the State authorities gained in the internal concerns of the Church; the more one will be inclined to see in the much boasted victory of Christianity, when the rulers of this world, and whole nations in their train, became Christianized - only a serious indication of increasing weakness and unfaithfulness in the Church.

If at any time, then certainly when she entered into connection with the State and with the civil ruler, did the Church need the highest degree of fidelity and strength. It may often have been difficult for her to maintain her ground against the power of her enemies, when outward persecutions threatened her with utter [159] destruction; but a yet greater trial of faith lay before her, when he whose sceptre stretched over the whole then civilized world, robed in the imperial purple, took his place amidst her assembled bishops.

³⁷ The Emperor Constantine only allowed himself to be baptized shortly before his death.

Only the most entire devotedness of heart to God, and to Christ the Lord, and the most entire deadness to this world and its lusts, would have sufficed to preserve the Church and her leaders from being led astray into all manner of unfaithfulness by this coming into contact with all that the world had to show of power and glory. But that neither the bishops nor the Church as a whole, at the time of this mighty change in her outward position, did possess that devotedness or that heavenly mindedness, every one will acknowledge who has any acquaintance with the events of that period.³⁸ Thence it came that from the very first

³⁸ "Nothing is more characteristic," writes Thiersch (Vorl. über Katholizismus und Protestantismus. 13.Vorlesung. S. 206), "than the enthusiasm of the deluded Eusebius of Caesarea. He describes the feast at which the great Constantine displayed all the military pomp of his imperial throne before the Nicene fathers. 'It was as though Christ Himself, surrounded by the glory of His kingdom, were seated in the midst of them.'" Eusebius, l.c.c.15 fin

Basil, surnamed the Great, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, gives the following picture of the state of the Church in the fourth century (he died in 379) : - "But, alas! the Church of God is in a sad condition. I know not how I shall describe it. Our condition seems to me like men in a desperate sea-fight, where a furious storm and dark threatening clouds add to the general confusion. Men no longer know their friends from their enemies - friends attack one another. The usual signals are no longer seen, or at least no longer regarded; in the rage of the storm the voice of the commander is lost; while the ship is sinking men are contending who is to have the command of her, without heeding the general extremity and danger. So many desert to the enemy that one can no longer have confidence in any.

the connection of the Church with the State, which, had it been rightly gone about, might have been productive of the greatest blessing to both [160] parties, became, on the contrary, the root of endless trouble and temptation, and sowed the seeds of all the later entanglements and disturbances which hindered the free, independent operation of Church and State, each within that sphere assigned to it of God.

The Apostles acknowledged in the civil rulers a Divine ordinance for the maintenance of law and righteousness, Rom. XIII. 1,&c., and they called upon believers to be subject to rulers as God's ministers. But while they thus acknowledged the Divine right of

Thus it is in the Church of God, especially since the Arian controversy has broken out. Nothing but disorder, open and secret enmity. If the enemy does not hit yourself, he wounds him from whom you would have received help. Fearful outcry and contention: one party becomes Jewish, and confuses the Divine persons; the other becomes heathenish, and divides the Divine nature. They will neither be instructed by Scripture nor tradition. Every one, even with the most unclean conscience, will set up for a theologian. Men lead one another, and allow themselves to be led, into equal errors. They canvass for one another, help one another with regard to suitability for church offices; and drive their competitors away with force. Then, truly, amidst such confusion, the people no longer obey, and every one does and thinks and believes as he chooses. And here we are reminded of those youths in Babylon, who, when no one would abide with them, yet held fast to the truth, and did their duty even in the fiery furnace, singing to God and praising Him there."—Basil upon the Holy Ghost, to Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, chap. xx.

rulers, they also knew that there was a region of human life in which, in the sight of God, not the worldly rulers, but they, the Apostles of the Lord, had received the highest Divine commission and authority. It was not to the rulers of this world, but to His Apostles, that the Lord gave a commission which extended to all nations, and whereby [161] He appointed them as the highest spiritual authority in this world. Matt. XXVIII. 18-20. Without presumption, therefore, and without becoming guilty of disobedience in the sight of God, they might resist any command of the existing rulers which would hinder them in the fulfilment of the Divine commission given to them. Only, of course, in their resistance they could use no other than spiritual weapons. To open force they could never oppose force, but must rather yield themselves to suffering. Few words of Scripture have been oftener misused and misapplied than the well-known words of the Apostles in reply to the Jewish high-priest: and the peculiar position which God had given those men by whom they were spoken has been left quite out of sight. "Then Peter *and the other Apostles* answered," Acts V. 29. Peter, with the eleven - not Peter alone, but all the Apostles, to whom the exalted spiritual commission had been given, stood opposed to the high-priest, and Peter said, in the name of all the Apostles, "We ought to obey God rather than men." The full consciousness of their direct Divine mission,

of the exalted calling of which, as Apostles, they were partakers, raised them above all fear of man, and all anxiety as to the issue of so dangerous a collision with established authority. Their mission was not only to the people, but also to their rulers; and they responded to the command not to teach in the name of Jesus, by an announcement of the truth of God to those who would put them to silence. Acts V. 30-32. But when those rulers, using the authority given them by God, commanded them to be beaten, they did not resist, but yielded their backs to the rod, and praised God that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of their Lord. Acts V. 40, 4x. In all this [162] they followed the example of their heavenly Master; and we find in them the same spirit which was manifested in Him when placed before the high-priest and the Roman governor.

This freedom from all fear of man and dependence upon man's favour, this consciousness of their own high dignity as Apostles, this keeping within the proper border of their own commission, would have been also manifested by the Apostles had they come into the position in which the hundreds of bishops found themselves, when the civil authority, instead of commanding them to keep silence, was rather prepared to command them to speak. Had the Church, at the time when the worldly ruler at first acknowl-

edged Christianity, had at her head a small number of men, who, with the full consciousness of a commission received immediately from God, possessed the unity, and firmness, and truth, and grace of the first Apostles, perhaps the worldly authority would have been less inclined to regard them with favour; but that command of the Lord, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," would have been less in danger of being infringed. But what could a multitude of bishops do opposed to the unity, power, and glory of imperial Rome; bishops who derived their authority indeed from Apostles, but did not receive it directly from God; who were divided among themselves, often at enmity one with another; of whom only a few possessed the courage and fidelity that were necessary, on the one hand to resist the intrusion of the worldly ruler upon the Church's spiritual domain, and on the other to reject all earthly advantages and favours by which the purely spiritual character of the Church and her mission might be sullied or endangered? [163]. If we consider sufficiently how defective and how weakened the organization of the Church had become when the office no longer existed by which bishops with their individual churches were to be bound into one, and which could take its place before the worldly ruler as acting in the name of the Lord and of the whole Church, we cannot wonder that the

connection of the Church with the State necessarily ended in the decay of her heavenly dignity and of her purely spiritual influence, in her becoming more and more worldly, and being brought into bondage to worldly power.

5.3 The Popedom.

So unchangeable are the ways of God, and so irrevocable that internal law by which from the commencement He regulated the progress and welfare of His Church, that even after the ordinances which He Himself had given for maintaining unity were abandoned, the Church felt herself impelled continually to strive after some organ by which she might attain to unity. Only two ways, however, remained open, if she would not return to the ordinances of the New Testament. The one was seeking support from the powers of this world no longer at enmity with her, and maintaining sound doctrine and order by the arm of the worldly ruler at the expense of her own independence. The other, the exaltation of one of her bishops into the position originally held by the Apostles, and the attempt to bring the whole Church into subjection to him.

The first method was adopted in Eastern, the second in Western Christendom, not in consequence

of any determined, preconcerted plan, but rather from a kind of ecclesiastical instinct, which men were conscious of, so long as any consciousness remained in believers of what the Church is. Perhaps the difference in the outward [164] circumstances of the two great divisions of Christendom led, more than any other cause, to the different line adopted by each. The removal of the imperial residence to the East, and the maintenance there of that power and unity of the Roman empire which was dissolving and disappearing in the West, gave the leaders of the Eastern Church a much more favourable opportunity of availing themselves of the power and influence of the worldly potentate in order to advance ecclesiastical purposes; while on the other hand they more and more sacrificed their own independence. In the West, the Church authorities, through the decline of the State, were thrown more upon their own resources in order to accomplish their ends; and that, in the great ecclesiastical experiment of maintaining unity and strength by the exaltation of one bishop over his brethren, the Romish See was chosen, may be sufficiently explained from the peculiarity of its situation. The great consideration which the bishop of this See had from early times enjoyed, his unquestionable good service in upholding orthodox doctrine, and the spiritual influence which he gained over those new races that poured as a torrent over the ruins of old

Rome, together with the geographical situation, and the past history of that old metropolis of the world, were reasons sufficient why the Church's internal striving after unity and after united rule and guidance should lead to his exaltation rather than that of any other western bishop - even to the lofty height of the perfected Papacy.

It is no part of the task which we have assigned ourselves to give a historical account of the development of the Papacy, or to disclose further the errors and [165] abuses connected with it. We will only shortly point out how the history of the Church, from the Apostles' time to our own, gives proof that only in a return to the ordinances of the New Testament - that is, in a revival of those organs which God gave at the first - are the needful means to be found for meeting the Church's requirements, and accomplishing that purpose for which God has sent her into the world.

We have already remarked that after the Church had lost Apostles, and her authority, divided among a number of bishops, proved itself insufficient to save her from divisions and from threatening dissolution, only two ways were open for retaining some measure of unity and strength. These two methods have been tried on a large scale in the Greek and in the Roman

division of the Church; and the present condition of both these great divisions of Christendom testifies that the creation of a purely ecclesiastical authority which is not of Divine origin nor according to truth is no less ruinous to the Church than is unlawful connection with the State, or a merging of the organization of the Church in that of the civil power. There is, perhaps, more hope of repentance and amendment in the latter case, if the union with the worldly power has not had too deadening an influence on the conscience of the Church. But where, as in the Romish Church, God's original ordinances are for ever shut out, and their place taken by an ecclesiastical organ devised by man, men think they possess all the means not only for retaining the original measure of Divine doctrine and heavenly grace delivered to us, but also for calling forth at any time a further measure, and for meeting every exigency. The evil condition into which the Romish Church especially has brought herself, and [166] which is a fruit of her supposed advantages, will be completely revealed only when God, for the recovery and reuniting of His whole Church restores again the apostolic office. Such an act will be a great trial of faith for all Christendom. But doubly great for the Church of Rome would it be to be called upon to acknowledge Apostles sent of God, after having for so many centuries held it to be her peculiar calling to convince herself and the whole

world that the whole of Christendom possesses in the Bishop of Rome all that the Church in the beginning possessed in the Apostles given her by God.

God has never permitted the Romish theory of the Church to be universally acknowledged, or to attain the complete mastery. At the time when all Western Christendom was subject to the Bishop of Rome, the Greek Church, and the other Eastern Churches related to her, stood as venerable and incontestable witnesses against the falsehood and unlawfulness of the Romish claims. And as the attempt to ground the supreme authority of the Pope on a Divine commission must always fall before any inquiry into history, the Papacy bore from the beginning in itself the germ of its own destruction. Not only did it not succeed in making its claims acknowledged in the East, but, with the increase of its greatness, the bitter fruits of that which God had not planted increased also; and that to such an extent, that even in the West the gigantic structure of the Papacy of the middle ages was threatened with utter destruction.

But there would be much partiality and blindness in refusing to acknowledge that the Papacy most manifestly bore witness to truths which without the rise and continuance of this purely ecclesiastical power were in [167] danger of being entirely lost. The

most important truth of the spiritual jurisdiction and Divine rights of the Church, independent of and distinct from the civil power, found its living impersonation and mightiest support in the Papacy. Another not less important truth has been plainly declared for centuries by the Papacy for all who are willing to see and learn - namely, that if the Church is to act both externally and internally as one body; if discipline and order are to be maintained in all the Church, among the clergy as well as among individual churches; if all the churches are to be preserved in the unity of the Apostles' doctrine and practice; if blessings are to be dispensed not only to individuals, but for that whole community of which the individual is a member, then the Church requires an organ that can, under Christ, undertake the care of all the churches, and maintain the heavenly character of the Church before the worldly power. Had not the Papacy had these two truths on its side; and were not its rise in a great measure to be explained from the necessity of having a living embodiment of these truths, it would not have survived the numerous and often well-grounded attacks of its enemies.

5.4 The Reformation.

The weakness of the Reformation of the sixteenth century lies in this, that the Reformers had it not in

their power to set up any ecclesiastical organization corresponding to the real nature of the Church and of Christianity in the room of that spiritual power which they destroyed. For such a work two things failed them: insight into the Divine plan of the Church, and a Divine commission extending over the whole Church.

Whoever would restore and cleanse an old, disfigured [168], but originally beautiful and skilfully erected building, must know the plan according to which it was built at first; and, if the work is to be successful, he must possess the ability and skill of the original architect. It is not enough that he sees generally that the building has been disfigured; or that he clearly discerns the right form of this or that part, even though it be a chief part of the building in question. He must know the building as a whole, and in all its details. He must know the foundation, and all that has been erected upon the foundation. He must also know what means the Master-builder employed, in order to connect and establish as one building the many parts of which it consisted. Nor would even the knowledge of all this be sufficient for restoring the building. There must be the necessary authority conferred to undertake the work - the necessary ability, preparation, and experience for its accomplishment - if it is to succeed.

We have seen who, under God, were the master-builders at the beginning, through whom the spiritual building of the Holy Catholic Church was carried on. They were the Apostles; and they had as their helpers prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. The commission given to these men embraced, to the fullest extent, the whole sphere of activity appointed them of God. It extended to all people. And not only the extent, but the substance of the Divine commission, was declared in express words. The Apostles were to make disciples (μαθητευειν) of all people, to baptize them, and to teach them to keep the commandments of Christ. Matt. XXVIII.20. Their commission was for the twofold service of gathering, and of building and perfecting the Church. Not only should men through the Apostles be converted [169] to God, and become believers in Christ, but of these converted and believing men a people should be formed and trained who should be capable of keeping the commandments of God and of Christ in all things. For the fulfilment of this mighty task the Apostles were referred to the promise of the Comforter: the presence of Christ with them through the Holy Ghost should give them ability and strength to recognise and carry out in all its parts His plan in regard to His Church. John XVI.13-14: Acts I.1-5.

Thus the Church at first came into being. She was the work of God. But He accomplished His work through a number of men who had received from Him an especial commission for this work, and were furnished by Him with everything needful for the fulfilment of their commission.

How different from this position of the Apostles was that of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. None of them could show, or thought of showing, a Divine commission to purify the Church in her unity and entirety, and to restore her to the original Divine pattern.

The Reformers saw and felt the justification of their acts rather in the sorrowful condition into which, according to all witnesses, the Church at that time had fallen. The fearful increase of all manner of deadly errors; the gross abuses of ecclesiastical power on the part of the highest dignitaries of the Church; the deep ignorance, the fatal superstition of the masses of the people, which was encouraged by those in authority; these all seem justification sufficient for every Christian, who, having experienced in the depths of his own soul, the Divine light and life, stepped forward as witness to [170], and defender of, the living truth. Within certain limits, and in a certain degree, there was then, and is at all times, such a

right in the Church of Christ. Every Christian, whether priest or layman, has in his baptism by the Holy Ghost, a personal and immediate standing towards God and Christ bestowed upon him. We have not only become members of a body of which Christ is the Head, but also children of God, bought by the precious blood of Christ, and made free by the Spirit of adoption. As such, we have at all times free access to our Heavenly Father, and rejoice in that grace wherein we stand. As such, we have also an immediate responsibility before God to abide in the truth, and to witness for God and Christ by word and act. This calling and responsibility of the individual Christian, of which no man can rob him, was, at the time of the Reformation, practically denied and disowned, in consequence of the exaggerated and one-sided consideration given to the calling and standing of the clergy.

Thus the Reformation, which assisted and maintained this standing of the individual Christian and his direct relationship to God in Christ by faith, was thus far assuredly of the greatest importance for the whole Church. It is also easy to prove that the witness of the Reformation in this particular was indeed light in the darkness, and a testimony for God and Divine truth which nothing could withstand, nothing could put to silence; the blessed fruits of which not only

Protestant, but also Catholic Christians have consciously or unconsciously since then enjoyed. Without the Reformation of the sixteenth century, who can tell what would have remained of the dignity and freedom of the individual Christian, and his personal relationship to Christ? [171].

But all this was not sufficient to establish or prove any Divine authority to reform the Church as a whole, in her doctrine, her worship, her discipline, her Divine order and construction. For this the Reformers had no sufficient and direct commission; and therefore they had not the necessary preparation and endowment for such a comprehensive task. No wonder then that disunion appeared amongst them as soon as they went beyond the simple witness to the first principles of Christianity. They did not attain to unity in the larger extent, and in the rich fullness of apostolic teaching. They were not able to restore the worship according to the original apostolic pattern, and just as little able to restore the Divine organization of the Church as the Body of Christ in its manifoldness and Divine independence. As regards these chief points of a true Church reformation they were in uncertainty and disagreement: they had not the true power of judging and deciding. What one would preserve as Divine, the other would reject as human or even as devilish. Helplessness, confusion, wrangling,

and strife prevailed amongst them. In the uncertain and defective position in which they found themselves men were tempted and constrained to leave the ordinances of the Church to take such form as accident and the course of events might give them. They often made use of unspiritual and unholy means to accomplish their ends; and with few exceptions were obliged to suffer all authority in the Church to pass into wrong hands; so that in Protestant lands the secular powers obtained a position and superiority in affairs of the Church and of faith which proved perhaps still more dangerous and fatal to the growth of Divine life than the tyranny and unrighteousness of the Roman hierarchy [172].

It is true that the men at the head of this great religious movement of the sixteenth century did not intend beforehand to come forward as reformers of the whole Church. They were rather driven forward, through the fierce opposition of their ecclesiastical superiors and the whole condition of Christendom at the time, on a path which probably they would not have chosen for themselves, and were forced by circumstances to measures which inspired them with doubt and misgiving. But does not this very admission imply that they lacked the chief requirement for a Divine purifying and restoration of the Church - namely, a commission, a sending from above; and to-

gether with these, the enlightenment and power needful for so high and important a task?

If the Church is a work of God, and came into existence at the beginning according to a settled Divine plan, and through especial Divine gifts and instruments, it is evident that men may indeed destroy this Divine building, but cannot raise it up again. God alone can restore His Church when it has fallen into decay. He must both call and send forth the workmen who are to be His instruments in its restoration. Where such a call and mission have taken place, there also the needful measure of wisdom and grace will be found, not only to make a good beginning, but to guide the work to its accomplishment. But if the Divine call be wanting, if a man more or less presumptuously allows himself to be driven or pushed by outward circumstances into the place of a Church reformer, then the necessary Divine endowment will also be wanting. And who that knows the history of the Reformation, and is not greatly blinded by party spirit, can maintain that a full measure of [173] Divine endowment was manifested by the Reformers of the sixteenth century?

We would not come forward as accusers or judges of our brethren. But to what purpose do we live three hundred years nearer the end than those

men of whom we speak; and to what purpose is the movement in the Church of the sixteenth century, as it were, spread before our eyes in its rise, its progress, its results, but that we may learn wisdom from it, and be brought to inquire the reasons why this mighty movement - the aim of which was to cleanse the temple of God and to build again His sanctuary - has come so far short of its end? We do not doubt that the weightiest reason is that which is least known and least regarded - the want of a sufficient Divine authority for so great and truly apostolic a work on the part of those who engaged in it. This their weak point has not been hidden from their opponents. But apart from the fact that an enemy may embitter his adversary, but can seldom convince him, the evil on the other side is too great for any reproaches that come from thence, and that are seldom made in a good spirit, to obtain an entrance or hearing. But it were to be wished that the friends of the Reformers had in this matter been willing to learn from their enemies, and had been more ready to honour the truth, instead of labouring to set up all manner of untenable theories in order to cover their undeniable want of Divine authority.

To stand still is never possible for the Church, and least of all in our days. If we will not allow ourselves to be instructed by the past, a yet more terrible

future stands before us. The Church when she lost Apostles took refuge in the authority of bishops; and when that [174] was manifested to be insufficient, an attempt was made to exalt some bishops above their brethren, and at last one bishop above all the rest. But this great experiment also failed, and brought the Church into a condition which at last was unendurable. The stately edifice became broken in pieces; in its place there arose, not the Church such as it was at the beginning, but in Protestant lands a very imperfect Church organization, which time did not improve but rather made worse.

This is the history of the past; and what are the influences now existing from which the future will take its form. One influence is so powerful that everything must inevitably fall a prey to it, which is not upheld by the mighty power of God Himself and of Christ; that is, the unrelenting power of the majority - the power from beneath³⁹ - the dangerous influence which in these days the many, and the pressure from without, exercise upon the few who are appointed of God to rule men, and to make them obedient to him

³⁹ We understand by this expression every unlawful influence exercised by those who are subject upon their rulers - all that activity which seeks to obtain by human associations that which God bestows by His own ordinances - whether the men engaged in such activity be pious and well-meaning Christians or not.

and to His Gospel. The degree to which this power has already taken possession of everything in Christendom is unperceived, perhaps even by those eyes that see the clearest and the farthest.

The increase of this unholy influence is the sure token of the increasing unbelief in the heads, not less than in the body of the people. Their eye is not fixed upon the invisible, but upon the visible. They are not strong in God and in faith, and therefore they are not in a condition to resist the idols of the day [175].

We apply ourselves here only to the consideration of the Church, and will leave everything else as much as possible out of view. We have innumerable examples of the influence of the dangerous principles of the day upon Church matters. We need scarcely mention the destructive plans of those who, because they refuse obedience to the Gospel, see in Christianity and in the Church a power that disquiets their consciences and condemns their life; and who zealously seize every opportunity when they can take advantage of the unbelief and enmity towards the Church existing in the masses, in order to destroy its ancient and established ordinances. This kind of danger to which the Church is exposed is too open, and is even by recent examples too evidently presented before the eyes of Christian men, to make it necessary, in a treatise

like the present, to say much about it. There are many other manifestations of the influence of the power from beneath upon the concerns of the Church which are much more subtle, and therefore more dangerous. They conceal themselves behind all possible proposals and attempts to improve the condition of the Church, and to help her in her decay, and in her decreasing influence on the mass of the people; and thereby even Christians are blinded and led to acquiesce in principles, whereby gradually faith in the power and influence of man takes the place of faith in the living God and in His Christ. Examples of this sort are to be found in the continual attempts to help the Church by numerous meetings on a great scale of all manner of more or less pious and well-disposed people, who come together without any ecclesiastical authority, merely of their own will and choice. In such meetings the want of any Divine authority must be made up for [176] through the number and consequence of those who come together. And not only the weight of the meeting, but its organization, its acts, and resolutions, have their existence through the power of the majority. And if the resolutions adopted are ever to become more than resolutions, it can only be from the influence used from beneath on those above - through urging and driving, if not indeed through intimidating, the existing ecclesiastical authorities. The men who take part in these assemblies

may often have the best possible intentions, and they might shrink from the very idea of their meetings having any spiritual relationship with the political democratic movements of the time. But still it remains true that, in the one as in the other, homage is paid to the all-prevailing principles of the day; that help for our present necessities is sought not from above, through ordinances given, and appointed of God, but from beneath - through human confederacies and associations, through resolutions of the multitude, through agitation and excitement.

The Church should be the teacher of the nations. But when the people see that the members of the Church, without any regard to existing Church authority, often in positive opposition to it - at any rate, without its guidance or any commission received from it - assemble to debate all manner of ecclesiastical questions, to adopt resolutions and propose reforms; - must not those who desire to play the same part in civil matters feel themselves more than justified?

What we have said of the religious meetings of our time holds true also of the various associations for practical piety. Their aim, like that of the meetings, is [177] to provide help for present spiritual necessities. But instead of seeing that this help must come either from the ordinances now existing in the

Church, or such as God Himself shall give through men called and sent by Him, men set up countless societies - the mere product of thy human will - having their basis in the number of those consenting to be incorporated, whose leaders are chosen by the multitude, and whose strength, alas! often consists in the rank and consequence of their members, and the amount of the sums which they collect. And these are now to undertake and accomplish that work, for the accomplishment of which God has sent His Church into the world!

