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UNIVERSAL HISTORY

ON

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES.

CHIEFLY DESIGNED FOR THE YOUNG.

VOL. I.

FROM THE CREATION, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE,

B.C. 4004—A.D. 337.

Second Edition.

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SAMUEL BAGSTER AND SONS.

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PREFACE.

THE present volume contains an improved edition of the first and second parts of the Universal History, which were published in 1842 and 1843. The need of such a Compendium has been more extensively acknowledged than the writer expected. Many persons have regarded it as a desideratum in Christian education; and other classes, besides the youthful readers for whom it was principally designed, have welcomed it in a gratifying manner. It may be advisable to state, as in the previous edition, that the materials for the General History are gathered from the works of Rollin, Goldsmith, Robinson, Gibbon, Russell, etc.; the facts relative to Jewish History from Prideaux, Milman, etc.; and the records of Ecclesiastical History are given on the authority of Mosheim, Gregory, and Milner. The writer has sought to attain a right judgment concerning events and characters by a constant recurrence to Scripture; to secure historical fidelity by the patient examination and comparison of different authors; and to engage the attention of the youngest reader by simplicity of language and style.

That great advantages are to be derived from the study of History, when properly directed, will not be denied by those who consider how large a portion of the Bible is historical; yet the infidelity of some distinguished historians proves the fruitlessness of bringing the finest powers of mind to such a study, without subjection to God. Humble accordance with the Spirit of truth is incomparably to be preferred to independence of judgment, however elevated by genius above the

common level ; and the tendency to call evil good and good evil, to put darkness for light and light for darkness, to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, is only effectually corrected by submitting the understanding to the unerring standard of truth contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Under such guidance, we view, in Universal History, the infinitely varied workings of that evil principle inherent to fallen humanity, which we hate and war with in our own bosoms, as soon as we become new creatures in Christ Jesus ; we trace in it God's providential dealings, whether in mercy or judgment ; we learn to acknowledge God as the alone and proper fountain of every good thing ; and whilst we see man always destroying himself, we must own that the salvation of any is of the Lord. With such views and feelings the writer has prosecuted this work ; and, thankful for the encouragement already received, sends forth a Second Edition, with an earnest desire that the blessing of God may attend this feeble attempt to honour Him.

MAY, 1844.

CONTENTS OF PART I.

CHAP.	PAGE.
INTRODUCTION	iii
I. Whence comes my History?	1
II. The Beginning of History.....	3
III. The First Dispensation	4
IV. Fallen Man	5
V. The Second Dispensation—The Corrupt Earth	6
VI. The Third Dispensation, under which <i>the Earth</i> still remains.....	9
VII. The Re-peopling of the Earth	10
VIII. Nations and Languages	12
IX. The First Empire	14
X. The Story of Semiramis.....	15
XI. Egypt	17
XII. The Call of Abraham	19
XIII. Canaan	22
XIV. The Descendants of Abraham	23
XV. The Story of Egypt resumed	24
XVI. The Story of Sesostris	26
XVII. The Jewish Dispensation	27
XVIII. The Historical Books in the Bible	29
XIX. Asiatic Nations	32
XX. European Nations	33
XXI. The Kingdom of David and Solomon	35
XXII. The Failure of Israel	38
XXIII. The Kings of Nineveh	40
XXIV. The Foundation of Carthage and of Rome.....	43

CHAP.	PAGE.
XXV. The Seat of Empire removed from Nineveh to Babylon	45
XXVI. The Headship of Nebuchadnezzar.....	49
XXVII. The Religion of God and the Religion of Man Contrasted	52
XXVIII. The Law of God and the Laws of Man Contrasted ..	57
XXIX. The Early Stories of Rome.....	60
XXX. Judgment Executed on Tyre and Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar.....	65
XXXI. Babylon and its Kings	68
XXXII. Rise of the Second Great Empire, and the Story of Cyrus.....	71
XXXIII. The Lydians, and the Story of Cræsus.....	74
XXXIV. Babylon taken by Cyrus	80
XXXV. The Medo-Persian Empire	83
XXXVI. The Captive Jews set free by the command of Cyrus	84
XXXVII. The Reigns of Cambyses and Smerdis	88
XXXVIII. End of kingly Government at Rome	91
XXXIX. The States of Greece	92
XL. Reign of Darius Hystaspes	94
XLI. Greeks and Persians.....	97
XLII. The Chief Men of Greece.....	103
XLIII. The Macedo-Grecian Empire	109
XLIV. Alexander at Tyre and Jerusalem	113
XLV. Alexander's Conquests	117
XLVI. Death of Alexander, and the Division of the Empire	121
XLVII. Stories of the Romans	124
XLVIII. Alexander's Successors.....	130
XLIX. The Story of Pyrrhus, King of Epirus	132
L. The Kings of Syria and Egypt	137
LI. Jewish High Priests.....	141
LII. Romans and Carthaginians.....	146
LIII. The Reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.....	151
LIV. The Maccabees	156
LV. History of the Maccabees continued.....	165
LVI. The Fourth Great Empire.....	168