Far be it from us to wish to judge the many pious and well-meaning people who take part in these things, and expect from them the regeneration of Christendom. The greater part know not what they do. The darkness has become so thick, and the seduction from the right way so universal, that even those whose eyes are open can scarcely see. Men take appearances for realities, and an empty name for the thing which it represents. If the thing be only religious, and have a good outside, and the word Church⁴⁰ can in any way be appended to it, that is

⁴⁰ This word, which is now used to weariness in religious circles, if it has any meaning at all as applied by them, should mean that the operations to which they apply it rest on a Divine authority, and are carried on through those appointed by God to offices in His Church, as opposed to that

enough; and there is no hesitation in taking part in it. The dangerous principles of the present day are either not recognised, when disguised in a religious garb, or they are considered innocent in religious or [178] Church matters. Men enter into combinations, they agitate, they choose their own leaders, follow them, carry out their plans; and neither see nor feel how far they have departed from the way of God. And the authorities in the Church who behold all this, what do they do? Sometimes they have the right feeling, that this great activity of meetings and societies, from which so much is expected, is undermining the ordinances of the Church, though professing only to be a help for the Church's insufficiency. But often even the ecclesiastical authorities themselves see no better way of bringing about an improved condition of things; or they find it convenient to throw the burden off from themselves upon such well-meant Christian undertakings, and pacify their consciences with the hope that they will be attended with success. Besides that, having so much determined infidelity to struggle with, they are too much inclined to approve of anything which in any form acknowledges Christian truth.

5.5 Present Times and Future Prospects.

activity which merely proceeds from the will and choice of pious men.

All are agreed that our present condition is to the last degree unsatisfactory. Everywhere is disquiet - everywhere is discontent. The old garment no longer holds together; and the new cloth put in only makes the rents worse. The fermentation in men's minds is universal, and equally universal is the endeavour to stay the evils of the times. Often the sincerest desire is not wanting, but no one knows where to begin or what to do: and if anything new be attempted the consequence is so doubtful that men wish what they had done undone. How can it be otherwise if faith in the living God has disappeared from Christendom? - if help be sought from men rather than from God? - if the power, and skill, and [179] consequence, and influence of men take the place of the grace of God in His ordinances? Where are the men in these days who seek or expect help in political matters from the wisdom of God in anointed sovereigns, or in spiritual matters from the grace of God in the ordinances of His Church? God would be sought for where He has promised to be found; not that we are to idolize ordinances, but to seek God and His blessing in them. And because we do not do this, but look to men and put them in God's place, therefore He gives us according to what is in our hearts; and the idolatry of man, which threatens to become universal, and has taken such deep root in this generation, will bring about a new state of things both politically and ecclesiastically

in Christendom - a state of things in which not the God-Man, but the man set in the place of God, shall find the impress and expression of his will and his being.

This new order of things, towards which Christendom is hastening with gigantic strides, is no less than that organized apostasy concerning which the Divine Revelation testifies, and with which the history of Christendom shall close. If we would have no part in it, we must keep free of those principles which shall have in it their last embodiment. We must not adopt them nor yield to them in any form, not even for pious or Christian ends. We must reject all schemes of helping ourselves, however innocent they may appear, and have our hope in God alone. If we really do this; if we are really longing for Divine help in our present need; if we have learned the great lesson of being still and waiting upon God; if we have become wise through experience, avoiding the folly of past generations, and armed against the greater temptation of adopting the unbelieving [180] counsels of the present generation; then we are walking in that way in which God will meet us with that salvation which He has in store for His children in the last times. That salvation is nothing less than the fulfilment at length of His purpose in His Church at the coming again of His Son.

The Church of Christ has neither her origin nor her ultimate purpose in this world. Through the sin and unfaithfulness of men the devil has prevailed to contaminate her in many ways during her abode in this evil world, and to entangle her with the world. Nevertheless, she remains a Divine constitution; and as her beginning and entrance into the world testified to her Divine origin, John XVII.18, so shall her completion and her going out of this world redeem again her Divine character and establish it for ever.

The resurrection of the sleeping saints, the change of the living, and the union of both with their Lord, who cometh from heaven, is that for which both the departed and the living wait. And the change and translation of the living is that salvation for which we are called to look. That was what the Apostles had before their eyes at the beginning; 1.Thess. IV.15-17; 1.Cor. XV. 51-52; and when the hour approaches in which it shall be attained, God will revive again the ordinances given at the first, and will, by the mighty operation of His grace, prepare those who hope in Him and wait for His aid, for that glorious issue of the Church's history.

It was but a small company that composed the Church at the beginning, and it may be a yet smaller one that [181] shall take part in its completion.

“When the Son of Man cometh,” it is said, “shall He find faith on the earth?” Luke XVIII.8. Yet it is for God to count the number, not for us; we know that all who are baptized are members of the one body, and called to have their share in the completion and future glory of that body. May God give us grace to attain to this our high calling.

6. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM IN VISIBLE GLORY.

6.1 Introductory Remarks.

THE first Christians, with the Apostles at their head lived in the continual expectation of the return of Christ again to this earth, and the setting up of His kingdom in visible glory. This hope was still maintained in the Church after the departure of the Apostles. It was the common property of all Christians, during the centuries of the martyrs, and until the time of Constantine. There is scarcely any part of the Church during that period which has not left testimonies as to the existence of that hope. We might quote many teachers of the primitive Church; but we will content ourselves with one as a witness on this point - Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, who, in the latter half of the second century, in the fifth book of his treatise against the Gnostics, declares that he had received the doctrine of the reign of Christ for a thousand years from Presbyters who had seen the Apostle John. He fully states it, and proves it from Scripture. According to him, and to many of the fathers, the seven days of the creation were typical of the duration of the present system of the world God created the natural world in six days, and rested on the seventh: so would He complete the new and spiritual creation

in Christ within six thousand [183] years,⁴¹ and then would the reign of peace and blessed rest for a thousand years commence. No doubt fleshly ideas soon mixed themselves with the expectation of the future kingdom of Christ; and there was probably little true prophetic light in the Church as to the character of this kingdom, after the departure of Apostles. But this much is certain, that the hope of the saints made perfect, partaking in the future reign of Christ on earth, was the hope of the Apostles and early disciples. A devilish distortion of this hope appeared at various times in the Church, in the fanatical expectation that the saints should rule on earth in mortal bodies before the coming of Christ and the first resurrection. But while we reject such fleshly and destructive ideas, we must take heed that we be not taken in the snare of a false spirituality; or allow ourselves to be misled by those who, in the room of the original hope of Christian men - the hope of the coming again of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom - have imagined to themselves a kingdom of glory already in existence: a kingdom consisting of departed souls, already made perfect, crowned, and triumphing with Christ in the visible state!

⁴¹ "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (See Psalm XC. 4; and 2. Pe-

6.2 The Hope of the Jews and of the Apostles concerning the Messiah.

The Apostle Peter says, that the Spirit of Christ in the prophets of the Old Testament testified not only of the *sufferings* of Christ, but of the *glory* that should follow. 1.Peter I.11. This double stream of prophecy concerning the Messiah goes through the whole Scriptures. And in the Old Testament, the prophecies concerning the [184] appearing of our Lord in His humiliation are so interwoven with those concerning His future appearing in glory, Compare Isaiah IX., XI., XL., LXI., and LXII.; Joel II. ; Matt. III. and IV., &c., that we must beware of a one-sided interpretation of them.⁴²

The error of the Jews in our Lord's time did not consist in their expecting the kingdom of the Messiah in visible glory, but in their ignorance of the way in which, according to the counsel of God, this kingdom was to be brought about. They did not perceive that

ter III. 8.)

⁴² Seeing the prophecies concerning our Lord's humiliation and sufferings were literally fulfilled, what right have we to take it for granted that the prophecies testifying of His glory, and the glory of His kingdom, are only to have a spiritual fulfilment - are only to be understood of the spread of the Gospel, and of the invisible reign of Christ in the hearts of believers?

the promised Messiah must first save them from their sins, Matt. I.21, before God could confer upon Him the throne of His father David. Luke I. 32, 33. But that He was to be King over the house of Jacob for ever, and that of His kingdom there was to be no end, is not only clearly and plainly testified by the prophets, Isa. IX.7; Jer. XXXIII. 14-26; but the angel also, who made known to the Virgin Mary the grace bestowed upon her, repeats the promise of the throne and kingdom of the coming Messiah. We do not find that our Lord sought to contend against the expectations of a kingdom of glory on earth in His disciples, or in the mass of His hearers. He took occasion to remind the Pharisees, Luke XVII. 20-21 - who considered themselves peculiarly spiritual, while they were in fact the reverse - that whoever would see the coming of this kingdom, must have an eye capable of discerning its internal and invisible glory. But we may gather how little He sought to take from His disciples their hopes concerning the Messiah from the question of the Apostles immediately before [185] His ascension. Their question was occasioned by the command to remain at Jerusalem, and wait for the promise of the Father; "Lord," said they, "wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts I.6. The Lord does not reprove them for any perverted notions of the expected kingdom, but only blames their curiosity in regard to times and seasons which God has

kept in His own power. If the Apostles had been in an entire error, and the promised kingdom was only to be understood as an operation of God upon the hearts of men whereby they were to be prepared for the invisible state of departed souls, our Lord's answer would have been quite of another kind; nor would He have left them so long in uncertainty upon a matter of such importance. But the fact was otherwise. The Apostles only believed the clear testimony of Scripture when they expected a kingdom of visible glory on earth; and this testimony our Lord confirmed, instead of setting aside.

As to the manner in which this kingdom was to be brought about, Matt. XIX.28, they might, when they put the question which we have quoted, have had little light or understanding, and our Lord did not see fit to give them more at that time; but in the chief point, in their expectation that through Christ the promises contained in the prophets of the future glory of the people of God, Isa.XI.; LXVI. 22-24; and the blessed and regenerated condition of the whole earth should be fulfilled, they were in no error. Consequently the Holy Ghost strengthens them in this expectation, as Peter's discourses in the second and third chapters of Acts testify. He says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both

Lord and Christ.” His second discourse explains to us how [186] these words are to be understood. His train of thought is as follows: Ye have killed the Prince of Life who was in the midst of you ; ye and your rulers have done it in ignorance, and God hath thus fulfilled what He had by the prophets declared beforehand of the sufferings of Christ. He has, however, not cast you off; your hopes of the Messiah and his kingdom are not lost. God has raised up and glorified His Son, of which we are witnesses; and in His name we call upon you to repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and the times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord. Then He shall send Jesus Christ again, who before was preached unto you. For the heaven shall only receive Him until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. See Acts III. 13-21.

As Peter quotes the testimony of the prophets, it is clear that, in speaking of the times of restitution, he refers to the glory of the Messiah’s kingdom. The hope - therefore, which he holds forth to penitent and believing Jews is not beyond the grave - is not to depart this life, and then to be with their Messiah in heaven. But it is the coming again of Christ, and the kingdom to be established on His return to this earth.

6.3 Our Lord’s Promise of His Return.

Our Lord had spoken plainly enough to His disciples of His return, not only in His parables, and His prophetic discourses, but in clear and simple words. When He was about to leave them, He said that if He went to prepare a place for them,⁴³ He would come again, and [187] receive them to Himself, that where He was, there they might be also. John XIV.3. This consolation He gave them while He was yet with them; and scarcely was He taken from their sight, as He ascended into heaven, when two men stood by them in white apparel, who said to them, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” Acts I.10-11. As, when any one leaves those whom he loves, he gladly embraces an opportunity of sending them a last greeting; thus does our gracious Lord; and He knows of nothing more consolatory or more glorious whereof He can send tidings to His mourning disciples whom He has left on earth than His coming again. And He takes care that His message shall not be misunderstood; they are told

⁴³ The *place* is the future glory of the resurrection, which He prepares for His Church, through His death on the cross, and through that which, until He comes again, He is doing in the presence of His Father. (Compare 2.Cor. V.1, &c.).

that, *in like manner* as they have seen Him go into heaven, so are they to expect Him to come again.

No doubt these words made the deepest impression upon the Apostles and their first disciples; and they would not fail to find in this consoling promise of the return of their Lord the confirmation of their most blessed hopes. Now they understood when the expectation of the wise virgins was to have its accomplishment, Matt. XXV. 1-13; when their faithful hearts were to be filled with the joy of the marriage. Now they knew when the faithful servants, to whom the nobleman on departing to a far country had given each his pound, were to obtain their reward. Luke XIX. 11-27.⁴⁴ They were not to wait for [188] death, as though their desires were then to be satisfied; not as departed spirits were they to keep the marriage feast with him who, as the Risen One, had ascended to heaven. The souls of the faithful servants were not to follow their Lord into that far land whither He had gone, in order there to receive from Him authority over many cities. But when He had received the king-

⁴⁴ According to St. Luke, that which gave occasion to this parable was the expectation of the disciples, "because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Their expectation of a kingdom of God in visible glory on earth was to be fulfilled, but not immediately - not until their Lord's return.

dom, then He would return; and they would see Him again there, where they had parted from Him.

6.4 The Hope of the Second Advent in the Churches founded by St. Paul.

This living hope of the speedy return of their ascended Lord, and the expectation that the Church now struggling on earth would then attain her perfection and glory, we find among all the Apostles, and in all churches at the beginning.

We have seen how Peter, with the eleven, Acts II.14, when he first preached to the Jews, directed their attention to the sending again of Jesus Christ. And the epistles of St. Paul, to whom "the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed," Gal. II.7, testify that he and the churches under his care were not less filled with the hope of the Lord's return, than the Apostles to the Jews.

Concerning the Corinthians, he testifies that they came "behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." 1.Cor. I.7. He was confident that He who had begun a good work among the Philippians, would "perform it until the *day of Jesus Christ*." Phil. I.6. The Thessalonians were "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for

His Son from heaven.” 1.Thess. I.9-10. The Apostle admonishes Timothy to “keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1.Tim. VI.14. To Titus he writes, “For the grace of God that bringeth [189] salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Titus II.11-13.

If we gather together all those rays of light which we find scattered through the apostolic epistles, we shall obtain a very complete idea of what the Apostles taught the churches concerning the second advent.

Paul declares to the Thessalonians, as the “word of the Lord,” what the fate of them that should be alive at the coming of the Lord would be. 1.Thess. IV.15-18. They should not prevent them which were asleep, for when the Lord shall descend from heaven, then shall the dead in Christ arise; and they that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall ever be with the Lord.

6.5 The Translation or Gathering of the Saints to the Lord at His Coming.

As the Apostle does not here speak of all the men who shall be alive on the earth at the coming of the Lord, so neither does he speak of all the dead. The living he describes in these words, “we which are alive”; that is, the Apostles and the churches; and when he would particularize who among the dead shall be gathered with the living to meet the Lord, he calls them “the dead in Christ.” As neither then nor now it could be said of all the living that they belong to the Church of Christ, as little can it be said of all the dead that they are “the dead in Christ.” These can be only such members of Christ’s body as have fallen asleep.

From this passage of Scripture we learn that the Apostle expected, at the coming of the Lord, the perfecting of the Church (in the more limited sense of this word), and her entrance into glory. The Church, as the [190] mystical body of the Lord, consisting of an election of Jew and Gentile, was to be perfected by the resurrection of her sleeping members and the change of the living, and thus together be caught up to meet the Lord.

Concerning this translation of the saints, the Lord spoke in the following words, "Then" (at the coming of the Son of Man) "shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Matt. XXIV. 40,41.

The Apostle, in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, returns to the subject of the gathering of the saints to the Lord, and the warning which he gives them throws further light upon the events of the last times: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand (ενεστηκεν, is present, come, or at hand). Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (η αποστασια) first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that when I was yet with you I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity (το μυστηριον της ανομιας) doth already work: only he who now letteth

will let until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (ο ανομιος) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His [191] mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." 2.Thess. II.

The *coming* of Christ and the *day* of Christ do not signify, strictly speaking, the same thing. As in the natural day the sun must be present first before the night can cease and the day appear; so must the Lord first personally and visibly descend from heaven before His day can begin. The Lord is spiritually and to the eye of faith present in His Church, but the world does not see Him; the world sees only "the lesser light," the moon, the Church; and the stars, God's ministers: but when the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness, comes again, then shall every eye see His glory, Rev. I.7; then shall the great and terrible day of the Lord begin, when He shall enter upon His office as King and Judge.

The Apostle teaches us, in the epistle to the Thessalonians, that this day of the Lord, this new order of things, when the Lord in visible glory exercises His kingly office on earth, shall not come until the apostasy and Antichrist be revealed; and, in the 8th verse of chap. II., he says that Antichrist shall be destroyed, not by the coming of Christ, but by the ap-

pearing of His coming (επιφανεia της παρουσιας); that is, through the revelation of that which had already taken place. The coming of Christ is, in the first place, the fulfilment of His promise to His disciples, that He would come to them again and take them to Himself; that they should see Him come again, even as they had seen Him go into heaven. From the midst of them had He ascended; to them should He come again. They should meet Him “in the air.” The sleeping members of His mystical body should awake, and the living be changed, 1.Cor. XV.52; Phil. III.20-21; [192] and after the union of all the saints in glorified bodies with their Divine Head He shall appear to the world, to execute judgement on the apostasy, and to set up His kingdom on earth.

If the saints had not already been gathered to their Lord, how could they come with Him when He is revealed in His glory? How could such passages as the following be understood? - “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.” 1.Thess. III. 12, 13.

Those that are disobedient to the Gospel “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified *in His saints*, and to be admired in all them that believe.” 2.Thess.I.9-10.

“Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, Behold, the Lord cometh *with ten thousand of His saints*.” Jude 14.

The saints who shall come *with* the Lord shall not be mere unclothed spirits, any more than He Himself is a mere Spirit. They are His members, His brethren, perfected in the same manner in which He is perfected. The company of those who meet Him in the air consists of those who shall be raised and those who shall be changed, His bride, His body; those who having struggled and suffered with Him shall then be crowned with Him, and as kings and priests shall execute judgement with Him on the earth. “Do ye not know,” says St. Paul, “that the saints shall judge the world?” 1.Cor. VI. 2. We read, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open [193] the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings

and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” Rev. V. 9-10.

While in the apostolic epistles we find individual features of the solemn events of the last times scattered here and there, we find them all gathered together in Rev. XIX., where they are summed up in four heads: - (a) The Judgment upon Babylon; (b) The Marriage of the Lamb; (c) The appearance of the Lord with His Saints; and (d), The Destruction of the Beast and the False Prophet.

Babylon and the Beast,⁴⁵ in connection with the false prophet, are two different stages in the decay and apostasy of Christendom.

6.6 The Present State of Christendom in the Light of the Prophetic Word.

Babylon, in prophetic language, is called both a woman and a city. Rev. XVII.18. Both expressions in

⁴⁵ We speak of the final and complete fulfilment of these prophetic images, which now awaits us and all Christendom; but do not wish, in what we say, to reject or contradict the application that has been made of them to past events. Whoever knows the character of the prophetic parts of Scripture, knows that the same word, or the same image, may have divers applications; but of these the last contains always the proper and complete fulfilment. The prophetic word is often like the centre of concentric circles: it is fulfilled in various circumferences.

Scripture designate a people or peoples with whom God has made a covenant. As a man chooses for himself a wife to be the object of his love and special care, and from whom he expects perfect fidelity, so God acts with His people. And as a city is a spot chosen for the defence and peaceable lives of the inhabitants, so is the covenant which God makes with His people - with the Divine [194] ordinances and appointments belonging to it - the sure protection and defence within which spiritual life can flourish. But Babylon is an unfaithful wife, Rev. XVII.1, and is a type of the people of the new covenant, the baptized, not in their original purity and faithfulness, but in their condition of spiritual decay. The baptized were called to be the bride of Christ - and of them, and not only of His ancient people, God speaks by His prophet, when He says, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals,” Jer. II.2; but to them also are spoken those words of reproof through the same prophet: “Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers.” Jer.III.1. The one passage described the condition of the children of God, when God at the beginning freed them from the bondage of sin and Satan, and made His covenant with them. The other describes the covenanted people in the deeply fallen condition of their later history.

Babylon sits upon many waters. Rev. XVII.1. *Waters*, in prophetic language, signify peoples. Rev. XVII.15. Babylon, therefore, includes all the nations of the baptized. Their unfaithfulness towards their heavenly King, their denial of their heavenly calling, the uncleanness of Christendom, and the guilt of all those abominations committed on the earth, which during centuries the baptized nations have heaped upon themselves; as also their enmity against those faithful witnesses whom God has raised up from time to time in the midst of them; these are all detailed in verses 2, 4, 5, and 6, of Rev. XVII.; while the third verse describes the stage of the apostasy represented under the image of Babylon.

The woman Babylon sits upon the beast; that is, the Christian institutions of the baptized still rule over the already existing elements of the last Anti-christ: for [195], while Babylon represents the condition of Christendom, which has already become matter of history, with its institutions in Church and State, more or less having had their rise in the spirit of Christianity, the beast is the image of the determined form of anti-Christendom - whose elements, existing in Christendom, are, until the time of Babylon's judgement, by her restrained and held down. But when that hour comes when she shall be visited and judged of God, on account of the sins of many

generations of the baptized, then shall what is contained in verse 16 have its fulfilment: Babylon shall be made desolate and naked, and her power broken and destroyed by the ten horns of the beast; that is, the existing and long-established order of things in Christendom shall be judged through the victory of the Anti-Christian powers, which shall obtain the dominion.

This judgement upon Babylon, or rather the rejoicing in heaven over this righteous judgement of God, is that with which the magnificent prophetic description of chap. XIX. of the Revelation opens. As we have already seen, the judgement upon Babylon, and that upon the beast and the false prophet, are not one and the self-same act of God. They are of quite different characters, and do not take place at the same time. The judgement of Babylon takes place through the victory of the beast; but the beast, himself and the false prophet are, at the appearance of the Lord with His saints, cast into the lake of fire. The judgement of Babylon is the righteous judgement of God upon the old Christian institutions in Church and State. It is the victory of unbelief and apostasy; the visiting with judgement those who have stood in the place of God, but have not witnessed for Him, nor sought His honour nor the salvation of His [196] children. This judgement is in many ways foreshadowed

and predicted in the Holy Scriptures. Its fullest description in prophetic language we find in Rev. XVIII.

God has given us to see the commencement, or rather the terrible prelude, of that desolation which awaits Christendom, in the first French revolution. There, the faithless woman was made desolate and naked by the beast. God showed in one nation what awaits all. All the civil and ecclesiastical institutions of that kingdom, whose king bore the title of "Most Christian," were destroyed by the hatred of those who denied God. Of this destruction, there could not be a more striking image than that of a defenceless woman given up to the rage of a wild beast of prey. The fate of France was a warning for all Christendom. But Christendom has not taken the warning to heart. The doctrines and principles of Antichrist - in former times the melancholy monopoly of so-called men of learning - have, during the last half century, spread like leaven through the masses of the people. These principles in their most popular form having become the property of the common man, unacquainted with history, the failure of former attempts at revolution will not hold his hand back from the work of destruction, when the hour strikes which God has appointed for the judgement of Babylon. In one hour shall the riches of that great city come to nought. Rev. XVIII. 10,17. The prophetic word proclaims a sudden overthrow of the pre-

sent order of things. In spite of all the warnings which God has given - and they have been often enough repeated in our days - a universal terror shall seize men when the great city is about to fall. But, as in Rev. XVIII., the destruction of Babylon calls forth holy joy in heaven, and among God's faithful witnesses, verse 20, while [197] weeping and wailing are heard from those who sought and found their portion there; so in the commencement of chap. XIX. hallelujahs and songs of praise burst forth, because "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and "the marriage of the Lamb is come."

The marriage of the Lamb is the final union of all the saints, the sleeping and waking, with Christ - the completion of God's purpose with His Church. It is that event of which we have already largely spoken, in which the hope of the Apostles and Christians at the beginning shall be fulfilled, and that word of the Lord accomplished, which the Apostle Paul declared to the Thessalonians concerning the resurrection of them that sleep in Jesus - the change of the living, and the translation of both to meet the Lord. Here, in Rev. XIX.7, it is said: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

2.Cor. XI.2. And in the epistle to the Ephesians he writes: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. V. 25-27. This aim of the devoted love of Christ, and of the holy zeal of His faithful Apostles shall be reached when these words are heard: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come." Rev. XIX.7. The preparation of that bride, for whom the Heavenly [198] Bridegroom waits, is her sanctification. "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Rev. XIX.8.

When, therefore, the time comes at which God shall send His Son again from heaven, and His saints shall be gathered unto Him, 2.Thess. II., 1.Thess. IV. 17; then shall the necessary measure of preparation have been attained both among the living and among them that sleep; and, upon the internal perfecting, that which is external shall follow through resurrection and translation.

After the marriage of the Lamb, the Apostle sees heaven opened, Rev. XIX.11; and the Lord appears at the head of His glorified saints, to execute judgement upon the beast and the false prophet.

That which we have already shown from other passages of Holy Scripture, namely, that the Lord, when He shall be revealed in His glory, shall be surrounded by His saints, is clearly shown in this vision of the Apostle. The Lord does not appear alone, but "the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." Rev. XIX.14. "In the air," as the Apostle writes, 1.Thess. IV.17, not on this earth, the union takes place of the glorified Head with His perfected members; *there* is the marriage solemnized of the Heavenly Bridegroom, with His fully adorned bride; and thereafter heaven opens, and He that is "Faithful and True" appears upon the white horse.

The horse, without any distinctive mark, is an image of the power of the flesh; and therefore the prophet pronounces a woe upon those who trust in horses instead of in the Holy One of Israel. Isa. XXXI.1. But the Son of [199] God has become Man, and the white horse is human nature, as through Christ it has been cleansed, sanctified, glorified, and made an instrument of the righteousness of God, and

of the revelation of His glory. The true and faithful One on the white horse is therefore the Lord in His glorified humanity - the Son of Man as conqueror; and the army on white horses, clothed in clean and white linen (in the righteousness of saints), is the glorified company of His saints, who appear with Him in judgement upon Antichrist. When the Lord is thus revealed, therefore, Babylon must already have been judged; the long established order of things in Christendom must have given place to a new order of things established by Antichrist.

The short but complete victory of Antichrist is God's judgement upon impenitent Christendom. The wicked are His rod; and while they accomplish their wicked thoughts, and reveal what was hidden in their hearts, they are at the same time the means and instruments in God's hand, in order to punish those who have exhausted His patience and long-suffering, and whom He will visit with judgement. Assyria (the type of the infidel) is the rod of His anger in the day of Israel's visitation.

But after God has accomplished all His work on the hill of Zion and in Jerusalem, He will judge the proud king who despises the living God, and exalts himself above all that is called God; and, as in the case of Sennacherib's army, He will do this not by

means of mortal men, but by the revelation of the power of the Lord. Comp. Isa. X.; 2.Kings XIX.; 2.Chron. XXXII., and 2.Thess. II. "Whom," namely, the personal Antichrist," the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." [200].

While the judgement upon Babylon shall take place through the power of the beast, that is, the victory of the infidel; the beast himself along with the false prophet - that is, the apostasy in its organized form, the kingdom of Antichrist - shall be destroyed by the coming of the Lord in person.

6.7 The Apostasy and the Coming Judgement.

We have remarked, at the commencement of our interpretation of this prophetic image, that Babylon and the beast indicate two different stages of the unfaithfulness and sin of the baptized. Babylon is a faithless woman, but not a beast. She has allowed herself to be seduced, has denied her heavenly character, has polluted herself by yielding to earthly-mindedness, and by grasping at all which this world can confer upon her of power and glory; but she is a woman still. She is the prophetic type of Christendom

in its unfaithfulness; laden, it is true, with the sins of many generations, but not yet rejected of God.

The transition from Babylon to the beast, that is, the change from the present order of things to that of the predicted kingdom of Antichrist, is already fearfully prepared throughout all Christendom. For one can almost say, that while the forms of the old Christian constitutions yet predominate, the principles of the future kingdom of Antichrist have already taken possession of the baptized. The Divine judgement still tarries. Still God's word concerning Babylon is, "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed." Jer. LI.9. Her last hour is one of impenitence. In her heart she says, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." Rev. XVIII.7. She does not allow herself to be chastened and humbled by God. As a body (for it is only as such that we here speak of her) she still believes in the stability of [201] the present order of things. She will not, in her heads and members, heartily bow herself before God, will not hear His threatenings; either gives no heed to them, or regards them only as a passing evil, and so hurries on to her doom. When Babylon falls, it is said of her, "She is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Rev. XVIII.2. We perhaps little know to what a degree those words are already fulfilled;

though the powers of darkness that compass Christendom about, and have already taken up their dwelling in it, make themselves but too manifest. They have shown themselves under every guise, in every form - in the scientific lecturer, in the popular orator, in the pulpit, in assemblies for pleasure, both of high and low, of rich and poor; at one time using men's discontent and their wicked lusts to stir them up to rebellion; at another amusing the empty and worn out hunters after excitement with apparently innocent juggling tricks.⁴⁶ And they can play their wicked game, and carry on their attacks the more boldly and the more securely, because Christians generally have long considered the existence of an invisible world of spirits to be among the fables of a by-gone childish and credulous generation. However, even when Babylon has become the hold of foul spirits, she is still not the beast. But if baptized Christendom has once reached that stage in her downward career, in which as a body she becomes the dwelling place of those spirits at enmity with God, we may believe that the hour of her judgement is at the door, when the perfected apostasy shall be manifested.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ For example, table-turning.

⁴⁷ Man is the image and meant to be the likeness of God. This shows his capability and capacity. When men fail to recognise and rise up to this calling, the capability and ca-

The perfected apostasy is, in prophetic language, spoken of under the image of two beasts of different origin, or of the beast and the false prophet. Rev. XIII. XIX. and XX. In its very essence it is the perfected form of the denial of God. It does not merely deny God and His Christ; but sets man in their room. St. Paul, speaking of the personal head of this apostasy, says, "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." 2 Thess. II.4.

Apostasy among men must be in proportion to the measure of Divine grace bestowed upon them. And because Christendom has received the last and greatest measure, unfaithfulness must *there* attain to its last and most fearful form of blasphemy. The heathen who fails to recognise or acknowledge the Creator as revealed in creation, becomes an idolater of created things. Rom. I.19-21. The Jew who denies the living God as revealed in the law, becomes an idolater of the dead letter of the Divine law. But the Christian who denies God manifest in the flesh ends with an idolatry of flesh, that is, of sinful fallen human nature.

capacity still remain; but the result is, they become the image and likeness of devils. By giving heed to seducing spirits men are at last filled with them.

This form of idolatry manifests itself already in Christendom in a thousand ways.

Those millions of the baptized who live without any practical acknowledgement of a God external to and above them; who never bow the knee to God, nor call upon Him in their families, nor feel any necessity for worshipping Him or humbling themselves before Him; do not they belong, in a greater or less degree, to those who make gods of themselves or of human nature? Do they not serve themselves, their own lusts, and all manner of mere human aims and purposes, with those powers of [203] soul and body with which they should serve God and Christ? Are they conscious of anything higher or greater than themselves, or humanity as existing around them, with all its busy doings and idle ways? Many among them may, unconsciously to themselves, have reached the last stage of apostasy of which we have spoken; but in countless cases it needs but an impulse from without, the bold example of more presumptuous spirits, the war-cry of Anti-Christian leaders, to lead the great masses of the double-minded and lukewarm to the last decisive step.

Further, what does the present idolatry of every distinguished human talent indicate? - the hero-worship of men now existing, or the idolatry of the

great men of past days? Is it not a token, or rather a sure proof, of the readiness of Christendom to receive the great man of the last time? who, furnished with all human and Satanic power, with skill and cunning, and a semblance of all that is good and beautiful, shall win the godless hearts of the baptized; and, under the pretext of being the creature of their own almighty will, and the expression of their own perfection, shall lead them into the most fearful slavery!

And can we wonder that Antichrist shall succeed in raising himself to universal dominion, in spite of being at heart the very son of perdition? Do people in these days ask much about the moral or religious worth of any action, provided it only succeed, and public opinion be in favour of it? Have not the powers of Christendom long ago declared the "*fait accompli*" to be their highest god and last tribunal, before which all must bow? And while a deed in these days needs only to be accomplished in order to be acknowledged and accepted, what are the [204] doctrines and theories which are held to be the highest truth and most perfect wisdom? For the learned and educated, are there not the modern philosophical systems which make a deity of the human mind, and assert that in the human mind the deity arrives at self-consciousness? - while for the unlearned and uneducated, is there not the same lie of Satan in a popular

form - the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, of human nature, and the will of the people as being the source of all power and all authority - and this to be the basis of all social and political institutions among men?

As we have already remarked, the old forms of a rapidly sinking, or already extinguished life from God and Christ still exist, and we cannot sufficiently thank God for every hour that they are preserved to us; to Him alone and to His Almighty hand must we give the glory: but it would be foolish, and in the highest degree dangerous, if we sought to deceive ourselves as to the strength, or rather the weakness, of these remaining forms, in the midst of the present general diffusion of Anti-Christian principles. Christian forms of life - civil and ecclesiastical institutions - which had their rise in the living Christianity of by-gone times, appear good and wholesome to men only so long as they have Christianity in their own hearts. When that is not the case, they seem to them untrue, pernicious, and to be cast off. Only those who believe in Christ, can have faith in his presence in the ordinances of His house; or can honour the ministers of those Divine ordinances for the Lord's sake, whose representatives and servants they are.

Whoever does not believe in Christ, can see in them only what is human; and cannot distinguish between a [205] Divine ordinance, and the sins and abuses of those who in God's stead administer this ordinance. The claim to a Divine authority on the part of those who in his eyes are no better than himself, seems to him presumptuous, and a means by which they seek to escape from their responsibility to men, in order to bring the masses into subjection. Hence the undeniable enmity of the present generation towards all civil or ecclesiastical authorities, who claim to be anything more than the creatures of the people's will, and the representatives of their equals. And as the true test of living faith in the invisible Head in heaven must always be our being able to see and obey Him in those to whom He has given authority on earth to rule and bless men; so nothing gives fuller proof of the unbelief of the present generation than the general failure of such obedience. The very essence of Antichrist is declared in Scripture to be lawlessness. 2.Thess. II.7 (το μυστηριον της ανομιας). It does not follow from this that the Anti-Christian condition will be manifested only in the breaking of bonds, and the dissolution and destruction of the established order of things. For though its first triumph may be of this description, yet out of this chaos of rebellion and unbridled license shall spring a condition of iron law. But this will not be a subjection to law for

God's sake, and in obedience to His Christ; on the contrary, it will be the organized denial of all authority of God and of Christ over men. It will be that condition in which each individual must in everything, in matters of faith as well as in earthly things, yield to the authority of a man, who, in the name of humanity exalted to the place of God, shall claim unlimited sovereignty.

This last condition, with the previous destruction and [206] desolation, is the perfected apostasy - the kingdom of Antichrist. That beast, whose ten horns shall lay waste the great city, rises out of the sea; and the dragon gives him his power, seat, and great authority. Rev. XIII.1-2. The *sea*, in prophetic language, is a type of the people, or humanity in its lawlessness and numerical force. An excited multitude has such a resemblance to an agitated sea, that even in common language the figure is used as being a striking representation of the restlessness, rage, and power of an unbridled human multitude. The beast rises out of the sea; that is, Antichrist is the creature of the people's will - the expression and image of all that lives and works in humanity estranged from God. What God is for the ruler, who rules in the name of God and of Christ, such is humanity exalted to the place of God for Antichrist. He rules in the name of the people, and the people allow themselves to be

ruled by him, because in him they see themselves on the throne. His power and glory are the reflection of the power and glory of deified manhood, whose representative he is; and when men worship him they worship themselves. But the beast risen out of the sea receives from the dragon his power, and his seat, and great authority; that is, Antichrist in his spiritual power and hidden origin is the tyranny of the devil in the name of humanity usurping the place of God. The dragon is "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." Rev. XII.9. He is the origin of sin and rebellion against God, and thence also of tyranny. For when the creature casts off the rule of God, he becomes necessarily the oppressor of his fellow-creatures. The rule of God alone preserves the liberty of His creatures. The highest measure of true liberty has been reached in Christendom [207] under the rule of those who ruled, not in their own name, but in the name of God and of Christ. But in Christendom also shall the most fearful of all tyranny be manifested; for in it will the devil so far prevail with men, that he will claim to be God, and therefore irresponsible, and will not hesitate at the most arbitrary deeds, or the most terrible oppression.

Such and so terrible will be the last tyranny of Antichrist. It will be God's righteous recompense to those who would not that Christ should reign over

them; and who manifested their enmity towards Himself by rejecting those ordinances which had been instituted in His name for the guidance of men. It is of Antichrist that St. Paul says, that his "coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." 2.Thess. II.9-10.

Man is according to his nature a spiritual being, and will never long find contentment in those things that merely address his senses. Least of all will this be the case with baptized persons. They are in their baptism made vessels and instruments of the Spirit of God; and when they have driven Him from them by sin and unbelief, there remains an inward spiritual emptiness which all the power and glory of the external world cannot fill. This void it is which explains men's present diseased craving for what is wonderful and unusual, for signs and wonders, for great deeds and astonishing events. In the kingdom of Antichrist the devil will seek to satisfy these spiritual cravings of men, by the manifestation of all those wonderful powers which are at his command. And as men have ceased to believe in the existence of a superhuman spiritual world, they will - as indeed they already do - see in these manifestations of [208] Satanic power only the further development and perfection of all the

hidden properties that have slumbered in man's nature.

We cannot, indeed, attempt any adequate representation of what shall be the actual power and extent of Satanic working in the kingdom of Antichrist; nor should the Christian desire to picture to himself this consummation of evil before the fulfilment of the Divine Word. But from that word it seems not doubtful that the kingdom of Antichrist will, if we may so express ourselves, receive a sort of spiritual consecration; and that its irresistible, seducing, bewitching power, will proceed from a spiritual operation. This spiritual element shall accompany Antichrist in his character of head and ruler, and by it his importance shall be increased and consolidated. The second beast in Rev. XIII., and the false prophet in Rev. XIX., appear as the image and representative of such spiritual operation. At the appearing of the Lord with His saints, the beast and the false prophet shall be cast alive into the lake of fire. Rev. XIX. 19-20.

The saints who are alive on the earth at the coming of Christ, and who have allowed themselves to be cleansed and perfected by God, shall not die, but be changed, and caught up to meet the Lord. The victory of God and of Christ in them stands in contrast to the victory of Satan in those who have become apostate.

The former shall, without seeing death, receive the reward of their fidelity. The latter shall also, without passing through the intermediate condition of the first death, have to endure the last terrible punishment of their apostasy.

It is for the beast and the false prophet that this doom is prepared.

We have already seen what is to be understood by [209] these symbolical expressions. We will not here seek to determine how far the rule of Antichrist will extend also to Jews and heathen. Without doubt he will aim at universal rule. But the especial scene of his operations will be Christendom. In it the apostasy will take place, and upon that the judgement of God will first descend, when the King of kings and Lord of lords shall appear.

6.8 The Future Kingdom.

The establishment of the kingdom of Christ follows upon the fall of Antichrist. Rev. XX. Upon the throne of His Father the Lord sits alone. But when He shall come again, and His throne shall be set up, then those who have overcome, and been found faithful even unto death, shall also sit on thrones and execute judgement with Him. "The kingdom and dominion,

and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” Dan. VII.27. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.” Rev.III.21. “He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father.” Rev. II.26. “Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgement written: this honour have all His saints.” Psalm CXLIX.5-9. “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon [210] them, and judgement was given unto them:...they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.⁴⁸ Blessed and holy is he that

⁴⁸ Many passages of Holy Scripture plainly show that not all the dead shall attain to resurrection immediately on the coming of Christ. We have already quoted the “word of the

Lord,” in 1.Thess. IV. 15-17, where the resurrection at the coming of Christ is limited to those that sleep in Him. In 1.Cor. XV., where the Apostle enters fully into the subject of the resurrection, he says (verses 22, 23), “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits: afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.” Further, when Paul in his epistle to the Philippians presents before us that object for which he struggled, he says, to “know Him (Christ), and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” (εις την εξαναστασιν των νεκρων, literally, from among the dead, Phil. III.10-11). Were the Apostle speaking of the general resurrection, his striving after it would have no meaning - for all men shall rise again - not because they have overcome in the Christian warfare, but because Christ has tasted death for all men (Heb. II.9). But Paul strives after being made perfect in Christ, which consists in this, that after we have suffered with Him, and with Him have overcome, we should be reckoned among those who shall rise from among the dead at His appearing; or if found alive, shall be changed, in order to be with Him in glorious bodies, as kings and priests on the earth (Rev. V.10; XX.6). That this was the object which St. Paul set before him, is evident from what he goes on to say at the close of the third chapter of this epistle to the Philippians: “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

In the Gospels also we find passages which, if strictly taken, cannot be understood of the general resurrection. When our Lord in His answer to the Sadducees says, “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection” (Luke XX.35-36). He

hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Rev.XX.4-6.

This kingdom of Christ, when He shall reign with His saints, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become [211] the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,"⁴⁹ is that kingdom for the coming of which His disciples have prayed ever since He put into their mouth the petition, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." -

A kingdom implies the presence of him who reigns. Whoever in this petition in the Lord's Prayer sees nothing but a petition for the exercise of an invisible influence from above upon the souls of men, and looks for no other fulfilment of the same than the spread of the gospel through the preaching of missionaries, is in a dangerous error - an error no less ruinous in its consequences than the unbelief of the

does not speak of the resurrection of all men, but of that resurrection to which the righteous alone shall attain. And there is a like limitation to be understood in those words in which He counts them happy who do not receive the reward of their works in this life: "Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke XIV. 14).

⁴⁹ He the Head, and the Church His Body, are here taken together as One Christ, as in 1.Cor. XII.12; Gal.III.16.

Jews as to our Lord's appearance in humiliation. The Jews rejected the counsel of God to their own destruction, because they would hear of nothing but a kingdom of the Messiah in visible glory. And now that the promised coming of Christ in humiliation has taken place, no Christians are [212] in danger of committing the same error as that of the Jews. Our unbelief will show itself not in regard to what is already fulfilled, but in regard to that part of the Divine word which remains to be fulfilled. And this unbelief will be so much the more dangerous if it conceal itself under the appearance of false spirituality and false humility. From the very beginning the devil has done his utmost to quench in the hearts of God's children faith in the resurrection, in the coming again of Christ, and in His future kingdom on earth; and he has succeeded but too well. By distorting and perverting Divine truth, he has made those blessed objects of hope to be objects of suspicion in the eyes of many; and the nearer we come to the period of their fulfilment the less are Christians inclined to acquiesce in the purpose of God.

It is not the way of God to give us light in regard to the future, merely to gratify our curiosity. The will of God is "our sanctification," 1.Thess. IV.3; and if He gives us revelations as to the future in His word, it is in order that we may better fulfil the task and duty of

the present. For this end it is sufficient that we are made acquainted with the chief characteristics of the future kingdom of Christ, that we know generally that to which our hopes are to be directed.

Such grand outlines we find in the Word of God. Those events by which this kingdom is to be ushered in we have already considered. We will now merely take a short review of them.

Baptized Christendom is hastening to meet the judgement of God. The sins of many past generations, and the impenitence of the present, will be visited upon those Christian institutions - civil, ecclesiastical, or social - that yet remain. Destruction and desolation await them. [213] God will permit infidels, as the instruments of Satan, to accomplish this destruction, with the personal Antichrist at their head. Through him Satan will make the attempt to get beforehand with God, and to establish a universal kingdom among the apostates, in which fallen man shall find complete satisfaction for his pride and for his lusts. This kingdom will be destroyed by the appearing of the Lord in His glory.

When the Lord appears for the destruction of Antichrist, He will be accompanied by His perfected and glorified saints. Before the perfecting of the kingdom

of Antichrist, He gathers them to Himself: those that sleep by resurrection, the living by being changed and translated. Their union with their coming Lord does not take place on earth, but in a higher region. They will appear with Him, to be His instruments in establishing the new order of things on earth.

This holy company, or, as we read in Jude 14, the many thousand saints who come with the Lord, are His Church in the strictest sense of the word; His mystical body, through which He will do His will; His wife, who shall share His power and glory; the new Jerusalem, the holy City, in whose light the nations of them that are saved shall walk. Rev. XXI.24.

The Church in this sense is an election out of all the nations of the earth, who shall have been gathered and prepared during the present dispensation in order to be God's mighty instrument in that which is to come; through whom all the nations remaining on earth shall be brought to the knowledge of God, and be blessed by Him.

The future reign of Christ and His saints will be the dispensation of the fullness of God's blessing, whereby that condition of universal peace and knowledge of God [214] predicted by the prophets shall be

attained. Then shall the Lord “judge⁵⁰ among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Isa. II. IV.; compare Micah IV.1-5; Psalm XLVI.9; Hosea II.18.

The nations who shall enjoy the blessing of Christ’s future rule, are those nations who are left on earth after Antichrist is judged; who are then converted to God, and walk according to His commandments.⁵¹

At the head of the nations stand the restored Jewish people, for whom a glorious future is in store,

⁵⁰ “Judge,” in the sense in which the word is used in the Bible, and especially with regard to the future reign of Christ, has more than its usual signification. Christ as King and Judge, is He through whose righteous and blessed rule the nations shall be freed from all oppression and from all wickedness. “Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins.” Those judges through whom the Jews were delivered from their enemies, were types of Christ in His future acting as Judge.

⁵¹ “All the enemies of Christ,” says Bengel, “both within and out of Christendom, must finally be made His footstool. But this does not take place till the personal Antichrist has appeared; upon his destruction follows the reign of a thousand years, and the general conversion of Jews and heathen.” – Interpretation of the Apocalypse, p. 706: Stuttgart, 1834.

according to the predictions both of the Old and New Testament. The Jew will, in that future dispensation, form the connecting link between the glorified Church of the elect, and the remaining nations of the earth. Comp. Ezek. xxxvi.23-38; XXXVII. 21-28; Rom. XI. 25-26; Luke XXI.24; Isa. XI.10-12; LX.3-5; LXVI.15-24; Zech. VIII. 20-23.

At the commencement of that dispensation the devil will be deprived of the power of doing harm. He will be seized, and bound, and cast into the bottomless pit [215]; which shall be closed and sealed upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years be fulfilled.

The Lord by His death has deprived the devil of his power. Rev. XX. 2-3. He has “spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly.” Col II.15. But although the devil be a conquered enemy, yet he has still possession of this world, which Christ has redeemed by His blood. Not only does he reign over the heathen, but he has succeeded in gaining power in baptized Christendom itself.

At the coming of Christ he shall be cast into the bottomless pit; a condition in which he shall not yet be in the torment of the lake of fire; but in which he

shall be able to deceive the nations no more during a certain period determined by God. Rev.XX. 3,10.

Those nations, therefore, who remain after the judgement on Antichrist, enjoy a double advantage. They receive the blessings which Christ and His saints dispense on the earth, and they are freed from the power and craft of Satan, whereby he now deceives the nations, and holds them in darkness and bondage.

As to the changes in the natural world, and the favourable conditions of animal life connected with them, which the coming of Christ, the removal of the curse, and of the influence of the spiritual powers of darkness shall occasion, we would rather be silent. We only call to mind that, as the earth and all the creatures were cursed by God on account of man's sin Gen. III.17-18, so they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ; and shall therefore, according to St. Paul's words to the Romans chap. VIII.18,23, be freed from their bondage at the revelation of the sons of God - of Christ and His perfected saints [216].

Concerning this new condition of the creation, the prophet says: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;

and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isa.XI. 6,9.

The thousand years in Rev. XX. indicate the duration of the future dispensation. Whether it be a prophetic or a literal arithmetical number, matters not. It is sufficient that we know that it indicates a determined period appointed by God, during which the new order of things of which we have spoken shall exist.

This future dispensation leads on to the general resurrection and the last judgement. Rev. XX. 6-15. Satan will be permitted once more to try his power over those nations who, during the thousand years, have enjoyed the blessings of the kingdom of Christ; and He will succeed in bringing about a great apostasy. They shall compass the camp of the saints about, and shall be destroyed by fire from God out of heaven.

This apostasy, at the end of the thousand years, corresponds in its signification for the future nations, to that apostasy among the baptized with which the present dispensation shall close. Further, to the apostasy among God's ancient people with which the Jewish economy closed; and to the apostasy in the world before the flood, which ended that dispensation. It must add to [217] all that went before it the last mighty proof of the unfaithfulness and ingratitude of men, the power and craft of Satan, and the invincible power and wisdom of God.