210.
 211.
 212.
 213.
 214.
 215.
 216.
 217.
 218.
 219.
 220.
 221.
 222.
 223.
 224.
 225.
 226.
 227.
 228.
 229.
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 231.
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 995.
 996.
 997.
 998.
 999.
 1000.

CHAP.	PAGE.
LVII. Judea under its last native Princes	172
LVIII. Struggles for Power at Rome.....	175
LIX. Rome, the Centre of History.....	182
LX. Cæsar's Conquests in the West	185
LXI. The End of the First Triumvirate	189
LXII. The Second Triumvirate	197
LXIII. The Reign of Herod.....	200
LXIV. The Augustan Age	204
LXV. The Close of Herod's Reign	210
Conclusion	212

CONTENTS OF PART II.

CHAP.	PAGE.
I. State of the World at the Time of the Birth of Christ— Three Classes of Inhabitants—Philosophical Sects among the Greeks and Romans—Religious State of the Jews.....	215
II. Government of Augustus—Burial of Herod—Tumult in Judea—Description of the Temple—The Sons of Herod—Judea, a Roman Province—Galilean Princi- ples—The Early Life of Christ.....	221
III. Close of the Reign of Augustus—Reign of Tiberius— Story of Germanicus—Sejanus—Government of Judea—Pontius Pilate—The Sanhedrin—Herod An- tipas—Philip the Tetrarch.....	229
IV. The Ministry of John the Baptist—The Humiliation and the Rejection of Christ—The two-fold Effect of the Death of Christ.....	236
V. Utter Failure of Man—Power of the Resurrection of Christ—Formation of the Church—Light to the Gentiles—Gift of the Holy Ghost—Christ and His Church, the Temple of God	241

CHAP.	PAGE.
VI. Testimony to Christ in Jerusalem—The Jerusalem Church —The Witness of Stephen—Spread of the Gospel— Calling of Paul.....	246
VII. Tiberius—Pilate—Herod Antipas—Herod Agrippa— Caligula—His Desire for Worship—His Cruelty and Folly—Resistance of the Jews—Caligula's Murder	253
VIII. The Door of Faith opened to the Gentiles—Claudius, Emperor—Reign of Herod Agrippa—Weakness of Claudius—Conquest of Britain—Murder of Claudius	263
IX. Reign of Nero—His Character and Conduct—Death of Seneca—Burning of Rome—Persecution of the Chris- tians—Close of Nero's Reign.....	271
X. History of the Church during the Reign of Nero—Pro- gress of the Gospel—The Law not binding on the Gentiles—Epistle of James—Epistle to the Hebrews —Churches in the Heathen Cities—The Close of Paul's Labours—Martyrdom of Paul and Peter.....	277
XI. History of the Jews during the Reign of Nero— Govern- ment of Felix—Porcius Festus—Martyrdom of James —Government of Albinus—Florus—State of Jeru- salem and of Judea—Overthrow of Cestius—Escape of the Christians from Jerusalem.. ..	284
XII. Vespasian—Josephus—The Romans in Galilee—Jotapata —Tarichea—Gamala—John of Gischala—Progress of the Romans in Judea till the Death of Nero.....	291
XIII. Galba, Emperor—Otho, Emperor—Vitellius, Emperor— Vespasian, Emperor—Vespasian's Character—State of Rome.....	297
XIV. Presages of Evil in Jerusalem—State of Jerusalem—John, Eleazar, and Simon—Commencement of the Siege— Fortifications of Jerusalem	300
XV. Siege of Jerusalem—The Horrors of Famine—The Curses threatened by the Law—Sufferings of the Jews— Siege of the Temple—Its Destruction by Fire.....	307