Many may wonder that it should be possible to seduce those nations upon whom God, during the thousand years, showers down His blessings, and in the midst of whom the Lord's kingdom is set up. We will make no attempt to account for this; but satisfy ourselves with believing what the Word of God has declared. Only remarking, first, that however favourable the position of these nations may then be, we must not look upon their condition as an eternal and unchangeable one. And, secondly, that it is at least doubtful whether the presence of Christ and His glorified saints shall, during the thousand years, be equally and at all times known to all nations; or whether it may not rather be the calling of the Jewish people, to have the glory of the Lord especially revealed in their midst, and that through their interven-

tion the blessings of the future kingdom should be conveyed to the rest of the nations.

6.9 Conclusions.

But why waste time in the consideration of things far beyond the present task and duty assigned us as Christians? The end of the present dispensation is before us. Our calling is to belong to those who, from among the living and the departed, shall be gathered to Christ at His coming. The practical question for each one of us is: Am I ready to be changed suddenly in a moment, and to meet the Lord?

"His wife," it is written "hath made herself ready: and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Rev. XIX.7-8. And in the epistle to the Hebrews, we are exhorted to strive after "holiness [218], without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. XII.14. The question whether we are prepared to escape the coming judgement, and, like Enoch and Elijah, to be suddenly taken from the earth, and gathered to the Lord without seeing death, is only another form of the question as to our sanctification. We are called to be holy. Hereunto we are baptized, that we should walk as those who are dead unto sin and alive unto God; that we should not live

after the flesh, but after the Spirit. To this end we eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood, that we may dwell in Him and He in us; and that we may live by Him as He lived by the Father. For this we have received the Holy Ghost; and God has given to His Church ministrations and gifts, in order that our inner man may grow and increase, and become strong to do His will, and to serve Him in holiness and righteousness of life.

With God there is no respect of persons. He has no favourites. He found Noah righteous before Him, and therefore He saved him in the hour of judgement. Gen. VII.1. Enoch before his translation had this testimony, that he pleased God, and therefore he received the reward of his faith. Heb. XI.5. Lot was saved out of Sodom because he was righteous, and had no part in the wickedness around him, 2.Peter II.7-8.

If we would escape those plagues by which, according to the Word of God, impenitent Christendom is to be visited, we must be free from those sins which reach unto heaven, and call down the judgements of God. We speak not of self-righteousness, or righteousness through works; but neither are we advocates of lukewarmness, unbelief, and hypocrisy. Our works indeed cannot save us in the day of God's

righteous wrath; but Christ's [219] work in us can and will stand the fiery trial. The question will be, whether we have oil in our vessels. Art thou full of the Holy Ghost? Then art thou ready to receive the Lord. Nothing but the fullness of the Divine life in us will be able to save us from the dangerous deceivableness of the last times - the false appearances in spiritual things. Not only those who are expecting the salvation of the world from the coming Antichrist are in danger of being found unprepared when the Lord will gather His saints to Himself. We may be among the virgins who take their lamps, and go forth to meet the Bridegroom, and yet be shut out from the marriage.

We know neither the day nor the hour when the Lord shall come. But if even those Christians who wait for His coming, may be found without the necessary preparation, how much more those who refuse even to hear of the speedy coming of the Lord - who give no heed to the signs of the times - and who do not hesitate to join their voices to those of the men who say in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth His coming"? Matt. XXIV.48. Where is now the desire for the coming of Christ? Where is faith in the prophetic word? Why is it not diligently searched?

Why are we satisfied with so poor and scanty a measure of light in regard to the great and glorious

hope of which our hearts should be full, and in the fulfilment of which alone we shall be saved from our present distresses? Where are the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem, who call to the daughters of Zion, "Behold thy salvation cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him"? Isa. LXII. 11; Rev. XXII.12. Instead of seeking to awaken the hope of the coming [220] of Christ in the heart of Christians, they rather labour to find out proof that His coming cannot be nigh at hand. They do not themselves believe in it; they do not love it; they are not ready to forsake all and follow Christ. How can they then awaken this hope in the hearts of others?

Oh, the secret infidelity in the hearts of Christians! Love waxing cold, through the abounding of iniquity - love to the heavenly Bridegroom! Is not hidden infidelity lurking behind these arguments, that the coming of Christ cannot be at hand? Prove thine own heart, O Christian, and make answer to God, why thou canst not believe that He will speedily send His Son again. Say, why is it that thou canst believe so many other things which are far less likely? You can believe that though the increase of infidelity, and the fearful immorality of our times, could not be prevented nor restrained by the Church with its ministries and ordinances appointed of God, yet that this shall be accomplished by confederacies and associa-

tions of men - by instruments of their choice and their ordaining. Or have you doubts as to the issue of all those efforts upon which the hopes of so many Christians are set?

But if Christendom is not to be helped by "home missions," and if our Lord is not to come, where then are we to look for help and restoration? One might often weep and mourn over the blindness of those who should have eyes for the signs of their own time! Shall the children of this world always be wiser than the children of light? For where is a child of this world now who cannot interpret the signs of the times? Everywhere in Christendom, in all lands, among all nations, only one language is held in regard to the times in which we live [221].

With all their disunion and opposition to one another, men are at one as to this, that the world has reached a crisis, that its present condition cannot last, that we are living in a period of transition, that the spiritual struggle going on in all parts of Christendom between the old and the new, between the views and ideas that have been handed down to us and those that are now springing up, must be fought out, and that this struggle is the matter in hand in our days. Men in general do not understand the peculiar character of this struggle, nor its final issue, for

they have not drawn their light from the Word of God. But still, do they not put those many Christians to shame, who, in spite of all the warnings God has given, neither can nor will believe that the end hastens, and that we are about to meet it?

Oh, that all Christians would but embrace the hope of the coming and kingdom of Christ! What a blessed effect would this holy longing have upon the hearts of the faithful!

Should we, if filled with the hope of a speedy union with the Lord and His saints, continue in strife among ourselves, smiting our brethren with the tongue?

Should we, in expectation of the Holy One, content ourselves with lukewarmness and a divided heart; and nourish in our hearts all manner of hidden uncleanness?

Should we, in the prospect of that glory which is speedily to be revealed to us, allow ourselves to be taken captives by the vanity of this world, the favour of men, or transitory fame?

If Christians cannot be at one in all things, this one thing they can at least all do: in all confessions

and all parties, lift their hearts to the Lord, and without ceasing cry, "COME, LORD JESUS."

7. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

7.1 The Relation of the Lord's Supper to Baptism.

BIRTH is the beginning of life; but life is maintained by meat and drink. Both its origin and its continuance are, however, a mystery; and must ever remain beyond the reach of the human understanding.

Thus it is also with the new life which we receive from God. Its beginning is the new birth of water and of the Spirit; and it is maintained by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man. John III.5; VI.53. The mysteries of the new life are as impenetrable as those of the natural life, if not more incomprehensible.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are God's ordained means whereby the new life is communicated and sustained. This life is the life of Christ, 2.Cor. IV.11; Gal. II.20; Col. III.3-4.; of the Son of God, who lives in those that are in Him, Gal. II.20; and is at the same time the living bread whereof we must partake, if we would live for ever. John VI.51.

7.2 Our Lord's Words, John VI.

Among the most painful experiences of our Lord during His life on earth was no doubt the inability which He found in His hearers rightly to understand the words that He spoke. In spite of His gracious condescension to the low estate in which He found the people of God, oftentimes even the little company of His Apostles and disciples were scarcely able to hear rightly [223] what He had to say. We have an example of this when He spoke for the first time of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. John VI.

We will consider this discourse of our Lord's, and the impression that it made on the different classes of His hearers, somewhat particularly, as introductory to our exposition of the Holy Sacrament.

The miraculous feeding of five thousand men with five barley loaves and two fishes, should doubtless have served to awaken more confidence and higher anticipations in the hearts of those who were permitted to hear this mysterious discourse concerning the Bread from heaven. Our Lord appears intentionally to have chosen for it the period immediately before the passover - a season when the thoughts of the pious were directed to the significant appointment of God at the time of their deliverance out of Egypt;

and at which they were to partake of that lamb whose blood was the sign of their salvation.

The feeding of the multitude on the mountain was for the nourishment of their bodily life. But it was of such a nature that thereby those who partook of this wonderful meal must have been, in the highest degree, stirred up to a sense of the heavenly and spiritual. As indeed seems to have been the case; for it is said, "When they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, they said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world."

But there was no pure and unmingled stirring up of their hope for the Messiah in the great company whose hunger had been satisfied. The Lord on the following day had to meet them with a word of rebuke - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw [224] the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." As if He would have said, the object that I had in working this miracle among you was no mere earthly one; but rather, by supplying your bodily wants in so wonderful a way, I sought to give you a sign that I am He who can give you incorruptible food - food that endureth unto everlasting life. John VI.27. For this food, however, the multitude of those who had been fed felt no hunger. They believed what they had *seen*, and nothing more.

When called upon to believe on Him whom God had sent, they demand new signs; and, as is always the case with the carnally-minded, the acts of God which belong to the past appear to them much greater than those of the present. John VI.29-31.

From all that preceded His discourse our Lord must have known that He had little prospect of finding faith in His hearers. Yet He makes no effort to bring what he says down to the level of the human understanding. He gives no explanations nor interpretation of the dark words which He speaks; nor does He seek to refute the objections or contradictions of the Jews. He knows that His discourse can only be received in the Spirit, and in faith. Instead, therefore, of striving with His carnally-minded hearers, He warns them that no man can come to Him "except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." He reminds them of the words of the prophet, "They shall be all taught of God," and adds, "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me." John VI.45,46,65.

It would not be through their own power or might, or through any human reasoning, or mode of proof, that they would come to the knowledge of the things of which He spoke. They must be revealed to them of [225] God; and in order to receive such teach-

ing from God, acuteness of understanding was not what was necessary, but faith, humility, and simplicity of heart. But where did these exist? Where did they exist in such a measure as to make it possible to hear of eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Lord, without taking offence? Scarcely had the Lord uttered the words, "And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," when the proud impatient understanding of these undisciplined Jews rises against them. They ask, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"

The Lord gives them no explanation. It is not His concern to meet the objections of the understanding, but rather to awaken faith in the hearts of the humble. He therefore only repeats in simple and determined words what He had already declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." John VI.53-57.

But not only the Jews strive among themselves, instead of receiving the word of the Lord in faith; many even of His disciples say, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" John VI. 60. Hitherto these disciples had been able to follow Him; but we may conclude that they had not made the right use of that which they had already received from God, in their hearts and lives. [226] And so, when the time came that the Lord would lead them further on, and impart to them a new measure of Divine truth, their unbelief, or weakness of faith, reveals itself. The Lord endeavours to help them. John VI. 61-66. He would raise them into the region of the Spirit and of faith, from which they are in danger of falling back into the flesh. But He does not succeed. On the contrary, we read, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." The twelve, however, remained firm.

7.3 The Impression on those who heard them.

If we inquire why the twelve did not take offence at the "hard saying," at least not such offence as to induce them to forsake their Lord, we shall not find that they were kept faithful by a more clear understanding of the words that were spoken. To our Lord's question, "Will ye also go away?" Simon Peter does

not answer, "No, Lord; for we have understood Thee, and find nothing mysterious or inexplicable in what Thou hast said;" but, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John VI.67-69. Faith that He, out of whose mouth the mysterious words proceeded, was the Christ, the Son of the living God, this it was that made it possible for them to receive as infallible Divine truth what was inaccessible to their understanding. The words which the Lord had spoken appeared to them probably as enigmatical as to the other disciples; but they knew who spoke them, and had confidence in the Lord, that in His own time He would give them the needed light in regard to them.

Probably the disciples often pondered afterwards in their hearts those words concerning the eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man. The significant [227] acts of the Lord which preceded them; their sad effect upon many of the disciples, who up to the period, of their utterance had followed the Lord; and, above all, the very words themselves, must have made an indelible impression upon the twelve. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man," the Lord had said, "and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." But how could this be? They do not venture to ask, however great may have been their desire to re-

ceive some further explanation. They had witnessed the perplexity of the Jews and the other disciples, and saw that the Lord did not chose to expound further what He had spoken. Nothing remained for them, therefore, but to lay up the words quietly in their hearts, and wait for the time when He should see it good to reveal to them how this act of eating and drinking would be made possible.

We do not learn that our Lord ever by words further explained His discourse to His disciples. The explanation was to take place through an *act*.

When the evening had come which immediately preceded His death, He sat down to table with the twelve. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. XXVI. 26-28.

7.4 The Institution of the Sacrament, and the Triumph of Faith in the Apostles.

The institution of the Holy Sacrament was the actual exposition of the mysterious discourse concerning the eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His blood. It was indeed no explanation to the understanding [228] of man. Such an explanation is and must be impossible. The sacrament must be believed, must be received in the Spirit. Faith is presupposed in those who are to receive it. Faith that He who instituted it is Christ, the Son of God, whose word and act are truth and reality. If He takes bread, and gives it to His disciples, with the words, "This is My body," then that bread is His body; but only if He who so acts and speaks is God. If I am not firmly persuaded that Christ is God; and therefore ready to yield myself implicitly, without hesitation or dispute, to all that He says and does, I shall not believe that the bread is His body or the wine His blood.

It was faith that Christ is the Son of God which made it possible for the twelve to hear the Lord's discourse without offence and without opposition, when He spoke for the first time of eating His flesh and drinking His blood; and only the same faith - the same unshaken conviction of the Divinity of that Person who sat in the midst of them, and presented to them the bread and the cup - could have been sufficient to silence the opposition of the understanding, and every doubt of the natural man.

It was a mighty triumph of faith that was manifested in the disciples at the first celebration of the Lord's Supper. Without any introduction or warning, without any attempt to remove doubts or misunderstanding by previous explanation, the Lord takes bread and wine, and performs the holy act. And none of those present stagger, or doubt, or go aside. They believe what the Lord says, enjoy the heavenly food, and their hearts are filled with praise and adoration.

At least eleven men were present from the beginning [229] to the close of this celebration of the holy service. Men whose character, temperament, and spiritual qualities were doubtless very different. Bread and wine were presented to them. Their senses testify that no change has taken place in their creature properties, and yet they are to receive them as the body and blood of Him who sits before them. We can scarcely conceive a greater trial, or a more difficult task for faith, save that which had preceded it, namely, that the Man Jesus Christ of Nazareth is God.

“Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven,” was our Lord's answer to Peter, when, in the name of the disciples, he witnessed that good confession: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Mat. XVI.13-17.

And if flesh and blood cannot fathom the mystery of the incarnation of God, as little, we may venture to say, can they fathom the mystery of the flesh and blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrament.

7.5 The Spiritually-minded Man, and the Gradual Growth in the True Knowledge of Divine Things.

“The natural man,” saith the Scripture,” receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1.Cor. II.14. This is spoken of Divine things generally, and cannot be sufficiently laid to heart. For it is true, not only in regard to the first beginnings of Divine knowledge, but of every further step which we make in it. We are too much inclined to take it for granted, that if a man has become a believer, as we express ourselves, that is, if he has in some measure confessed that he is a sinner, and can be saved only through faith in Christ, that such an one is already a spiritually-minded man, who can discern Divine truth in the Spirit, and who runs no risk of allowing his fleshly understanding [230] to exercise judgement in heavenly things. But, besides that faith in any man may be either strong or weak, every converted and believing person needs Divine training in order to become truly spiritually-

mind. His inner man needs discipline, instruction, exercise in patience, in self-denial, in faith, in prayer, in order to his being delivered from his own strength, from all self-confidence, and being brought into a right disposition of heart amid spirit towards God and towards His truth. Only in the measure in which he allows his training for the kingdom of heaven to be effectual, will he become spiritually-minded, and be in a condition to lay hold of, and acknowledge Divine truth.

And, however little it may in these days be acknowledged or laid to heart, it is yet a fact that growth in Divine things must be like every other growth or progress. If we desire really to grow in the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, we must be content to do so step by step. There is one measure of truth for one stage of the spiritual life, and another for another. "And I, brethren," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal." 1.Cor. III.1-3. And in the epistle to the Hebrews, in speaking of the priesthood of Melchisedec, he says, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing that ye are dull of hearing. For when for the

time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Heb. V.11-12.[231].

The Apostle did not consider that the Divine truth, as it is in Christ Jesus, was all contained in a few meagre sentences concerning repentance and faith; or that the whole contents of Christian doctrine must be declared to all men at once, and without distinction. The Corinthians to whom Paul wrote were believing and baptized Christians, but they were as babes in Christ; and therefore he did not venture to speak to them as he would have spoken if they could have borne strong meat. The Hebrews were also Christians in whom a good foundation was laid; but instead of having thereby become capable of making progress in knowledge, they needed to hear again the first principles of the Gospel; and therefore the Apostle found it difficult to impart to them truths that required a greater measure of internal preparation.

And the Apostles, when they thus sought with wisdom and fatherly love to lead forward the children of God committed to them gradually from one stage of Divine knowledge to another, only followed the example their Lord had given them, and led others in that way in which He had led them. He well understood

how to impart the right measure of Divine truth at the right time, and to keep back words which were hard to bear till He recognised in His disciples faith strong enough to endure them.

“From that time forth,” it is written - that is, from the time that Peter witnessed a good confession to the Son of God - began Jesus to speak unto His disciples concerning His sufferings, His death, and His resurrection. Mat. XVI.21. And we know that, even to the last hour of His earthly course, He kept back many things, because they could not bear them. Compare. John XVI.12. [232].

No doubt among the last instructions given by the Apostles and their fellow-labourers in the setting up of a Church, or in receiving members into the Church, would be those concerning the Lord’s Supper.⁵²

The Apostles had known in their own experience that only a firm faith in God become Man made it possible for them to receive implicitly the words of the Lord concerning the partaking of His flesh and blood;

⁵² This was the undeviating practice of the ancient Church - the so-called “*disciplina arcani*”. In the catechetical teachings of Cyril of Jerusalem, the mystical come last; and of these the Lord’s Supper forms the conclusion.

and therefore it became their duty to ground their new converts thoroughly in this faith before they instructed them concerning the Holy Sacrament. The same unshaken faith that what Christ speaks is truth, even when that truth is beyond all that the understanding or senses of man can reach, which was in the Apostles themselves when the Lord first dispensed to them the holy elements, was necessary for their disciples also, if they were to have faith in the full and true meaning of the sacrament. What was therefore more natural than that the Apostles should refrain from making the sacrament a subject of their preaching to the unconverted? while they laboured that those who were to receive it for the first time should, through previous instruction, be so disciplined in spirit and in faith as not to be hindered by the doubts of their carnal understanding.

Learned men have disputed whether there were secret doctrines in the primitive Church or not. Secret doctrines, in the sense of truths that feared the light, and, like a black art, could only be communicated to a few initiated persons, there certainly were not. But only the greatest [233] ignorance and inexperience in Divine things could take offence at the Apostles, or at the rulers and Christian teachers of the first centuries, because they feared to give that which was holy to the dogs, or to cast their pearls before swine, Mat.

VII.6; or because, in wisdom and in charity, they meted out the Divine truth which they imparted according to the faith and capability of their hearers.

We have laboured to show what must already be found existing in any man before he can believe the word concerning the flesh and blood of Christ in the Holy Communion; and we have purposely entered more fully into this subject because we are convinced that the due consideration of it is the greatest importance, both for the establishment of the true doctrine and for explaining the many sad disputes that have arisen concerning this Holy Sacrament.

It is the task of the Church, and especially of those in her who are appointed to the office of teachers by the Holy Ghost, to know the truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus, and by the Word to bring it to the understanding of the faithful. But it does not follow that all that the Church believes must or can be made clear to their understanding.

Our knowledge is but imperfect; and there are truths whereof it may be said, the less the understanding deals with them the clearer they shine, and the deeper knowledge we acquire of them. Such a truth especially is the subject now under consideration.

7.6 What the Sacrament Contains.

What is set before us in the Holy Supper is the bestowal of a Divine gift. The Lord, surrounded only by the most intimate of His disciples - by those who believed in Him, who loved Him, and who had proved by deeds their entire devotedness to Him - dispenses to [234] them, in a manner hidden and mysterious, but not therefore less true and effectual, His own body and His precious blood. A greater or more precious gift He could not have bestowed. It surpasses all that the most devoted love, and the most ardent longing could have conceived or desired. The disciples loved their Lord above everything in heaven or in earth. They could surrender themselves wholly to Him, and lay their very being at His feet, for He was their God and their Lord. Blessed and most reviving had His holy presence been to them; from His mouth they had heard the word of life; but now He would impart Himself to them in another manner, far transcending anything they had hitherto experienced. They were to eat His flesh and drink His blood; and thus be united in the closest, most unutterable manner with Him, the God-Man, the Lord and Saviour of the world, as it is written, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Fa-

ther; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.”
John VI.56- 57.

7.7 The Manner of the Real Presence a Divine Mystery.

What the Lord gives us in the Holy Supper is His body and blood - the body and blood of Him who died on the Cross, and now lives at the right hand of the Father. The *mode* of the presence of His body and blood is a Divine mystery; it cannot be declared or understood; it surpasses all that our senses can perceive, or our understanding reach. It is a Divine ordinance, and no device of man: therefore it is possible, true, and actual. It has pleased God in this, and in no other way, to give us the body and blood of His Son, and man has only to say “Amen” to the appointment of God. Faith lays hold of the mysterious gift; the spirit of the regenerate [235] man recognises it by the Holy Ghost; but the mode of its presence cannot be declared by words. No one ever has explained, or will be able to explain, how the holy elements can be the body and blood of Christ.

But just because the “*how*” can never be explained, it is the duty of those who are stewards of God’s mysteries to watch that a sacrament which God has made to be an object of faith, and of the deepest

reverence, and for the communicating of infinite blessing, be not desecrated and degraded, or robbed of its spiritual and heavenly character, through attempts to bring it to the level of the understanding. As our Lord Himself would enter into no explanation of the “*how*,” so His servants, if they walk in the Spirit, will dread to attempt understanding or explaining what God in His wisdom has concealed; and what He has, perhaps as a test of faith, and for the humbling of the human pride of understanding, covered with the impenetrable veil of a sacramental mystery. But while God’s ministers must abstain from seeking to explain the mystery of the sacrament, they must, with the firmness of an unshaken faith maintain its full and true import, according to the simple declaration of the Lord and His Apostles.

7.8 The True Faith concerning it.

The true faith is, that in the Holy Supper, *the bread is the body of Christ, and that the wine is His blood.*

The difficulty which this article of faith contains for the understanding, gives the fleshly-minded man no rest till he has got rid of it. Three ways are open to him. He can deny the presence of the bread and wine; or he can deny the presence of the body and blood;

or, thirdly, he can grant the presence of both, but only as existing beside one another.

In all these three cases the peculiar mystery of the [236] sacrament, namely, the inexplicable and incomprehensible mode of the true presence of the body and blood of Christ is got rid of; and what is a matter of faith is made a matter of superstition, of infidelity, or of uncertainty.

Faith alone acknowledges the mystery as such, refusing every attempt to make it comprehensible to the understanding.

When the Jews heard the words of the Lord, "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," they strove among themselves, saying, "*How* can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" John VI.52. Is it not beyond measure melancholy and disgraceful, that this strife, which began among the carnally-minded Jews, should have been continued, and have exercised its evil influence within the Church? For what have different religious parties been disputing about for centuries, but just such a "how"?

Faith does not require to know *how* bread and wine in the Holy Sacrament can be flesh and blood. It

only requires certainty that this is the fact. This certainty rests upon the Divine institution of the sacrament, and upon Christ's command that it should be celebrated in the Church. If He commissioned His Apostles to continue the celebration of the sacrament in His Church, we may rest convinced that He will acknowledge the holy rite when performed by His servants according to His institution. No human power can bring about this sacrament. It cannot be effected by means of the faith of him who dispenses, or of them who receive it. Nothing short of an act of Almighty God can make the bread and wine after consecration to be the flesh and blood of Christ. This act of God is in answer to the faith and prayer of His Church; and not without the [237] instrumentality of His servant, the minister, who performs the holy rite in the name and by the authority of Christ. Yet the sacrament is not brought about by the minister, but it is an act of Christ by the Holy Ghost, who with the Father and the Son is God, and dwells in the Church.

In the early Church, at the celebration of this Holy Sacrament, there was a special acknowledgment of the Divine aid whereby the body and blood of Christ were made present, when, at the consecration of the elements, the celebrant prayed aloud for the sending down of the Holy Ghost upon them to accomplish the sacramental mystery. The period at

which we have to believe that the Divine act is accomplished, is when our Lord's words of institution are pronounced.

7.9 The Object of the Sacrament.

If we ask for what purpose the Lord has instituted this rite in His Church, the answer is given in His own words: "Do this in remembrance of Me." 1.Cor. XI.24; Luke XXII.19. Simple as these words appear at the first glance, they are deep and full of meaning, when we consider the circumstances under which they were uttered. The Apostle Paul adds, to define and explain them, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." 1.Cor. XI.26. He declares the sacramental rite to be an actual showing forth of the sacrificial death of Christ. And in saying so, he says no more than what would necessarily be the case. For what can be a more practical demonstration of a sacrifice which has been offered up than the flesh and blood of the victim? While on other occasions Christ's death is proclaimed by word, in this sacrament it is proclaimed and set forth in an *act* - before God and His holy angels, before the assembled Church, and before [238] the powers of darkness over whom He triumphed. This can be denied only by such as deny the real presence of the body and blood of Christ.

In the institution of the sacrament, therefore, the Lord has given His Church, during the period of His personal absence, and until He come again, a continual memorial of His perfected offering. 1.Cor. XI.26; Matt. XXVI.29. Whilst He Himself, the Lord, He who liveth, and who appears before God as "a Lamb as it had been slain," Rev. V.6, shows forth His perfect offering in the Holiest of all in heaven; He has given His body and blood to show it forth in a corresponding manner in the sanctuary of His Church on earth.

The showing forth of the death of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, as the Fathers termed the Holy Supper, is a sacramental showing forth. It is not for the conversion of men, or for the awakening of faith, as when it is proclaimed in preaching; but the name of God is not the less glorified by it on that account. The death of Christ upon the cross is that perfect act; that alone worthy and perfect service, upon which the eye of God can rest with delight, and whereby His name is glorified; it is the true foundation of all surrender of the creature to God, of all worship and of all service. Therefore must the rite - wherein this death, as accomplished and accepted of God, is, through the body and blood of the victim, emblematically represented and shown forth - be the first and highest act of worship in the Church.

It would detain us too long at present to enter upon this more fully. We will show, in a separate treatise concerning Sacrifice and Priesthood, the importance of the Holy Supper in the worship of the Church; and limit ourselves at present to the consideration of this [239] sacrament as *the Heavenly Food which the Lord has appointed in His house for His children*.

7.10 The Lord's Supper as Heavenly Food.

Food serves for the nourishment of a life already existing. Human beings who have not yet begun to live, and those who have ceased to live, require no food. The Holy Supper is for those who are alive with Christ, and abide in Christ. It presupposes that we are the children of God, and made partakers of the Divine life in Christ; and it is the mysterious nourishment whereby the Divine life in us is to be strengthened and renewed.

He through whom we receive the new life from God is also the Food of this life. John VI.35. That which is from Heaven must also be nourished from Heaven. We are in Christ become "partakers of the Divine nature," 2.Peter I.4, and need a nourishment not only higher than any earthly nourishment, but

also higher and more glorious than any created thing. This food is the body and blood of Him who hath said," I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world....Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John VI.51-54.

No one can define what life is. But a living man is distinguished from a dead one by being able to do that for which he was created by God; this a dead one cannot do. Thus it is with the new life from God. The proof that we *have* this life, must be sought in this, that we are in a condition to do that for which God has [240] created us anew in Christ Jesus. We are become new creatures in Christ, in order that we may not sin, in order that we may walk as He walked; as it is written, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." 1.John II.6. "Whosoever is born of God," saith St. John, "doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of

God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” 1.John III.9-10. The proof that we *walk* in the power of the new life lies in this, that we do righteousness, and are full of love to the brethren: that we, each according to our place and condition - be it as men or women, parents or children, masters or servants, rulers or subjects, ministers or people - fulfil the duties laid upon us, for God’s sake and to His glory; and love as brethren all whom He has made His children in holy baptism. No one, however, will be able to do this who does not faithfully use all the means which God has given for our growth in holiness; and a chief means to this end is the worthy participation of the body and blood of Christ.

A man becomes strong through eating and drinking, provided he be healthy, but not if he be diseased. A physician will enjoin abstinence to the sick; not eating and drinking, but medicine, will be prescribed for their recovery. The Apostle St. Paul says of the sacrament, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgement) to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” 1.Cor. XI.28-29.[241].

The unworthy should not approach the Lord’s table. Not as though any man has any worthiness in

himself. There is only One worthy, even the Lord Jesus Christ. But because He is worthy, so are they also who are in Him, and He in them, accounted worthy before God; and for them the heavenly table is spread.

For those who are spiritually diseased the Lord has other means of recovery than participation of His flesh and blood. But it is not the penitent who is spiritually diseased - not he who is filled with godly sorrow because of his sins - not he who in God’s school has learned to know his own unworthiness, and the deep corruption of the human heart. It is he whose conscience is not sprinkled with the blood of Christ, 1.Peter I.2 - who has polluted himself by sin, and will not allow himself to be cleansed by the means appointed of God. He is spiritually diseased who withdraws himself from God’s discipline, rebels against His ordinances, and will receive no warning or reproof from those who care for the welfare of his soul. Wherever high-mindedness, self-righteousness, or hypocrisy exist in any form, there is the most dangerous spiritual disease. In such cases the Christian requires pastoral care and discipline; and abstinence from the sacrament will for him be more wholesome than the enjoyment of it. For as with a sick person eating and drinking often only nourish the disease and make it more dangerous, so the sacrament, when partaken of by one whose conscience is unclean, be-

comes a means not of cleansing, but rather of hardening in sin.

7.11 The Spiritual Weakness of the Baptized.

It is not without deep significance that the Apostle Paul closes his exhortations and reproofs in regard to the sacrament with these words: "For this cause" [242] (namely, that the sacrament was not partaken of worthily, and with the right discernment of the Lord's body) "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." 1.Cor. XI.30. If weakness and sickness, and even spiritual death, are the infallible consequences of the unworthy participation of the Holy Sacrament, we may assuredly also gather that the right use of this heavenly food begets a strong and sound spiritual life.

But if this be the case, we have indeed a sufficient explanation of the present spiritual condition of the baptized in the way in which this sacrament has, during centuries, been dispensed and received in Christendom.

We have no inclination to enter farther into this melancholy subject. Whosoever is not entirely blind or dead must see at the first glance that in every portion

of the Church there is fearful sin committed in this matter. He that cannot see or feel this, who is not ready to mourn and confess the sins of the whole Church, and of every member of it, in regard to the administration and use of this most Holy Sacrament, requires something else than instruction concerning the Holy Supper.

The baptized, says St. Paul, are "one body," 1.Cor. XII.13; and because we are one body it necessarily follows, that if "one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." How is it possible in the present decay, and partial extinction, of spiritual life among the baptized, that the individual Christian can possess such a measure of spiritual health and strength as he ought to do? The saddest thing in our condition is the disinclination of many Christians to see and acknowledge their dependence upon all their brethren. The unbelief and moral degradation of the great mass of the baptized cannot be [243] denied; but the influence of their condition upon those whom God yet spiritually keeps alive is neither felt nor acknowledged as it should be. Consciousness of the true unity of the church is gone. We do not suffer with those countless members who are sick and suffering; we do not see their sin and guilt as the sin and guilt of the one body; and therefore we do not feel the effect their condition must have on our own. We have

perhaps little understood the spiritual weakness into which we have fallen. Those who are sick often deceive themselves, as to the measure of strength which they still possess; the tokens of approaching death are often mistaken for signs of returning life.

Nothing shows more the weakness of faith at present than the timidity of believing Christians in regard to the demands which the Holy Scriptures make for holiness and righteousness of life. Why are men afraid of that name which Paul gave to the Christians of his time? 2.Cor. I.1; Eph. I.1; Phil. I.1; Col. I.2, &c. They are willing to be called *believers* but not *saints*. Will they be more humble than Paul? Was Paul one who sought righteousness through works? Did he not understand the doctrine of justification by faith, because he called Christians saints? Or are people afraid of this name, because their consciences testify that what it implies no longer exists? Oh, that all hypocrisy and self-deception might cease among Christians! Instead of thinking it enough to have been convinced of sin, and to seek to make up for the want of holiness by lamentations over the weakness amid sinfulness of ourselves and others, we should be ashamed and confounded before God, that our life affords no proof that He who has overcome sin lives in us. So long as we do not feel our want of power to [244] overcome sin as a reproach and denial of our

calling; so long as the question concerning the grounds of this weakness is not for us an all-important question, we shall not be able rightly to appreciate the sacrament of God's holy altar, nor to see how closely connected the decay of our spiritual life is with the general decline, and the great neglect as to that sacrament.

7.12 The Weekly Communion of the Primitive Christians, and the Practice of our Day.

It is well known that the first Christians partook of the Holy Communion at least every Sunday. The chief service in the Church on the Lord's-day was the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. No Christian, during the first three centuries, thought of allowing the Lord's-day to pass without having commemorated the death of Christ, and having enjoyed the heavenly nourishment of His body and blood. Whoever did not communicate, unless prevented by some most urgent hindrance, belonged to the penitents or catechumens. It was a sign of declension in the Church when, in the time of Chrysostom⁵³ (about A.D. 400), an inclination manifested itself to be present till the close of the celebration of the sacrament without communicating. Chrysostom was very zealous against this innovation;

⁵³ Bingham's Antiquities, xv. 4 and 9.

and his declaration in regard to it - that whosoever would not communicate, must take his place among the penitents, and leave the church with them; for he had defiled his garments, and should fear to be present - is the expression of the feeling that universally prevailed among early Christians.

How far have the Christians of the present day, even the most pious among them, declined from that original and becoming custom of the Church! Our brethren of the first centuries - whose piety, self-denial, and joyful [245] sacrificing of all things we justly admire - would have thought it impossible that a time should ever come when the desire for that heavenly food would be so small among Christians, that they would be quite satisfied with a monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, or yearly communion.

This want of a reverent and yet hearty desire for the blessed participation of the body and blood of Christ, which has, alas! so sadly distinguished the Christianity of later times, is connected with the general decay of worship, and of the life of the Church as a body. One seeks in vain for Christian churches, in the apostolic sense of the word, among those confessions into which the one Church is divided.

In the buildings consecrated to God and His solemn service there do not assemble now, as at the beginning, believing companies of holy men and women, full of worship and devoted love to the Heavenly Bridegroom. That Holy and Divine discipline, by which the solemn celebration of the Eucharist was preserved from desecration, and the unconverted person kept back from committing sin, has disappeared. Those mingled congregations of converted and unconverted persons, who gather together in the churches on Sundays, can endure nothing more than a discourse on the first principles of Christianity. The craving of believers for worship, and for being led deeper into the Divine doctrines of salvation, remains unsatisfied in the chief services in the Church on the Lord's-day; and compensation for this want, and help in these lamentable circumstances, are vainly sought by gathering smaller assemblies together for purposes of edification.

Nothing can be, either for the individual Christian or [246] for the whole Church, what the original celebration of the Holy Sacrament on each Lord's-day was. If this be neglected, and anything else put in its room; and if Christians allow themselves to get accustomed to such a mutilation of the solemn services of the Church of Christ, then we may rest assured that the Divine life in the members of the one body will

gradually dry up. We can scarcely conceive to what a degree Christendom is spiritually famished. The present disquiet among Christians; their running, and seeking, and catching after the dangerous excitement of religious oratory; their anxious acceptance of every newly-invented means of defence against the undeniable danger of increasing infidelity: this all testifies of weakness rather than of true Divine strength.

“The cup of blessing which we bless,” says the Apostle, “is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” 1.Cor. X.16-17.

7.13 Christian Unity a Unity of Life.

The participation of the one heavenly food is a chief means of effecting and maintaining unity in the Church. The unity of the many members of the one body is a unity of life; and where that exists there is true communion. This oneness of life can, however, only exist in the measure in which we abide in Christ, who is the fountain of the new life. And in order that we may abide in Him, and He in us, we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. John VI.56. In communion with the one Head, the members cease to live to

themselves, and live to Him who hath given Himself for us. And as we cease [247] to live to ourselves, we cease to separate ourselves one from another. If Christ be in us, and we in Him, then are we all one. The union of all with the one Lord is the union also of the members with one another.

Many Christians in these days have given up the hope of unity in the Church. The fruitless controversies about doctrine have caused many pious people to turn away from all theological discussion. But the weighty religious questions of our time cannot be settled by being merely ignored. Whoever undervalues the importance of true unity in the Church is liable to be carried away by the deception of supposing that Christians can carry on united works of love and mercy without regard to doctrine or worship. As if division in doctrine, in worship, and in the order of the Church, did not afford proof that the one life from God was wanting. But if the Spirit and life of Christ be wanting, how can our works be the works of Christ in and by us? And if our works be not the works of Christ, then they have no value in the sight of God.

“We are one bread and one body,” says the Apostle; “for we are all partakers of that one bread.” The one heavenly food of which we partake should continually remind us that we are called to unity. And

only in the measure in which the Church of God is “one bread and one body,” can the Lord use her as His instrument for the salvation of men.

7.14 On the Admission of Children to the Lord’s Table.

In conclusion: we must say a few words concerning children partaking of the Holy Sacrament.

It is known to have been the custom of the primitive Church not only to baptize the children of Christian parents, but also in their tenderest years to give them [248] the Holy Supper. For this custom we have the clearest evidence during the first centuries.⁵⁴ It is still maintained in the Greek Church, but not in western Christendom; though it can be shown that as late as the twelfth century little children communicated in the Gallican Church.

The early Christians gave little children the sacrament, on the ground of our Lord’s words, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.” John VI.53.

Doubtless, the question whether little children ought to receive the Holy Supper, cannot be decided

⁵⁴ Bingham’s Antiquities, xv. 4, sect. 7.

by proving their right to receive the sacrament of baptism. Though it may be said, since God has given children the new life in baptism, the heavenly food must also belong to them which He has appointed for the nourishment of that life; yet it does not follow that baptized children immediately need this food, or that it should be dispensed to them in their earliest years. The question concerning children partaking of the communion comes to this, whether a little child can exercise the spiritual life existing in him in such a manner as is requisite for the right receiving of the body and blood of Christ; not whether he can understand the mystery of the sacrament. That mystery no person of mature years has yet understood; least of all, those who insist that children should only be admitted to the Lord’s table when their understanding is fully developed. The question is not whether children can understand, but whether they can believe that the body and blood of Christ are dispensed to them from the holy altar. If they have this faith, and manifest a desire for the heavenly food, then there is no reason [249] why they should not be permitted to partake of the sacrament. In holy baptism they are made members of Christ. The Holy Ghost who dwells in the Church works in them. Why should they not desire the heavenly food? And if the hunger for it be there, why should it not be satisfied? Or is that hunger for the holy repast, which God has wrought in a young

child, to be satisfied by referring him to a time, when, perhaps, he may have lost the simplicity of his faith; and when the grace conferred in his baptism may be so far quenched, that the child, having become a youth, learns indeed his catechism by heart, but no longer believes its contents?

With the faith of the fathers, we have also lost their wisdom in regard to the nourishing of the religious life in children. All must now be done by means of teaching; though a little child is much more accessible to other means of religious training. It cannot understand a sermon; but the devotion of a congregation worshipping in the Spirit will not fail of its effect on the spirit and heart of a child. But how can spiritual life be rightly cared for in a child, when it is doubted whether it exists? And what certainty can we have as to the spiritual regeneration of our children, if we do not believe the work of God in baptism? And how are we likely to have cared for nourishing the Divine life in our children with the heavenly food of the body and blood of Christ, when we have not sought for, nor desired, this food for ourselves as we should have done?

A right understanding of when to dispense the Holy Supper to little children would come of itself, if the Sacrament could regain that consideration which

it had at the beginning, both for the worship of the Church and the internal life of individual Christians. If those of full [250] age learn to commemorate the death of Christ with the primitive purity and solemnity of the rite, and experience what a mighty effect it has upon the advancement of that life which flows from God, they will not fail to bring their children, who are partakers of the same life, as early as possible to the participation of the holy food.

But how shall the Holy Supper become again what it once was? We answer: Only by the Christian congregations becoming again what the first Apostolic Churches were, can the chief service of the Church regain its original purity and its fullness of grace.

8. SACRIFICE AND PRIESTHOOD.

8.1 The Meaning of the Old Testament Sacrifices.

FROM the beginning only one way was open by which sinful man could draw nigh to God: that was through sacrifice. This mode of honouring God was surely no human invention; but God no doubt appointed it, and revealed it to fallen man. The first example in Scripture of a sacrifice acceptable to God, is Abel's sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock. He brought to God a sacrifice of which the blood was

shed. Gen. IV. 3-5. Cain's sacrifice, on the other hand, in which no blood was shed, was not accepted by God. Noah followed the example of Abel. "He builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar." Gen. VIII.20. Abraham did likewise. Gen. XV.9. And when God, by the hand of Moses, set in order the holy service of His house in the midst of His chosen people, He confirmed, renewed, and perfected that mode of worship which had from the first existed among the children of men. The sacrifice of four-footed beasts and of fowls was commanded by the law.

If we, in the light of the grace conferred upon us as Christians, look back upon that Divine law, according to which no man from Adam downwards could venture to approach God without shedding of blood, we must [252] recognise in this Divine ordinance the incontestible testimony of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Gen. II.16-17. Man ate of that tree; and if he remained in life, if death did not

immediately exterminate him from the earth, it was because God had chosen one for Himself, Who being without sin, should yet taste death for every man. Heb. II.9. Only by looking upon the future death of the righteous One could God endure the sight of sinful man, and could fallen man dare to appear before the most holy God. After the fall no acceptable worship could be offered to God by man except such as bare witness to the future sacrificial death of Christ.

The blood of bulls and of goats, says the Apostle, cannot take away sin, nor cleanse the conscience; but through them remembrance is made of sin. Heb. X.2-4.

The sacrifice of beasts had in itself no value before God; as little could it help sinful man in his need. But by means of it the great truths, which are the foundation of all true knowledge and worship of God among men, are by acts set forth and kept in remembrance. The individual who brought the offering testified to the impassable chasm which sin had occasioned between him and a holy God; and in offering up not his own life but that of another, that of a guiltless victim, he testified to his own inability to redeem himself, and the need of a pure, spotless, and vicarious sacrifice, in order to turn away the righteous anger of God, and free the heavy-laden conscience of

man from its burden. In the fate of [253] the dying beast that was sacrificed, he that offered it was to recognise his own guilt and his own well-deserved punishment. That death which fell upon the victim, was what he himself had to expect if in his sinful condition he ventured to draw nigh to a holy God. And while the death of the sacrifice testified to the unchangeable righteousness of God, and to His holy law; the acceptance of the slain offering upon the altar opened to man the hope of a future acceptance with God, when the punishment merited by him should have been endured by another.

But we are not to consider the sacrifices which were offered previous to the Christian dispensation merely as a testimony to the future death of Christ, and God's acceptance of Him, and to our death and acceptance in Him. They were also, so long as the perfect Sacrifice had not yet appeared, the way of true worship and honouring of the name of God. And those who took part in that service, in faith, and in obedience to God's command, gave God the glory due to him, and received the blessing of Divine consolation and heavenly enlightenment.

Compared with the worship in the Church of Christ, the service of the tabernacle was only as the shadow and symbol of good things to come; yet the

blessings conveyed by it were so great, that the Psalmist could cry out with truth, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.....For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Psalm LXXXIV.1,2,10. [254].

8.2 Christ the Lamb of God.

When Christ appeared, and His Church was established on earth, the Old Testament sacrifices ceased. When the true and all-sufficient Sacrifice was offered, He became the source and the foundation of a more perfect manner of glorifying God on earth; and the merely symbolical sacrifices of the Old Testament were necessarily abolished.

"Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," was the testimony of John the Baptist to our blessed Saviour. John I. 29. "God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." 2.Cor. V.21. "He laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." Isa. LIII.6. Conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, He was the Lamb without spot or blemish, through whose precious blood we are redeemed.

1.Peter I.19. Made under the law, Gal. IV.4. He fulfilled all righteousness, Matt. III.15, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Phil. II.8. “He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God: and by His stripes we are healed. 1.Peter III.18; II.24.

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” John III.16. That great Sacrifice whereby God hath reconciled the world unto Himself, is His free gift. And the gift which God bestowed to save a sinful world, was no less than His own only begotten Son. O wonder of Divine love and Divine compassion! And the Son, whose delight it was from all eternity to do His Father’s will, said, “Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God.” Heb. X.9. He was ready to accomplish the Divine purpose in the redemption of man; and the Holy Ghost, Who is God with the Father and the Son, accomplished that great mystery by which the Son of God became flesh.

8.3 The Atonement Accomplished on the Cross.

The Son of God made flesh is the perfect, all-sufficient [255] sacrifice which God has provided; whose appearing was the hope of believers in all ages; and whose death was foreshadowed in the sufferings

and death of those victims offered up to God under the Old Testament.

On the cross His blood was shed. There He died as an atoning sacrifice. He suffered once for all. He died once for all. “He died unto sin once,” saith the Scripture, but “being raised from the dead, He dieth no more. Rom. VI. 9, 10.

The death of Christ was accomplished once for all, at an appointed place, and at an appointed time. What took place at Golgotha, when, having exclaimed, “It is finished,” He bowed His sacred head and died, John XIX.30, can never be either continued or repeated.

Under the law fresh victims were continually offered up, because it was impossible that the blood of beasts could make reconciliation for sin. But after Christ appeared, and His blood was shed, no further atoning sacrifice could take place, Heb. X.1-18; and any worship in which the sufferings and atoning death of Christ are professedly continued or repeated, is an actual denial of that perfect atonement which was accomplished on the cross.

8.4 It is Celebrated in the Church as an Act already Done.

But a worship wherein the work of Christ, which was finished on the cross, is shown forth and presented in memorial before God, is, not the denial, but the continual manifestation in act of the finished atonement. It sets forth the glory of God, and is the highest mode of magnifying His name; for it testifies, as no other service or act of worship can, the love of the Father and the perfect obedience of His Son. Such a service God has appointed in His Church. It is indeed the peculiar act of worship belonging to the Church of Christ, which can only be solemnised in the Church and by Christians [256].

8.5 Priesthood – The Relation between the Levitical Priesthood and the Priesthood of our Lord.

But before we proceed to a further consideration of this holy service, we must say what is necessary in regard to priesthood generally, and especially in regard to the Melchisedec priesthood of our Lord.

Sacrifice and priesthood are inseparable from one another. Both are of Divine appointment, and have their origin and their final fulfilment in the purpose of God concerning His Son. Man might only approach to God through sacrifice; and the Divine commission, which enabled him to appear before God, was of the

nature of priesthood. As he had no right to choose how he was to appear before God, just as little might he venture on his own authority to present anything to God either for himself or others, or to dispense anything from God.

The *family* was the first Divine ordinance on earth. In it we find the root and principle of all others. The father, as head of the family, was invested with the priestly office; but as he was head only of his own family, his right to appear before God, and to bless others in God's name, was limited to his family and household.

When the time came for a worship which should extend beyond the limits of the family - when the common worship of a whole people was to be presented to God, and the people were to receive from Him a common blessing - the priestly office of the head of the family no longer sufficed for such a service. A renewal and extension of the Divine commission, a higher endowment and qualification were necessary; and God chose Aaron and his sons, and consecrated them to be His priests, that they might serve Him in His sanctuary. Exodus XXVIII. and XXIX.

But the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood, though of [257] Divine appointment, was not intended to con-

tinue for ever. It was appointed by God for that worship which had fulfilled its highest end when the true Sacrifice appeared; and in the change of the service, the priesthood necessarily was changed. The relation of the sacrifices under the law to the sacrifice of Christ, marks the relation of the Levitical priesthood to our Lord's own priesthood. The sacrifices of the law, though appointed of God, must necessarily cease, because they consisted of beasts, which were only types of the eternal all-sufficient Sacrifice. Aaron, as head of the Levitical priesthood, was appointed of God; but as he was only a type of Christ, not himself possessing the eternal priesthood, so must his priesthood necessarily give way to that true and eternal priesthood with which the Son was to be invested of the Father.

It is said concerning our Lord, "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared: though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He

became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him; called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. V.5-10.

8.6 Christ the High Priest after the Order of Melchisedec.

While our Lord dwelt in mortal flesh on earth, He was not yet set as High Priest by God. As the eternal Son of the Father, He was, in the counsel of God, the Lamb [258] slain before the foundation of the world, comp. 1.Peter I.19-20; Rev. XIII.8; and also the holder of the unchangeable priesthood. But as it regarded the revelation and fulfilment of the Divine will, He was on the cross the victim slain; and only after His resurrection He became the priest according to the power of an endless life; concerning whom it is said, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Psalm CX.4; comp. Heb. VII.

He who was to be set by God as the eternal High Priest, and to be the true mediator between God and men, 1.Tim. II.5; must first be made like to His brethren, and be tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest before God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the world. Though He was the Son of the

Highest, yet in His flesh must He learn obedience through suffering. When He had yielded a perfect obedience, even to the death of the cross, God raised Him to His own right hand, causing Him to be born, as it were, the second time out of the jaws of hell and death, Heb. V.5; Acts XIII.33; and put upon Him the honour of being the true and eternal High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

After His resurrection and ascension, the Lord entered upon His high priestly office in the Holiest of all. As formerly the typical high priest under the law, on the great day of atonement, entered through the veil with the blood of the sin offering into the most holy place; so Christ with His own blood passed into the Holiest of all, even heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us. Heb. IX.12,24. And this His service in heaven continues until He appears the second time unto them that look for Him, without sin unto salvation. Heb. IX.28. [259].

“If He were on earth,” says the Apostle concerning our Lord, “He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.” Heb. VIII.4-5. But although His priestly office is exercised in heaven and not on earth, He yet exercises it as Head of His Church. As High Priest, He is

“a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Heb. VIII.2. This tabernacle is His Church, His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; one with Him as He is one with the Father. Eph. V. 30; John XVII.21. In the Church His acts are manifested; in His Church must be revealed not only what He did when on earth, but what He is now doing as High Priest in heaven.

“What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” Mark X.9.⁵⁵

Whoever will have the Church without the Lord, or the Lord without the Church, separates that which God has joined together. Wherever the Church comes forward independently, seeking her own honour and glory, and acting as though she were the saviour of the world, and the mediator between God and men, she tempts men to reject her as a liar and a deceiver. And by her rejection of her heavenly Head, she calls for the rejection of His mystical body.

⁵⁵ These words of our Lord were spoken concerning marriage; but as the union between Christ and His Church is the antitype of the union between man and woman in marriage (Eph. V.31-32), they may with propriety be applied to that relation. (Comp. Eph. II.6; Phil. III.20.)

8.7 The Peculiar Glory of the Christian Worship.

Faith does not separate what God has joined together. It sees Christ in the Church and the Church in Christ. To faith there is no contradiction between the priesthood [260] of Christ in heaven, and His priesthood in His Church on earth. The Church is dead with Christ, and is risen with Him. He has set her by the Spirit with Himself in heaven. His life is in her. She is anointed with His Spirit. He is present in her through the Holy Ghost. What He does as the Head in heaven must be experienced in her as His body. Her acts must be Christ's acts in and by her. Is He priest, and does He minister as priest in the most holy place in heaven? Then must He also be recognised as priest in His Church; and there can be no ministration in His Church which is not the ministry of the Heavenly Priest. If His priestly office in heaven consist in glorifying God and blessing men; so must the worship of God and the blessing of men be also that in which His Church is employed, or rather, that which He does in and through her.

In this unity of the Church with Christ, the peculiarity and the especial glory of Christian worship consists.

The worship of the tabernacle was instituted of God, and it had a deep and spiritual signification, through its connection with heavenly and future things, concerning which the Apostle speaks in the epistle to the Hebrews, chap. VIII.5, and X.1. On the mount these future things were shown to Moses in a figure; and after this figure or pattern he was to order all things in the Mosaic worship. But those things which he established were only the shadows and types of the heavenly glory; the "very image" of this glory (Heb. X.1) could only be revealed in the Church, the true tabernacle, where it gives its essential character to Christian worship.

In His double character of victim and priest the Lord is personally present in the invisible before God. He [261] has not ceased to be the Lamb of God because He has become God's priest. From the beginning God saw in Him the Lamb that should take away the sin of the world; and after He had taken flesh, had suffered on the cross, and had ascended to heaven, He appears in heaven as "a Lamb as it had been slain." Rev. V.6.

In this double character, as sacrifice and priest, He is present in His Church by the Holy Ghost. He is manifested by her in all that she does; and especially

when she celebrates that holy rite which He has instituted as the memorial of His completed atonement.

When the Church assembles for a right and worthy celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the eye of faith sees the glory of heaven in the midst of her. Christ, as the Lamb of God who died on the cross, appears on the altar in the consecrated elements of the glorious sacrament. His body and blood are the body and blood of One who was dead, and behold He liveth. Christ, as invested with the eternal priesthood, is present in those who are clothed with His authority, who worship God, and bestow benediction on men in His name.

8.8 The Holy Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is not the “very image” of the terrible events on Golgotha, when the Son of God suffered a cruel death by the hands of wicked men. It is the image of what now takes place in heaven. And as the sufferings and death of Christ are not renewed or continued there, just as little are they so in solemnizing the Eucharist in the Church. The Eucharist cannot make atonement for men with God; but *it is that rite whereby the atonement, as a finished and completed act, is set forth before God and men; and whereby, on the ground of the finished atonement, men*

become partakers. of the highest heavenly blessings.[262].

8.9 In what Sense it is a Sacrifice.

There has been much disputation in the Church as to whether the Holy Supper be a sacrifice or not. A sacrifice, in the sense in which Christ was a sacrifice on the cross, it certainly is not. For in that case every time the sacrament is celebrated our Lord must again suffer and die for the sins of the world, which is contrary to all truth. Heb. X.1-18. But in the sense in which the Lord in heaven is the finished, and eternally-prevailing sacrifice, to the praise of God and the blessing of men; in that sense must the sacrament be the sacrifice of the Church. In other words, it is not a sacrifice to make atonement for sin, but it is the Church's great thank-offering.

The death of Christ on the cross is the eternal foundation of all glorifying of God and blessing of men. This death has been accomplished. The hour in which God in flesh tasted death for every man belongs to the past, and cannot return. But the proof that His work on the cross has been accomplished lies in this, that He who is now in heaven is the same who died on earth. The Lamb who was slain on earth lives in heaven, and there proclaims by His presence

the finished atonement; and is the eternal and inexhaustible fountain of all glory to God, and the indispensable ground of all blessing to men.

In the same way, the Eucharist proclaims in the Church that our Lord's atoning death has been accomplished. 1.Cor. XI.26. The presence of His body and blood bears sure witness to eternal redemption through His blood; and the rite by which this presence is accomplished, is the highest act by which the Church glorifies the name of God, and the sure pledge of God's favour to His people [263].

8.10 How the Primitive Church understood the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The Eucharist has always been considered a thank-offering by the Church. It was acknowledged as the especial sacrifice offered under the New Testament; and it was called, in opposition to the bloody sacrifices of brute beasts under the law, the Church's reasonable and unbloody sacrifice. The teachers of the second century, such as Justin Martyr⁵⁶ and Irenæus,⁵⁷ speak in this way of the Holy Supper; and the Liturgies which still remain to us from the earliest

⁵⁶ Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, c. 117.

⁵⁷ Against the Gnostics, iv. c. 17, 18.

times testify that the Christians of the first centuries all offered the Holy Supper as a sacrifice. Even to this day it is only the Churches of the Reformation, and not even all of these, that do not celebrate the sacrament as a sacrifice. All other Christians - all those whose Church ordinances have come down to them from early times - agree in this, that they do not merely enjoy this sacrament as heavenly food, but first honour God therewith, presenting it as the most costly offering in His Church.

The Fathers are often treated as Scripture itself is treated; each party in the Church finding in them the confirmation of their own doctrines. Yet no one will deny that in the early Church the sacrament of the altar was as universally looked upon by the Fathers as a sacrifice, as the sacrament of holy baptism was considered the sacrament for spiritual regeneration. It must strike every Christian, who meditates on this subject, that the first Christians could never intend to worship God in such a manner in the Church, as would have been far excelled in truth and depth of meaning by the worship of the tabernacle. This, however, would doubtless have been the case, if, as some think, they [264] meant and thought of nothing more in the Holy Sacrament than an acknowledgement of God as Lord and Creator, through the presenting of bread and wine as the first-fruits of His creatures.

Such a service, which would testify nothing concerning either the fall or the atonement, would be, even among heathens, a denial of the testimony of God in the conscience of man. But among Christians, and among the Christians of the second century, to believe that they in the celebration of the sacrament, should have thought of no other honouring of God than that of the offering of bread and wine, were indeed to think little of their Christianity.

Scarcely less defective is the view according to which the idea of the sacramental sacrifice in the ancient Church, was the offering and dedication of the Church itself to God; for although reasonable men dedicating themselves by faith to God, is a higher service than the symbolic offering of bread and wine, yet it is insufficient as forming the highest act of worship in the Church of Christ. Only when, in addition to the offering of bread and wine, and the dedication of the congregation themselves by faith to God, there is added also the offering of the consecrated elements, as containing in them the presence of the sacrifice of Christ; only then does Christian worship attain to its especial glory and perfection. And this last, which is the very crowning point of the eucharistic rite, is, no less than the two others, contained in the idea of the sacrifice as held by the early Church.

But it does not follow from this that the primitive Church attached to the celebration of the Eucharist any idea of *atonement*. There are expressions in the later ecclesiastical writers, as for example in the catechetical [265] discourses of Cyril (A.D. 350),⁵⁸ which would allow of such an interpretation. But besides that, we cannot take single expressions of the Fathers as determining the doctrine of the Church; such a doctrine, according to which the atonement is represented as not yet having taken place, or as not being fully accomplished, is so contrary to the words of Holy Scripture, and to the analogy of the whole Christian faith, that it cannot be entertained.

⁵⁸ In the Twenty-third Discourse (Catech. Myst. v. 5, 6) we find the following: "After we have sanctified ourselves by this spiritual song of praise the (Hymn of the Seraphim), we entreat the most gracious God to send down the Holy Ghost upon the gifts lying on the altar, in order that He may make the bread to be the body of Christ, and the wine to be His blood. Then, when the unbloody service is perfectly prepared, we entreat God, having regard to this atoning sacrifice, for the general peace of the Church, for the welfare of the world, for the Emperors, their armies, and allies; for all in sickness and suffering, for all needing aid. Remembering also those who have fallen asleep - the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs - that God, through their prayers and intercessions, will receive our supplications. (?) Then we pray for the departed holy fathers and bishops, and all who have departed this life; believing that each soul receives great benefit when such prayer is offered for them before the holy and awful sacrifice."

But we go too far when, out of anxiety not to obscure or interfere with the work of Christ on the cross, we would rob the Christian worship of what is most essential to it, and what gives it its Divine sanctity. This we do, when we would know and worship God in His Church with that only which pious men can contribute, and would shut out from our worship all idea of the presence of Christ's sacrifice. Wherein, in that case, is the worship of the Church so much more glorious and excellent than that of the tabernacle? There, the true [266] Sacrifice, being yet future, was typified by sacrifices of animals ordained of God, and a continual testimony borne to the true mode of worship. And after the true Sacrifice has appeared, and been accepted of God, shall no act of worship in the Church set forth the atoning death of this Sacrifice, or its presence now in heaven? Shall the very essence and image of that which was only typified and shadowed forth in the tabernacle, be in the Church, and yet her worship contain no manifestation of the presence of the sacrifice of Christ? Or where is this manifestation to be found, if not in the presence of His body and blood? And if that is the practical showing forth of His atoning death, and at the same time the image of His appearance now at the heavenly altar, Rev. VIII.3; shall this sacrament then be no sacrifice? - shall it be given to the Church, not to the honour or praise of God, but only as food for men? What

does the apostle mean when he says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle"? Heb. XIII.10. Or when, in 1.Cor. X. 18-21, he makes a comparison between the sacrificial feasts of the Jews and heathen and the Holy Sacrament? Can there be an altar in the Christian Church, whereof we eat, and yet no sacrifice upon the altar? Or is the sacrifice upon the altar to be merely eaten, and not first offered to God? In the following chapter of the same epistle, St. Paul says, that as often as the Church celebrates this sacrament, she shows forth the Lord's death till He come. 1.Cor. XI.26. Is not this plainly to declare that the celebration of the sacrament is the manifestation of the accomplished atonement? - and shall this be merely for men's sake, and not be, at the same time, and, above all, to the glory of God? Or can anything which it is [267] possible for the Church to present, be more to the praise or glory of God than the body and blood of His own Son - the lively image of the one true and sufficient Sacrifice, whereby He has reconciled the world to Himself, and for the sake of which He hears the prayers of His Church?

8.11 The Relation between Preaching and Worship.

We have already repeatedly pointed out that any partiality or one-sidedness in spiritual things calls forth the opposite extreme. When preaching had long been neglected in the Church, and men, in consequence of this neglect, had sunk into superstition and ignorance; we need not be surprised if to such a period another succeeded, in which the declaration of the Word of God was held to be the only necessary and important thing. The worship of the Church was then in danger of being changed into a mere meeting for preaching. And where this condition of things has lasted through generations, the consciousness of the change has been lost, and men suppose that their church services should be, and were at the beginning, nothing more than so many people coming together to hear a sermon.

The spiritually-minded will not contend as to whether preaching or sacraments are the more important. Both are ordained of God, and are absolutely essential. The same Lord who commissioned His Apostles to preach and to teach, commanded them also to celebrate the sacrament in remembrance of Him. If preaching be neglected, or not exercised as it should be, the Church will not be in a condition rightly to celebrate the sacrament. For only a Church which, through a right handling of the Word of God, has

been cleansed, instructed, and upheld in the faith, can worship in spirit and in truth [268].

Again, if the celebration of the sacrament be neglected, or fall into decay, preaching will gradually lose its true unction and purity; and mere fleshly oratory and idolatry of men will take the place of that chaste, simple, but effectual declaration of Divine truth, which pierces to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow.

Christ's command to His Apostles can only be adequately fulfilled, when in a Church the Word is fully and faithfully declared according to the mind of God; and at the same time the worship retains its high place and importance.

The highest aim of all preaching must be the glory of God. Therefore St. Paul speaks of himself as of a minister of Christ among the heathen, "ministering the gospel of God (as in a priestly office, *ἱερουργουῖα*), that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost," Rom. XV.16; that is, Paul as minister of Christ and preacher of the gospel, did not labour merely to convert men, and to impart to them Divine blessings; but also that God's name might be glorified

among men, and that men might become an acceptable offering to Him for His praise.

There is therefore, no better criterion as to the success of preaching in any Church, than the condition of the worship, I mean the public worship in the house of God. For, although a heart full of devotion must be at all times in the Christian, and not merely on occasions of public worship; and although our daily life must necessarily be an offering to God, if the worship of the Church is to attain that character: yet the solemn assemblies of the faithful, when they appear as one before God, must always afford the chief and most adequate opportunity by which to measure the devotedness, piety, and desire [269] to honour God's Name existing in a congregation. If Christians, when they solemnly assemble in the Name of the Lord, seek nothing more than to hear something about God, and to receive blessings from Him; if they have no longing after worship, and after a full and undivided surrender of the heart to God; if there be no love which seeks vent in praise and thanksgiving; no desire to glorify God's Name, and to lay all at His feet; to appear before His throne, and in deepest devotion to render to Him the honour that belongs to Him; - then may we be assured that preaching has not yet brought forth its best and fairest fruits.

8.12 The Worship of the Church Sacrificial.

It is a sign of false humility, or of extreme want of understanding, when any one maintains that the worship of the Church can have no sacrificial character, because we have nothing to offer to God, but are called upon merely to receive something from Him. That we, as God's creatures, can offer Him nothing that is not already His own, is a matter of course; and that we, as sinful men, are both unworthy and incapable of drawing near to God, can admit of no doubt among Christians. But it does not follow from this that no worship, having a sacrificial character, can take place in the Church. The Apostle Paul says, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Rom. XII.1. And Peter exhorts the faithful, that they, as lively stones, are to be "built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1.Peter II.5.

As redeemed by Christ's blood, and in Him new [270] creatures and partakers of a Divine life, we can and ought to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. Such sacrifices are made possible by Christ's sacrifice.

Without his sacrifice they would have no value in God's sight - they could not be acceptable to Him. God accepts them only on account of Christ's sacrifice; only in so far as they are the fruits of His sufferings and death, the fruits of His perfect obedience, can they be brought into God's presence, and serve to glorify His Name. Therefore that rite, whereby the One Sacrifice of Christ is shown forth, must be the centre and foundation of all other sacrifices in the Church. The willing devoting of our earthly substance, the renewing of our vows, and every service whereby we present ourselves to God and testify His right to all that we are and have, as well as the praise and prayer in the Church, are spiritual sacrifices and necessary parts of Christian worship. But the worship of the Church receives its especial sanctity and glory from the presence of the body and blood of Christ. And the presenting of these mysterious emblems of the One Sacrifice, finished and perfected on the Cross; whereby the Church testifies her faith in the perfect atonement, and acknowledges the work of Christ as the alone source of glory to God from man, is the highest and most solemn act of human worship. Without it, it is impossible to maintain Christian worship in its true dignity, or to beget in the individual Christian the spirit of true adoration and deep devotion. When the Eucharistic Sacrifice disappears from the altar a blank is left which nothing can fill up; and

the worship of the Church sinks down to a service not essentially differing from that of a missionary preaching the gospel, or from private meetings held for edification [271].

8.13 The Intercessory Prayers at the Eucharist Service.

The especial power of Christian prayer lies in the acknowledgement of the finished atonement. Through the blood of Jesus we have access into the holiest of all. He has opened for us a new and living way through the veil, that is His flesh. Heb. X.19-20. Whenever we direct our prayers to God, we bring to mind the sufferings and merits of His Son, and expect to be heard for Christ's sake. But in the Eucharist this bringing to mind of the finished atonement is not merely by words, but by the presence of the body and blood of Him who suffered on the Cross for us and all mankind. Therefore in the Christian Church there is no more proper occasion for presenting intercession before God and no more effectual mode of doing so, than at the celebration of the Eucharist; as there is also no other rite so suited to fill the hearts of the faithful with thankfulness.

This explains the reason why the first Christians, according to all ancient testimony in the Church,⁵⁹ always accompanied the celebration of the Eucharist by a solemn giving of thanks, and a very full intercession for the welfare of the Church and all mankind.

The departed were also commemorated. Prayer was not made for their being freed from a place of torment; but, because the Church believed in the “Communion of Saints,” and the Eucharist is celebrated in remembrance of the One Offering, through the merits of which those who sleep hope for a final perfecting and glory; therefore they were brought in remembrance before God, thanks offered for the grace bestowed on them, and prayer made for their speedy perfecting and gathering together at the coming of the Lord. How could it be otherwise? How could the Church appear in her [272] oneness before God, and bring in remembrance before Him the great act of our redemption, without mentioning our brethren who have fallen asleep, members with us of the same body, and heirs of the same blessedness? Is there no love for them - no longing after them? What may be possible for them in their present condition we do not know, but we know that we, the living, are in a condition to remember them before God; we know that the

⁵⁹ Bingham's *Antiquities*, xv. 3.

altar of God is erected in the midst of us, and the symbol of the heavenly glory is present, and that God therefore expects from us, that we should pray not only for our own perfecting, but for theirs also. Shall we pray for our own change and translation at the coming of Christ, and not for their resurrection? What is the cry of the souls under the altar, “who were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” ? Is it not full of desire for the coming judgment? Rev. VI.10. And shall it find no response in the hearts of the living, who are gathered round the same altar for the worship of God?

8.14 The Priesthood of the Church.

The presence of the Eucharistic Sacrifice testifies to the presence in heaven of the One True and Perfect Sacrifice.

So also of the *priesthood* in the Church; far from being a denial of the priesthood of Christ, it is rather a testimony to His priesthood in heaven. Priests like to Aaron and his sons no longer exist. The head of the Levitical priesthood was a mortal man on earth. Not only the sons of Aaron but Aaron himself the high priest, ministered in the visible and perishable sanctuary; and when he went into the holiest of all, it was only into that made with hands, which served unto

the [273] example and shadow of heavenly things. The Head and possessor of the Christian priesthood is no mortal man. It is He that has risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, who has become the High Priest of the Church, the true tabernacle; and whatever exists of priesthood in the Church, flows from, and is the exercise of, His priestly authority. If mortal men participate in His priesthood, it is because they participate in His death and resurrection; because they are exalted with Him into the heavenly condition, and are anointed with His Spirit. As such - as mystically one with Him, He in them, and they in Him - they are partakers of His priestly dignity.

And as not only office-bearers in the Church, but all the baptized are in Christ, and partakers of His Spirit, therefore the whole Church shares in the priestly character of her Heavenly Head. "Ye are built up," says St. Peter, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood." 1.Pet. II.5. But it were a singular thing if the whole Church were to have part in the priestly dignity of the Lord, and those members of the body alone to be excluded whom He has especially called and appointed to active ministry in His house. Is there then any active ministry in the Church which can be acceptable to God unless it be the operation of Christ? And is He not the High Priest, the minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which God

pitched, and not man? And if it is the Priest in the heavens, who in and through His servants, ministers in the sanctuary, can their ministry not be a priestly service? - and if it be a priestly service, are not those who minister priests? Most certainly they are priests - priests in a far higher and more perfect sense than were the sons of Aaron [274].

Oh, that all ministers of Christ had the consciousness, in every ministry which they exercise, that He, in whose name and by whose authority they act, is God's High Priest in heaven! Then it would not be so difficult for the weak in faith to believe in the presence of that Heavenly Priest in His Church.

As High Priest in heaven, the Lord is the head of all true worship and glorifying of the name of God, and the source of all Divine blessing dispensed to men. In this double ministry to God and to man, He is recognised and acknowledged in His Church, when by His ministers He both leads the holy services of His house, and blesses His children. As in heaven He makes intercession on the ground of His finished sacrifice, of which He Himself is the living memorial, so intercession is made in His Church at the time when that rite is solemnized, in which His death is commemorated; and then also the heavenly food is dispensed by those who minister at the altar, fulfilling

His priestly office. Yet not only at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, but in every service appointed of God in the Church, when God's name is glorified, and men are blessed, we Christians should see in His ministers the Heavenly Priest; and only in so far as we do this, do we walk in faith and in the Holy Ghost - do we cease to give that glory to men which belongs to God - and can we expect to partake fully of the Divine blessing.

But where is the faith which sees the heavenly High Priest in His sanctuary? Where is the faith in the presence of Christ in all the offices, ordinances, and holy services of His house? And if this faith is generally so vainly looked for, shall we wonder that the Church has ceased, in the eyes and consciousness of many [275] Christians, to be the dwelling-place of the Most High; that the services appear cold and empty; that reverence and devotion have disappeared from the hearts of men; that the highest and most glorious service of the Church; which from the commencement manifested itself to be the richest source of heavenly blessing, should be celebrated so seldom, and be so little appreciated; that men at last know not how to make any distinction between the high and solemn services of the house of God, and any voluntary self-devised mode of religious edification; that even pious men deal with Divine things without restraint or ten-

derness; and seek to do the works of Christ without any Divine sanction, without being sent of Him?

8.15 The Church the Kingdom in a Mystery.

The Church is the kingdom of heaven in a mystery - in hidden, not in visible glory. The worship of the Church, the solemn adoration of God in His sanctuary, is as a preparatory school for the future blessed service of the saints; and gives believers, while yet surrounded by corruption and mortality, a foretaste of the coming deliverance.

8.16 Ministry has its Root in Worship.

The whole ministry in the Church must have its root in the worship, and must receive from it its true sacredness, depth, and power. The altar of the Lord must be the centre from which men are blessed, and to which the hearts of believers are drawn in holy longing. Is it defiled by men - does it stand empty and forsaken? - then desolation has reached the heart of the sanctuary; and an effectual healing of other evils is not to be thought of, until it is again cleansed and set up - till the worship of the Church has regained its original truth and depth, and glorious fullness [276].

Any reformation which does not lead to a purifying and restoration of *worship*, and especially of the Eucharistic Service, may have begun in what was right, but must fail in attaining the right end. The commencement of the purifying and restoration of the Church indeed must be through preaching and instruction. Faith must be awakened; knowledge of God, and understanding of His ways; desire after Him and His holy presence must exist; if the service of the altar is to become again what it was at the beginning. But if this service is not restored - if preaching does not lead to worship - if the pulpit more and more takes the place of the altar, and at length becomes the very centre of the Church service - then we may be convinced that the work of real reformation is not advancing.

Preaching is always necessary, not only for the conversion of unbelievers, but also for the confirming, renewing, and advancing of believers. But without the service at the altar, no congregation can be sanctified and prepared for the coming of Christ. What prayer is to the life of the individual Christian, such is worship in the Church, for the maintenance and growth of life in the whole Church. When the Church of God rises into worship, the gates of heaven are opened to her, and she enters into the presence of the Most High. The nearness of the Lord's presence, as experienced

in worship, frees from the burden and vanity of this transitory world. The spirit of man becomes purified and strengthened in communion with the living God. The desire after perfection and eternal union with the heavenly Bridegroom is nourished and increased. And as worshippers of the true triune God, in the communion of the Holy Catholic Church, we shall be found ready with all saints [277], those that sleep, as well as those that remain and are alive, to be gathered to the Lord when He comes. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. *Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.* Psalm L. 3-5.

8.17 Tithes.

We will conclude with a few words upon the payment of tithes. The solemn acknowledgement of God as the possessor of heaven and earth, through the payment of the tenth part of our earthly income, is no Mosaic institution, and is not among those ordinances of the law which are to have only a spiritual fulfilment in the Church. It stands rather on a similar footing with the Sabbath. The keeping holy of the Sabbath was commanded by the law, but had not its

origin in the law; for from the beginning God had blessed and sanctified that day. Gen. II.3. The law says, "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." Lev. XXVII.30. But before the law was given the patriarchs already paid tithes. Gen. XIV.20; XXVIII.22.

Through the sanctifying of the Sabbath, we testify that we are God's creatures; and that to Him we owe not the seventh day only, but all the days of our lives. Through the separating and sanctifying of the tenth part of our earthly substance, we testify that not only this part, but all our earthly possessions are God's property. Christianity does not deny God as Creator, and therefore, from the beginning, a seventh part of time has been sanctified to Him in the Church; although the day was changed, in order to celebrate not only the completion [278] of the first creation, but also of the second in Christ. In like manner Christianity does not free us from the duty of acknowledging God as possessor of heaven and earth; therefore in all times Christians have paid tithes.

The duty of our paying tithes, however, appears in Holy Scripture in a still more solemn and distinct light. Under the law the children of Levi took tithes, because the tenth part of all earthly substance be-

longs to God, and He gave it to them, who being devoted to His service had no other earthly possession. Numb. XVIII.20-21. But the children of Levi had not the original and permanent right to that part of the earthly possession which was consecrated to God. Another had received tithes before them. We read, "Melchisedec king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all." Gen. XIV.18-20. The appearance of Melchisedec, and the acknowledgement of him by Abraham, before Levi or the law existed, is a testimony that the Jewish priesthood, and the worship of God under the law, were not the original or enduring form of priesthood or of worship; and that not to Levi but to Melchisedec pertained the especial right to tithes. Melchisedec was, however, according to the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, the representative of the true and eternal priesthood, of which Christ is the possessor. Therefore to our Lord, as to the "high priest after the order of Melchisedec," belongs that acknowledgement and honour testified by the payment of tithes. And Christians, as having received the blessing of [279] Melchisedec, are under, if possible, a yet stronger obligation than the Jews to

present to God the tenth part of their earthly substance. "Here men that die receive tithes: but there He receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that He liveth." Heb. VIII.8.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." Ps. XXIV.1. And though He has given it to man to occupy, He (Gen. IX.1-3) has not given up His right as possessor. As such, He requires always to be acknowledged, not only in word but in deed. Whoever offers no tithe to God, denies in fact His right to all that we have. He deals with his earthly possessions as though he, not God, were the possessor of them. And as God has given to Christ, the King of righteousness and peace, Heb. VII.2, the eternal High Priest, all power in heaven and earth - when we keep back our tithes, we deny Christ as Priest of the Most High God, and must lose the blessing with which He blesses the true children of Abraham. "Will a man rob God?" says the last of the prophets, who proclaimed the coming judgement, "Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall

not be room enough to receive it." Mal. III.8-10. God knows the hearts of men. He knows how they cling to their earthly possessions - how easy it is for them to serve God with their lips - but how hardly they can resolve to offer to Him that which they possess, gold or silver, or land. Therefore He makes the bringing up of tithes to be the measure or criterion of [280] His people's faithfulness; and promises the fullness of the Divine blessing to those who have faith enough conscientiously to fulfil God's command in this matter.

There can be no doubt that the custom of paying tithes, which dates from the earliest times in the Christian Church, was originally an apostolic injunction, proceeding from a right understanding and believing acknowledgement of the Melchisedec priesthood of our Lord. Concerning this, as concerning the baptism of infants, we find the custom existing from the earliest times, without being able to show where it originated.

As we have already seen, the principle on which the duty of paying tithes rests, can be equally proved from the Old and from the New Testament.

Of the first Christians at Jerusalem it is said, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that

ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” Acts IV.32. The principle that all that we have belongs to God and to Christ, and consequently to the Church, as the body of Christ, must always be acknowledged by the Christian. But it does not follow from this that we are to sell our possessions, and lay the price at the feet of God’s ministers. Acts IV.34-35. The principle, however, which in especial cases could lead to the entire surrender of earthly possessions, must in no case remain a mere dead letter. All Christians should show in act that they do not consider themselves as the real proprietors of their worldly goods; and God’s appointed way of doing this is the payment of tithes. Of course the fulfilment of this command must proceed from faith, and must be left to the conscience of each individual [281].

Tithes belong unto the Lord. They are His portion as Priest of the Most High. They should be brought up to His altar; and having been solemnly presented to Him, they are by Him given for the sustenance of those who minister at His altar.

This is the perfect way of the Lord, whereby He provides for the bodily wants of His servants. Every other way of maintaining God’s ministers leads to

evils that have a most hurtful influence on the life of the Church.

If the clergy live upon Church property; if, as a class, they become enriched, then they sink into worldliness and love of enjoyment.

If they are supported by the State, they lose their heavenly character, and become servants of the State.

If they live upon the voluntary contributions of the congregation, then they become the servants of men.

Only when the Church pays tithes as to God and to Christ, and the priests live upon that which they receive from the altar of God, will they be in a condition to serve men without proving false to their heavenly calling and commission; and will preserve their priestly dignity, without exercising tyranny over the souls of men.

9. THE WORK OF PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD.

9.1 Analogy between the State of Things among God’s People at the

First and at the Second Advent of Christ.

WHEN our Lord appeared in the midst of His chosen people, about four centuries had elapsed since the voice of the last prophet had been heard in Israel. The word with which the prophecy of the Old Testament closes, is a word of warning and reproof. For the last time God sets before His people their sins, calls them to repentance, and proclaims the coming judgement. As the righteous God, who is no respecter of persons, He spares neither priest nor people. The priests have profaned His name, Mal.I.12; the covenant of Levi is corrupted, Mal. II.8; and if they will not hear, and will not lay it to heart, He will even send a curse upon them, and will curse their blessings. Mal. II.2. The people had gone away from the ordinances of the Lord, even from the days of their fathers, Mal. III.7; they had become self-confident and unbelieving; saying, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." Mal. III.14-15. The Lord warns them of a day that shall burn as an oven; in which the proud and all that do wickedly shall be [283] burnt up as stubble; and comforts those who fear His Name with the

grace and blessing of which at that day they shall be made partakers. Mal. IV.1; III.17.

Thus solemnly, under the Old Testament, prophecy closes; and God gives His people long space for repentance. He is not slack concerning His promise, but long-suffering toward His children, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2.Peter III.9. But when the hour came - that decisive hour for the whole house of Israel, when all hearts should be revealed, and high and low be put to the fiery trial of having the Divine presence in the midst of them - in what condition does the Lord find His people? Those evils for which He reproveth them by His prophets, still exist, and in a higher degree; and priest and people are alike unprepared for those mighty acts which He is about to perform in the midst of them.

As the last means of calling them to repentance, and preparing the way for the Lord's coming, He sent to them John the Baptist.

John proclaimed no new law, and no signs or wonders accompanied his message. John X.41. He was to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers; lest the coming of the Lord, which was so nigh at hand,

should be to them a curse and not a blessing. Mal. IV.6. His appearance was a token both of the fallen condition of the people of God, and of the near fulfilment of His most gracious promises. Through him the way of the Lord was to be prepared; and the last opportunity was to be given to God's covenanted people to come into a condition in which the Messiah's coming could be to their salvation. God does all that is possible on His part in order not to find His [284] people unprepared. The message of John, and the baptism of repentance, Acts XIX.4, are intended for all who through circumcision were called to be heirs of the Divine promises. But corruption is so general and so great, darkness and obduracy so prevailing, faith so weak, there is so little understanding of the Divine purpose, that only a small portion of the Jewish people are in a condition to receive Jesus of Nazareth as the promised One. The high priests and elders of the people, the Pharisees and scribes, all those who in the eyes of men are most exalted, prove themselves, in the Divinely-appointed hour of trial, void of faith, enemies of God, and ripe for judgement.

Such was the condition of things at the first coming of Christ. What shall be their condition at His second coming?

9.2 A Work of Preparation for the Second Coming of Christ not only Probable, but Foretold in the Scriptures.

Christ's first coming was especially to the Jews: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Matt. XV.24. His second coming has, on the other hand, especial reference to those under the New Testament, to baptized Christendom; although in its wider extent and more general signification it will be a decisive event for all men. It was His disciples who received the promise of His coming again. John XIV.3. From the midst of them was He taken away, and they are to expect Him again from heaven. Acts I.11. He left His house ("whose house are we," saith the Apostle, Heb. III.6) when He ascended up to heaven, and "gave authority to His servants, and to every one his work, and commanded the porter to watch;" and to this His house, His Church, He returns again. Mark XIII.34-37. It is the *virgins* who hear the cry at midnight, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." Matt. XXV. 6. It is the Lamb's wife [285], the Church, who makes herself ready for the marriage, Rev. XIX.7. The Lord comes to His temple, Mal. III.1, and judgement begins at the House of God. 1.Peter IV.17. We are baptized into Christ, and made members of His body, that our conversation may be in heaven, and that we may wait for His appearing,

and for the changing of our vile bodies in the likeness of His glorious body. Phil. III.20-21. The Lord comes to judge all mankind, but only Christians can wait for Him, and love His appearing; and only among Christians can that preparation be found which is requisite in order to receive Him with joy.

This preparation should be found in all the baptized. As one body, one Church, as the one bride, should the whole of the baptized stand, hoping and waiting for the return of their Lord. And had we, who bear the name of the Lord, and who have in holy baptism been made partakers of the circumcision without hands, Col.II.10-12; made a right use of that full endowment which God bestowed on His Church at the beginning; had we and our fathers remained faithful, and given the Holy Ghost room to work in the midst of us, instead of quenching and grieving Him through sin and unbelief; verily the whole of Christendom would be full of joyful hope, and holy longing for the heavenly Bridegroom; and the coming of Christ would be ardently anticipated as the hour of complete redemption, and the entrance upon eternal glory.

But what do we behold in Christendom? Where is the pure virgin, over whom the Apostle was jealous with godly jealousy, because he had espoused her to one husband, to whom he desired to present her as a

bride fully adorned? It is vain to point to the many pious individuals in all those parties into which the one Church [286] has been divided. We willingly recognise the existence of such; and we gladly hope that God sees them in far greater numbers than the human eye can perceive. But those individuals, however faithful and pious they may be, are themselves suffering from the sins and deficiencies of those different parties to which they belong; and cannot, in their isolated and scattered condition, attain that measure of cleansing and sanctification which is necessary in order to endure the coming of Christ, and to be able to stand before Him when He appears. And, as we have already said, not scattered individuals in Christendom, but the whole body of the baptized, the whole people of the new covenant, are called to receive the Angel of the Covenant when He comes in His glory. And who will deny that all Christendom is at least as unprepared for the second, as the Jewish people were for the first coming of Christ?

Is it then to remain unprepared? Shall no work of preparation be accomplished in the midst of it? Has God already exhausted every means by which Christendom may be warned of the coming judgement? Did He send Noah to preach to the old world before its destruction, and cause Sodom and Gomorrah to be visited by His messengers before fire and brimstone de-

scended on them from heaven? Did He, by means of John the Baptist, call the Jewish people to repentance, and prepare the way of the Lord in His humiliation? And shall He do nothing for the warning and final preparation of Christendom, whose calling is to look upon the Lord coming in His glory? Who can believe in the grace and mercy of God, and not cherish the hope and expectation that He will yet once more visit Christendom in these last times, and stretch out His hand to gather [287] His scattered sheep, to comfort the poor and afflicted in Israel, and to call to repentance all who are called by His name?

But, thanks be to the Lord! He has not left us in uncertainty on a question of such importance. His Word plainly declares His gracious intention of undertaking a work of warning and preparation before His second coming.

If we carefully consider those passages of Holy Scripture in which the preparatory ministry of John the Baptist is predicted, we must feel that they have by no means as yet received their full and final fulfilment, but that the spirit of prophecy embraces something much larger than the ministry of the Baptist, and refers not to the first coming of Christ alone.

In Malachi, III.1-2, it is written : “Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap.” And again, “For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts. Remember [288] ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgements. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” Mal. IV.

We know from the New Testament that both these passages have an application to John the Baptist. And although, when the priests and Levites from Jerusalem asked John, "Art thou Elias?" he answered, "No," John I.19-21, our Lord testified concerning him that he it was of whom the prophet Malachi spake. Were this not the case, had we no testimony in the New Testament that this prophecy of Malachi has already had a fulfilment, we might be inclined rather to believe that it still remains altogether unfulfilled, than to agree with those who think that it refers only to events connected with the first coming of Christ. How can any one for a moment believe that expressions such as the following have received their proper and final fulfilment through our Lord's appearance in humiliation? - "Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?" - "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." - "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord." In these passages it is evident that the reference is specially to the second coming of Christ to judgement; and if that be the case, then the promise contained in this prediction concerning a work of preparation by the angel who is to prepare the

way [289] of the Lord, and by Elias, must have its full accomplishment in a Divine mission, which shall precede the coming of the Lord.

9.3 Consideration of the Passages of the Old Testament referring to the Ministry of John the Baptist, and of some Passages of the New Testament and the Elias Ministry.

John the Baptist's answer in the negative to the question, "Art thou Elias?" put to him by the priests and Levites who were sent to him, is to be best explained by his consciousness, that the prediction concerning Elias, so well known to the Jewish scribes, had not in him its special or final fulfilment. A like consciousness on the part of our Lord may have been the reason, why on the different occasions on which He testified to John as the promised Elias, He does so in a way which leaves room for a future more complete fulfilling of the prophecy. He says to the Jews, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." Matt. XI.14. And when the disciples, who had seen His glory in His transfiguration, asked Him, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" He answers, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is

come already.” Matt XVII.10-12.⁶⁰ As if He would [290] have said: In so far as I am already come, and ye have seen My glory, in so far as Elias also come: but in so far as My appearing in glory is a thing yet future, the scribes are right in saying that the preparing and restoring action of the Elias ministry is also a thing yet to come.

The other passage in which the mission of John is predicted is in Isaiah: “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare

⁶⁰ The thoughtful reader may observe that the words of our Lord in this passage, Ἡλίας μὲν ἔρχεται πρῶτον, *Elias is, indeed, first to come*, are in the future tense: suggesting, that in so far as the prophecy of Malachi relating to the restoring or restitution of all things was not fulfilled in John the Baptist, that Elias again *shall* first come, and precede the second coming of Messiah - at whose coming again every jot and tittle of the prophecies shall be fulfilled. Indeed, the words of our Lord in this passage, “Elias truly *shall* first come,” give the promise of a ministry before that time, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to restore that which has been lost. Thus the ministry of Elias preceding the first coming, and the ministry of Elias preceding the second coming of the Lord, shall be the means of exhaustively fulfilling the words of the prophet, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the *great and dreadful day of the Lord*.”

ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it...O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Isa. XL.1-10.

In this passage it is quite undeniable that not only the first, but also the second coming of Christ is spoken of. Can any one maintain that Jerusalem’s warfare had an end at the first coming of Christ? Why then do we still speak of a church militant? Was the glory of the Lord revealed to all flesh, when He took the form of a [291] servant, and learnt obedience through suffering? Did He come with a strong hand, and His arm ruling for Him in the days of His humiliation? Was His reward with Him, and His work before Him then? Is it not written in the New Testament, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with

Me, to give every man according as his work shall be”? Rev. XXII.12.

We must acknowledge that this passage in Isaiah, like that in the prophecy of Malachi, had a partial fulfilment during our Lord’s abode on earth; but the complete fulfilment is yet future, and will not take place until the Lord appears the second time in His glory. Therefore the voice of one crying in the wilderness, whereby the way of the Lord is to be prepared, must again be heard, when the hour draws near at which the prediction shall have its last and complete fulfilment.

We believe that these two important passages in the Old Testament afford sufficient proof to every one who yields subjection to the Word of God, and deals conscientiously with the interpretation of it, to convince them that a work of preparation corresponding to that of John the Baptist is to be looked for in Christendom before the Lord comes to judgement. Passages also in the New Testament are not wanting which justify such a hope.

The judgement upon Babylon is described in Rev. XVIII. As we have, in a former treatise,⁶¹ fully explained the signification of “Babylon,” we will here only shortly remark, that the commencement of this chapter XVIII. describes the condition of Babylon in the day of her [292] judgement. It sets before us the power of spiritual uncleanness, and all manner of seduction in Christendom in the last times. “Babylon is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication; and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.” That is, Christendom, which should be full of the Holy Ghost, is filled with the lying power of Satan, and taken possession of by all the powers of darkness. Through her unfaithfulness towards God, and especially in consequences of the unfaithfulness of her spiritual heads, the people are seduced, and the great and mighty of this earth are led to abuse priestly and ecclesiastical institutions to their own ends; and the advantages which the worldly condition of the Church offers to the earthly minded, have nourished that bargaining spirit, which does

⁶¹ The Second Coming of Christ and His Kingdom in Visible Glory. See pages 193—195.

nothing without looking for gain, in those who through holy baptism have become God's property, and have vowed to live to Him alone, and to serve Him alone.

At the time of this general corruption in Christendom, when her sins reach unto heaven, and God remembers her iniquities, then shall a voice be heard from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Rev. XVIII.4.

It is a voice from heaven that thus exhorts the children of God. It is the same gracious and merciful God, who has no pleasure in the death of the ungodly; and who in past times, when the hour of judgement approached [293], sounded the voice of warning in the ears of His people. This voice shall again be heard. The Lord sends forth that call, "Come out of her, My people!" And they who obey shall be sheltered from the pestilence and the destruction that cometh.

In what manner the people are to come out, we need not at present examine more particularly. We quote this passage only for the purpose of obtaining from the prophetic part of the New Testament further proof of the truth of what we maintain; namely,

that God's Word justifies the expectation that the Lord, before His coming again to judgement, will reveal Himself among His children in the way of warning and preparation.

With a view further to confirm this, we would draw attention to some other passages in the New Testament.

Rev. X. and XI. describe a testimony which shall be raised up immediately before the sounding of the last trumpet, and the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in glory on the earth. See Rev. XI. 13-15. This testimony is not a new revelation, but a re-awakening of that which was in the Church at the beginning.⁶² It measures the existing ordinances in the Church with God's measuring rod, Rev. XI.1; and corresponds in Christendom to the work of Elias in Israel, and to the testimony of Moses in Egypt.

If there be any dispute as to *who* those are who bear this testimony (though we think our Lord, in John XV. 26, 27, throws sufficient light on this ques-

⁶² "And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy AGAIN before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Rev. X.11). The going forth a second time of the word of the Lord as the apostle and prophet, to (concerning) peoples, nations, tongues and kings.

tion); yet there should at least be no dispute about the *fact* that God, in these two [294] chapters of the prophetic book of the New Testament, has predicted a work which has not yet been accomplished, and which is to precede the coming judgement.

Rev. XIV. also points to a Divine message, which in the last time is to be sent for the warning of men. The substance of this message is contained in the following words: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgement is come: and worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Rev. XIV.6f.

The cry at midnight, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him, which is heard by the ten virgins before the Bridegroom appears, Matt. XXV.6, is another indication given in Scripture concerning the testimony which is to be borne in Christendom in the last time.

Several of our Lord's parables,⁶³ and the prophetic [295] words of Peter in his second epistle,⁶⁴

⁶³ The widow (Luke XVIII.1-8) who, oppressed by her adversary, cries without ceasing to the judge, is an image of the forsaken and oppressed condition of the elect in the last time; and the encouraging promise of the Lord, that God will avenge His own elect, who cry day and night to Him, at the coming of Christ (verse 8), justifies our expecta-

may also be adduced to manifest God's gracious purposes with His Church in the last time.

We believe, however, that we have said enough to direct the attention of those who love the appearing of their Lord to the weighty subject of God's promised preparation.

tion, that as the end draws near He will in an especial manner care for His own.

In the parable of the field (Matt. XIII. 24, 43, &c.), the Lord promises at the end of the present dispensation, to send forth His reapers, "and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend (scandals), and them which do iniquity." These reapers are His angels, that is, the messengers of the Son of Man; and as every husbandman employs the same class of servants to prepare and sow the field (1.Cor. III.6) and to gather the harvest; so we may expect, from this parable, that the Lord, when the season of harvest is come, will revive again the original ordinances of His Church, and by them will take in hand the cleansing of His house (verse 41). Light reveals darkness, and when the Lord sends His messengers again, then shall all those be manifested who resist Him, and refuse to be blessed of Him, and they shall be cast into the fire.

⁶⁴ The Apostle predicts the apostacy in Christendom (2 Peter II.1-3); and after holding up as a warning God's dealings with the fallen angels, with the antediluvian world, and with Sodom and Gomorrah, he adds, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations (the temptation of the last time, Rev. III.10), and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgement to be punished."

A work of deliverance, therefore, corresponding to the deliverance of Noah and of Lot, awaits the godly ere the judgement descends on Christendom.

9.4 The Character of the Work of God at the End of the Christian Dispensation.

Many, we would hope, who, with their Bible in their hands, have followed us thus far, will be ready to acknowledge that the Holy Scriptures do indeed contain many prophetic passages pointing to a work of God which shall take place in the last time, preparatory to the coming of Christ.

But we may perhaps be met by the objection: "How, if such a work of warning and preparation is to precede the coming of the Lord, can His coming come upon men by surprise? How can it be sudden and unexpected, like the breaking in of a thief upon those who sleep? - how can such a condition of things be possible, as is described to us in Scripture, at the period of our Lord's coming; when fleshly security, and general forgetfulness of God, shall be the character of the time?" Matt. XXIV.38-39.

We answer, that, according to the analogy of God's [296] dealing in past times, and according to all the indications given in Scripture, His work in the last times will be of a kind that only few will acknowledge; and these few will only acknowledge it through faith and the Holy Ghost. The great mass of the baptized

will regard the Lord's work, somewhat as the men of Noah's day regarded the building of the ark; either seeing in it nothing particularly worthy of regard, or allowing themselves to be seduced into becoming mockers of that which God is doing.

When God at the end of a dispensation lifts up a testimony among men who have departed from His ways, and have rejected Him, it is not in order forcibly to restrain the development of their wickedness; still less is it to satisfy that craving after signs and wonders which accompanies unbelief and apostasy.

His testimony as it regards the greater number, serves rather to reveal the full measure of existing unbelief and apostasy, that He may be justified when He comes forth as judge. Such was God's dealings in the days of Noah. He sent a word of witness, and prepared a refuge - to man's eye most insignificant - for the few who were capable of being saved. But He gave those men who would not be convinced, through the preaching of Noah or the building of the ark, no sign, no incontrovertible proof of the coming judgement.

A similar dealing closed the Jewish dispensation. He gave warning by His preached word of that fate which awaited the impenitent: "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which

bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Matt. III.10. And He gave the means whereby those who received the testimony might be prepared for the close [297] of the then existing order of things; namely, “the baptism of repentance.” Matt. III.11; Acts XIX.4. But He wrought no wonders, to convince such as could not recognise the Divine mission of John in his preaching and baptism.

According to these examples it is not to be expected that the work of God, at the end of the Christian dispensation, should be such an one as will excite the wonder of men; and by which they will feel themselves constrained to acknowledge the hand of the Lord in the midst of them. Least of all is this to be expected in Christendom; seeing that the baptized should be believing and spiritual in a far higher measure than the Jews or the nations before the flood; and therefore are less to be excused, if they are incapable of recognising a spiritual work - a work addressing itself to faith.

The works of Antichrist and the false prophet are what will rouse attention, and what men will run after in the last days, They shall have on their side the signs and wonders, the popular principles, and the mighty deeds, whereby not only the great majority, who are unbelievers, but also, if it were possible, the

small minority of the godly elect shall be deceived. Of Antichrist it is said: “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thess.II.9-12.

It is those among the baptized, in whose hearts neither [298] the real love for Divine truth, nor the real abhorrence of every form of unrighteousness exist, who shall first be deceived and misled by the seductions of the enemy, and then shall be judged at the appearing of the Lord.

And if we sufficiently consider what this implies, we must see that the inmost condition of the heart is taken into account; and that the number of those who shall come under judgement includes not merely gross and open sinners, but all the baptized also in whose hearts exist an unconquered enmity to the truth, and an unmortified desire after unrighteousness.

But if this be the case - if the coming judgement is to overtake all such as will not allow themselves to be cleansed from their untruth and unrighteousness - then must that work of God which precedes this judgement, that work by which the hearts of all Christians are to be tried, and the final separation prepared for, be such an one as makes itself distinguishable only through truth and righteousness, and seeks acceptance with men through these alone; in other words, before the coming of Christ we have reason to expect from God, not so much signs and wonders, as a work through which apostolic doctrine shall be restored in that purity and completeness which has long ceased to exist; and all the hidden forms of untruth and unrighteousness throughout Christendom shall be discovered.

Such a work God has commenced in His Church in our days. In answer to the prayers and supplications of His children, and for the honour of His holy Name, He has restored the gifts of His Spirit, and set up again the original ministries of His house [299].

The Lord causes Christendom to be warned of the coming judgements by His witnesses; and offers to all the baptized, who will allow themselves to be cleansed by His appointed means, the opportunity of

being freed from the sins of Babylon, that they partake not of her plagues.

This work has already existed many years in the midst of Christendom, and the tidings of it have reached high and low in all lands.

What reception these tidings have met with we will now pass by in silence; nor is it our intention at present to describe more particularly the work which has begun. Not a description of the work, but the work itself must be examined; and that by personal contact with those who are office-bearers and ministers of the same.

We will now limit ourselves to some remarks, by which we would seek to help those who desire to enter on the earnest examination of so important a matter.

9.5 Remarks for the Help of those who desire to Examine into and to try the Divine Work of Restoration which has Begun in Christendom.

Whoever has any experience in Divine things, and knowledge of the past dealings of God, must be aware, that when He arises to work among men, we

cannot count upon any general acknowledgement or acceptance of His testimony: least of all when He manifests Himself at the end of a dispensation before approaching judgement. Our Lord's fate when He came to His own was that they rejected Him, John. I.11; and condemned Him to death as a deceiver and blasphemer. John VII.12.

Further, when God reveals Himself, the hidden wickedness of men reveals itself also; and of those who were reckoned pious and zealous for the faith of their fathers, many show themselves enemies of the living God. The Lord found publicans and harlots more ready to receive the kingdom of God, than the chief religious men and learned scribes of that day. Matt. XXI. 31,32. [300].

This being the case, we must take for granted, that if we would prove a testimony which lays claim to be from God, we must not take the judgement of men much into account; we must not wait to know what this pious man, or that learned theologian has determined. Nor must we, like the worldly-wise Gamaliel, Acts V.34, merely wait to see what will come of it; for behind such apparent wisdom lies often concealed the cold heart of the self-satisfied, or the scepticism that denies God.

It belongs to every Christian, though especially to the heads and leaders of the Church, to examine a testimony which is addressed to all Christendom. In such an examination we must beware of trusting too much or too little to ourselves. We trust too much to ourselves, when in such a matter we rely on our own piety or learning; when we take the position of judging, rather than examining; or when we would apply to it the measure or rule of any existing religious or theological system. For if the work be of God, then His thoughts and His wisdom are contained in it; and they go far beyond any measure of light or wisdom still remaining among men. And the Lord does not allow Himself to be judged of men. If He have undertaken this work, then it will be such a work as shall remain concealed from those who hold themselves for wise and prudent; and will only be revealed to those who are humble and simple enough to allow themselves to be taught of God.

But in regard to a work which professes to be of God, we may also trust ourselves too little; and this we do when we refuse to examine it, as believing ourselves incapable of distinguishing or determining in such matters. Pride or indolence often conceals itself under [301] such a pretext. But people are also often kept aloof through weakness of faith and timidity. They look to men instead of to God; they are accus-

tomed to follow man, and wonder why this pious or that learned man does not acknowledge the work. They would rather wait till other people, more capable of judging, have decided.

Such faint-hearted persons we would remind that, had they eighteen centuries ago delayed their examination of what God then did till the high priests and elders at Jerusalem, or the men of importance and learning at Athens and Rome, had come to a decision, they had surely had cause to repent of their delay. We remind them also that, though none of us - not the most pious nor the best informed - have in ourselves a capability of rightly discerning spiritual things, yet as baptized Christians, we have received from God all that is needful to distinguish between light and darkness, between the work of God and the delusions of Satan. What the apostle John writes concerning the anointing, whereby we know all things, 1.John II.20,27, is true of every Christian; and through the endowment bestowed on us in our baptism, not through the natural capability of our spirit, should we enter on the consideration of a matter that requires spiritual discernment.

In such an inquiry our confidence must be in God, who alone can preserve us from error and the delusion of the devil, and give us grace to recognise

His work and to follow Him in His ways. When a spiritual work appears among us we are exposed to a double danger. The work may be of the devil, and we may be deceived by it; but the work may also be of God, and we may run the risk of rejecting or even of blaspheming what [302] God has undertaken for our blessing. The last danger is as great as the first. Christian-minded people seem often only to think of the first; and as soon as they hear that apostles and prophets are said to exist, they are immediately seized with fear, as though spiritual manifestations must be of the devil, and as though he alone had power to raise up instruments for his use in Christendom. Such fear of the devil and his delusions is no good token. A child does not fear when led by his father's hand in the broad light of day; but the slightest, most harmless movement, terrifies a child who feels himself alone and in darkness. We pass no judgement upon our brethren. But we would entreat them to examine themselves before God, when the report that God has raised up apostles and prophets awakens in them only sentiments of fear; when they will not allow even the possibility of such an operation of God; when they neither hope nor wish that the report may be true, until convinced of the contrary.

Why should not God restore apostles and prophets again in our days? Whoever denies the possibility

of this must be prepared to prove from Scripture that it is opposed to the will of God. The contrary, however, is rather to be gathered from Holy Scripture. We have already quoted prophetic passages enough, from which we are led to the expectation of a work of warning and preparation in Christendom before the coming of the Lord. And whoever understands the character of the Christian dispensation, will scarcely think of any means as probable for such a work, other than the restoration of the original gifts. Eph. IV.8-14.

When the Son of God had become man, and the Holy Ghost had descended, God had given to mankind His [303] last gift. We have no new Gospel, no new Church, and no other Holy Ghost to expect; so that we can look for no other mode of Divine operation among us, than through the ministries and gifts bestowed on us at the beginning.

So long as a word of prophecy is not fulfilled it is easily misinterpreted. St. Peter, when he exhorts us to take heed to the word of prophecy, reminds us at the same time that "No prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation." 2 Peter I.20.⁶⁵ God pre-

⁶⁵ The Apostle in this passage lays down as a leading principle (τουτο πρωτον γινωσκοντες, *knowing this first*.) that not any prophecy of Scripture is of self-interpretation, that

dicted beforehand what He would do among His ancient people, but in such a manner that no measure of human ingenuity, no inquiry into Scripture, however earnest or learned, was sufficient to show clearly beforehand the way in which God would bring about its fulfilment [304].

Who, for instance, among the contemporaries of John the Baptist, could have shown that that word, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord," would have had such a fulfilment as it received in the appearance of the Baptist? Who among the scribes, at

is, its own interpreter. It was essential to the scheme of prophecy that it should not be of self-solution; meaning, that it could not be explained from itself by any scrutiny of its own terms, till light should be cast upon it. For the Scripture prophecies are not detached predictions of separate independent events, but are united in system, all terminating in one great object - the complete establishment of Messiah's kingdom. And the reason is evident, for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The predictions of the prophets did not, like their own private thoughts and sentiments, originate in their own minds. But the omniscient Spirit used them as instruments for conveying some of the treasures of His knowledge.

How momentously valuable, therefore, must the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and prophecy be, given by the same Spirit in the New Testament Church (1.Cor. XII.7-11); and how essential these gifts must be, for the opening up of the Scriptures, and for the bringing out of this treasury things both new and old, as the Master Himself did. (See Matt. XIII. 52; John XIV. 26; Luke XXIV. 32, 44, 45.)

the time of our Lord's incarnation had already understood the way in which the predictions concerning the Messiah were then to have their fulfilment?

And at our Lord's second coming shall it be otherwise? Shall those prophecies which relate to the return of Christ, and the preceding work of preparation, be of such a nature that the right interpretation of them must be apparent to every one who understands the letter of Scripture? The expectations and demands expressed by many Christians, in regard to the work which God has begun in Christendom, would imply this; for they not only demand that such a work should be predicted in Scripture, but that it should be so literally and distinctly described, that no one should be able to question the correspondence of the fact with the prophecy: they require that it be said in express terms, that the Lord will give again in the last times apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers.

We would beg these our brethren to consider, that if the prophetic announcement of the present work of God were contained in the New Testament in this form, then the gradual disappearance of these original ministries and gifts must be predicted in a like manner! But concerning this we read nothing. The Apostles rather take for granted that all the min-

istries and gifts, with which God endowed His Church at the beginning, should abide in full operation till she attained to her [305] perfection at the return of Christ. God saw the coming apostacy in the Church, the quenching of the Holy Ghost, and the consequent mutilation of the Divine ordinances; and for the consolation of the penitent in the last times He caused His work of restoration to be declared by the Spirit of prophecy in prophetic language. And all those Christians who have come to a penitent acknowledgement of the universal decay of the Church, and have learned to set their hope in God alone, will search into these Scriptures; and to them God will give light both in regard to the disappearance of His gifts, and their restoration. But those who do not rightly take to heart the present condition of the Church, or who will not confess that upon us and our fathers lies the guilt of not having always had in the midst of us all the original fullness of apostolic grace; to such Christians the prophetic word must remain sealed. And because they have not searched it diligently, and are not minded to do so, they run every hazard of coming in contact with things, for the appearance of which they are not prepared; and to reject them because they do not agree, as they think, with the written Word.

Many Christians allow that in the last times a condition of the Church similar to that at her com-

mencement may be seen again. Many are not disinclined to believe that spiritual manifestations, such as those among the first Christians, will again exist as the end draws near. But that we have to expect Apostles again, in the proper sense of this word, or that God has indeed raised them up - this few can believe.

Far be it from us to maintain, that faith in that which God is now doing, namely, the restoration of the apostolic office, is an easy thing. But why should it [306] be an easy thing to believe an act of God? Why should such a faith require no searching of the human heart, no struggle and no victory? When was it ever easy for men to believe in God when He arose to work among His people? Would Noah have no struggle when he was "warned of things not seen as yet"? Heb. XI.7. Or Abraham, when he was called to go out from the land of his fathers; not knowing whither he went? Heb. XI.8. Had Moses and all those who, under the old dispensation, were called to perform acts that could only be done in faith, no doubts, no hesitation, no struggle, no trial? Was it so easy for the pious Jews who honoured the faith of their fathers, and had experienced God's blessings under the law, to believe in the judgement about to overtake their people, and to follow God in that way in which He led them - first, by John the Baptist, and afterwards by His own Son? If at all times God's children

were sorely tried when He stretched out His hand towards them, why should it be an easier thing for us when He visits His Church in the last days? Why should the present work of God be accompanied by such incontestable proof, or convince by such irresistible power, that little or no room should be left for any struggle or trial of faith?

But while no experienced Christian will expect to acknowledge or receive a work of the living God without such struggles and trials, yet possibly many make faith in what God is now doing more difficult in themselves, through prejudice, and want of due acquaintance with the subject.

Mankind is always disposed to idolize the heroes of the past; but in regard to God's instruments, His prophets and messengers, there was a special ground [307] why, while they were without exception rejected by their contemporaries, by those of after times they have been honoured even beyond the measure due to any man. Their testimony was a light in the darkness, and aroused the enmity of all those who loved darkness rather than light. Only when death had removed them from being an offence to their enemies, and when that new thing which God had wrought by means of them found more general recognition, did those departed instruments of Divine grace come into

high esteem; each succeeding generation surpassed the one which went before in glorifying the faithful witnesses of a remote period, until human fancy at length stripped them of every fault or failing, and represented them as patterns of an unattainable perfection.

Such has been the case in regard to the first Apostles. While during their lifetime, by their own testimony, 1.Cor. IV. 9-13; IX.2; 2.Cor. XI.; XIII.1-6.; 2.Tim.I.15; IV.14-16; 3.John IX., they were accounted "the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things." And even by those who received them as God's ordinances, and had been blessed through them, they were in many ways rejected and despised. Since their death they have for centuries been venerated and glorified to such a degree by millions of men, that the usual idea of an Apostle among Christians is of something so superhuman and wonderful, that he is scarcely considered as of flesh and blood, or as participating in the ordinary circumstances or necessities of human life.

This being the case, we cannot wonder if men feel themselves little prepared to acknowledge living Apostles; if fear rather than joy is felt at the report that God has raised them up; and if men are inclined [308] to reject such a report without examination, rather

than to give themselves, in the hope that it is true, the utmost concern to come to a right decision on so important a matter. And those who do seek to examine it, must beware lest they judge the messengers whom God is now sending, according to their own fleshly ideas; otherwise they will be in danger of rejecting the same grace which was in Peter and Paul, only because the vessels containing it are ordinary fallible men, and not demigods.

But whoever, in spite of all the difficulties which attend the acknowledgement of living Apostles in this late hour of the Christian dispensation, yet would not be of the number of those who reject God's offered help, may obtain light and strength by examining more minutely the position of the first Apostles and disciples in regard to Paul.

To us, belief in Paul's apostleship is not difficult - because the New Testament bears testimony to it - because the fruits of his labours are before us - and because the Church has from the beginning acknowledged him as an Apostle, on an equal footing with the first twelve. But was it so easy for the first Christians and the first Apostles to acknowledge Paul as an Apostle, and to give to him and to Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship"? Read Gal. II. and see how hardly he obtained the recognition of his apostleship from

those who were Apostles before him; with what prudence he needed to conduct himself; and with what distrust and difficulties on their part he had to contend. And if we place ourselves in the position of the first Apostles and Jewish Christians, we shall not wonder at their want of readiness in acknowledging the new Apostles; but on the contrary [309] we must confess, that they had much more ground to refuse to believe that God would add more Apostles to the then existing twelve, than we have to disbelieve in His restoring Apostles now.

The Lord had limited His original choice of Apostles to twelve, and gave them to understand that this number had a secret reference to the number of the tribes of Israel. Matt. XIX. 28. After one of them had become unfaithful, his place was filled up by one taken by lot from among those men who had “compared with them all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among them.” Acts I.21-22. This choice was confirmed and sealed by God in the most solemn manner at Pentecost, when Matthias with the eleven received the consecration and endowment of the Holy Ghost for his apostolic office. From that time he took his place with them as a competent witness for the Risen One, and undertook with them the rule and guidance of the Church. It is written: “Peter, standing up with the *eleven*.” Acts II.14. And again, “Then the

twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them.” Acts VI.2.

The number of the Apostles was again complete; and the work of the Lord, through them and under their guidance, made most joyful progress. Suddenly one arises who had hitherto had no communion with the twelve; on the contrary, had been the bitterest enemy of Christianity; in whom none of those conditions were fulfilled which had been considered indispensable in the case of Matthias, Acts I. 21-22; who had not been one of the Lord’s disciples while He was on earth, who had not been an eye-witness of His deeds, or of His resurrection; who had heard none of His teaching; - such an one was now to be an Apostle - was to receive the same commission [310], and have equal authority with the other twelve! What could be more unlikely or incredible? Where were the passages of Scripture to which Paul could appeal? Where was it written that he was to appear? The Lord had not said one word about giving other Apostles than the twelve. Well might they, when they heard of this new Apostle, feel very shy and distrustful of his claims. Yet God gave them such humility and faith, that they overcame all their prejudices, and gave to Paul and to Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

What instruction was given in this calling of Paul, and his acknowledgement by the first Apostles, for all succeeding generations of the Church! Has not God therein answered, once for all, those Christians who in after times would maintain, that, beyond the first twelve, there should be no more Apostles? and that only such men as had companied with the Lord when on earth, and had received the promise of the Father at Pentecost, could be Apostles in the proper sense of the word? Has not the Lord, through the giving of this thirteenth apostle, proved to the Church, once for all, that the grace of apostleship was not bound to the first twelve - was not exhausted in them - had not its source in them - but in Himself, the Risen One; and that He could at any time restore this precious ministry to His Church in its full power and activity? Does not Paul stand as an incontestable proof, that the Lord who dwelleth in heaven, through the Holy Ghost present on earth, can in all times constitute men Apostles, and send them as such to His Church?

Apostles were then existing. The twelve first called were in full power and activity. Humanly speaking [311], they were sufficient for all that was needed in their time. Yet it pleased the Lord to call another Apostle! Let those, therefore, who in these days profess such certain knowledge that the Lord will constitute no more Apostles, feel a little less se-

cure in their preconceived opinions, which stand so opposed to Scripture. They will then run less danger of rejecting the hand of the Lord when it is stretched out for the salvation of His people.

We grant that, showing the possibility of the restoration of the original offices and gifts in the Church, does not prove that those men who now claim for themselves and their fellow-labourers an apostolic mission, are truly sent from God. But how is this proof to be attained? In regard to this, many Christians may want light and a proper insight into the ways of God.

What any one relates concerning himself, can only carry conviction to those who, in some other way, have come to the assurance that he who bears the testimony is neither a deceiver nor deceived. If those men who are now exercising the ministry of apostleship in Christendom, would seek to prove their Divine mission, by the relation of wonders which they have seen and experienced - should we be satisfied with such a proof? Certainly not. The account might be mere fiction; or if we had reason to believe the men to be honest, yet we should have no proof that the appearances which they had seen, or the voices which they had heard, or whatever else they had been witnesses of, were of God. Or even supposing they were

of God and not of the devil, yet they might have deceived themselves as to their signification, and have interpreted [312] gracious manifestations, given for a totally different purpose, as conveying a Divine commission and authority.

It is, therefore, a very unnecessary question, which is so often put when people want, above all things, to know how these men have received their mission. Instead of asking how they have been called, we should rather ask, What are they doing? For in what they do, or rather in what God works through them, and not in their personal experiences, we are to find proof that they are Apostles: that God has restored the ministry of apostleship again.

We again refer you to the example of Paul. In the account which we have of the conference which he had with the other Apostles at Jerusalem, concerning his work, it is said: "When they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter (for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles): and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship." Gal. II.7-9.

These words give us a view of the transactions which then took place between Paul and the other Apostles, and show us, at the same time, how those at Jerusalem came to the conviction that he was indeed invested with the apostolic office. On his former visit to Jerusalem, he had only, as it appears, had intercourse for a short time with Peter, Gal. I.18-19. , and scarcely any with the other Apostles. To the churches of Judea he was unknown by face; they had only heard of the great change which had taken place in their former persecutor. Gal. I.22-23. [313]. After a period of fourteen years he appears again with two of his fellow-labourers at Jerusalem. The men who were Apostles before him, the bearers of a Divine commission, find themselves confronted by a man, who, without having received the Gospel from them, Gal. I.12, professes not only to be a Christian and a preacher, but even an Apostle. How does it become clear to them? How do they allow themselves to be convinced that the claims of this man are well founded? By what they learn of his *work*. They acknowledge that He who wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in Paul towards the Gentiles. They know that in all which they themselves had wrought as Apostles, it was the Risen Lord who wrought in and by them. They are humble and modest enough to acknowledge that He can as readily accomplish the same work

through other instruments as through them. And now they see that He has indeed done so; that without imparting to them His thoughts, or giving them His reasons, the same grace of apostleship, which had been conferred upon them, is now exercised by a man as yet little known to them. And why are they then not to consider him as having equal claim to the apostleship with themselves? They do not insist that the new Apostle could only receive the apostolic ministry in the same way in which they had themselves received it; for they dared not prescribe to the Lord how He shall call and prepare His servants. The apostolic grace of Christ had manifested itself as present in Paul. Through him churches had been gathered, edified, and filled with the Holy Ghost. What greater things can be done by an Apostle? What more had [314] been done by those who were Apostles before him? Such must have been the thoughts of the Apostles at Jerusalem. And God, who gives to all those who are of humble and pure hearts, faith in His work, gave to his servants there the conviction and certainty that Paul was sent by Him.

Are we, then, of like mind with these men at Jerusalem? Have we their humility, their simplicity, their readiness to acknowledge the grace of God wherever it may be manifested? Are we as free from all idolatry of man as they were? And have we been

accustomed to seek the fountain of all grace, not in man, but in the living Head of the Church at the right hand of God? Then shall we be capable of discerning by the words and works of the men, now acting as Apostles, whether they be indeed sent of God or not.

We will now conclude with a few words upon what are the works of an Apostle.

Peter and Paul were Apostles, and what they did were the works of Apostles. But if these men were to rise among us now, would they do the same works which they did eighteen hundred years ago? Would they set aside baptized Christendom, and seek a field for their labour as missionaries among Jews and heathen? Apostles, whom God has set as first and chief among the members of the Church, 1.Cor. XII.28., can they be on earth without caring for the Church of God? Can they leave the Church to her fate, and act as if Christendom did not exist - as if the earth were now in the same condition as at Pentecost? Did Paul, before the Lord took him away, care for all the churches, 2 Cor. XI.28., and feel so intensely the unity of the body of Christ, that [315] he could write, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" And were he to appear among us again, would he think only of the conversion of Jews and heathen?

We believe, on the contrary, that if men clothed with the same office as Peter and Paul were to appear among us now, their first care would be for Christendom, for the Church, for the One Body of the One Lord. As messengers of the One Head in heaven, they would address themselves first to the heads of Christendom, offering them help and consolation from the Lord in their present straits and difficulties. As possessors themselves of the highest ministry in the Church, they would know how to honour all her office-bearers - be they Greek, Roman, or Protestant - in their office; and their desire would be to see them strengthened and confirmed, in their places, of the Lord, and endowed with the full measure of heavenly grace. They would not appear as accusers of the brethren; nor would they be partisans of any one existing confession. Rather would they call all the baptized, and especially the clergy, as members of the one body, to repentance; and offer them from the Lord, means and ways whereby they might be healed of their divisions, and be brought back to unity of faith.

And Apostles will do this, not as having themselves no share in the sin, suffering, and necessity of Christendom; but they will set the example to all the baptized of that true repentance to which they call the Church; and will teach them to believe in Him who is

ready again to turn hand upon us, and purely purge away our dross, and to take away all our tin; and to restore our judges as at the first, and our counsellors as at the [316] beginning, that we may again be called, The City of Righteousness, The Faithful City. Isa. I.25-26. Their testimony will be a testimony to Christ as the Risen One; but not so much to His having once risen, as to His enduring life, and to His coming again. To Jews and Gentiles who knew nothing of the Risen One, the Apostles announced that God had raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead, and made Him Lord and Christ; and that through this Man He would judge the world in righteousness. Acts II.36; XVII.31. But if Apostles arise in Christendom among the baptized, they will take for granted faith in a risen Lord, and their testimony will be, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to Him."

And as Apostles go before the coming Lord, and will find Christendom unprepared for His coming, it must be their task to gather into churches such of the baptized as receive their testimony, and will allow themselves to be made ready; in order that each individual, in the unity of the body, and through the working together of various gifts and powers, may be led on to perfection.