VII.	Triking of Jerusa honour of T
VIII.	Reign of Vespas: Mount Vesuv:
IX.	The Present D: Jewish and Chr: the New Testam Thessalonians, and to the Ephe and Jude
X.	Domitian, Emper: Persecution of —Nerva, Emper:
XI.	First Epistle of Jo Church Govern of John—The B Church at large Last Days of th
XII.	Trajan, Emper: —Corresponde jan's Eastern E tims—The Jew
XIII.	State of the Churc of Ignatius—De
XIV.	Adrian, Emper: His Treatment Barcochab— —Illness and U
XV.	Position of the Days—Leaven
XVI.	Antoninus Pius, I Protection of t Emperor—Publ The Plague—P duct and Death

CHAP.	PAGE.
XVI. Taking of Jerusalem—Treatment of the Jews—Behaviour of Titus—Works of Josephus	316
XVII. Reign of Vespasian—Titus, Emperor—Eruption of Mount Vesuvius—Agricola—Death of Titus	321
XVIII. The Present Dispensation—Contrast between the Jewish and Christian Dispensations—The Books of the New Testament—Outlines of the Epistle to the Thessalonians, to the Corinthians, to the Romans, and to the Ephesians—Last Epistles of Peter, Paul, and Jude	324
XIX. Domitian, Emperor—His Character—His Cruelty—Persecution of the Christians—Murder of Domitian—Nerva, Emperor—His Character—Death of Nerva	331
XX. First Epistle of John—Heresies of the First Century—Church Government—Second and Third Epistles of John—The Book of Revelation—Failure of the Church at large—Meanings of the word Church—Last Days of the Apostle John	336
XXI. Trajan, Emperor—His Character—Conquest of Dacia—Correspondence between Trajan and Pliny—Trajan's Eastern Expedition—Intercourse with Ignatius—The Jews in Egypt and Cyprus	342
XXII. State of the Church—Epistles of Ignatius—Martyrdom of Ignatius—Death of Trajan	348
XXIII. Adrian, Emperor—Adrian's Character and Travels—His Treatment of the Christians and of the Jews—Barchochab—Second Jewish War—Ælia Capitolina—Illness and Death of Adrian	353
XXIV. Position of the Church on Earth—Observance of Days—Leaven of Philosophy—Justin Martyr	360
XXV. Antoninus Pius, Emperor—Character of his Reign—Protection of the Christians—Marcus Antoninus, Emperor—Public Calamities—The Parthian War—The Plague—Persecution of the Christians—Conduct and Death of Verus—Literature and Learned	

CHAP.	PAGE.
Men—State of the Jews—Death of Marcus—His Character and Writings	364
XXVI. The Church on Earth—Causes of Decline—Early Departure from Christian Simplicity—Corruption in Doctrine—Changes in Ministry, comparing that of the Two First Centuries—Assemblies for Worship in the Early Churches—Public Services of the Second Century—Introduction of Ceremonies—Sacraments.....	374
XXVII. Commodus, Emperor—His Character and Amusements—Death of Commodus—Pertinax, Emperor—Murder of Pertinax—Sale of the Empire—History of Septimus Severus.....	382
XXVIII. Rome—The Capitol—The Amphitheatre of Titus—Temples—Baths—Aqueducts—Sewers—Dress of the Romans—Meals—Marriages—Funerals—Mode of Administering Justice—The Public Ways	389
XXIX. Caracalla and Geta—Murder of Geta—Cruelty of Caracalla—Murder of Caracalla—Macrinus and his Son—Heliogabalus—His Follies and violent Death—Protection of the Christians.....	395
XXX. The Church in the World—Heresy of Montanus—The Eclectics—Origen—Remarks on Fasting—New Mode of interpreting Scripture	400
XXXI. Alexander Severus, Emperor—An Example of Devout Paganism—Protection of the Jews and Christians—End of Alexander and his Mother—Second Persian Empire—The Manichean Heresy—Temporary Prosperity of the Jews.....	405
XXXII. Maximin, Emperor—The Gordians—Pupienus, Balbinus, and Gordian—Philip, the Arabian—State of the Church—Death of Philip—Causes of the Decline of the Roman Empire	412
XXXIII. The Nations beyond the Roman World—Independent Germany—The Goths—Gallus, Emperor—The De-	

on Persecution—T
 rry from the Tr
 cas—The Ch
 Hermit—Pena
 Diocletian, Emperor—
 Persecution—Cap
 Galerius—The Ne
 Faints and Alie
 —General Calam
 Lexia
 Diocletian, Emperor—
 Emperor—Victory
 omph—Death of
 Months
 Diocletian Roads—Pr
 Cities of Asia M
 Slavery—Mora
 Italy, Spain, Sw
 of the Romans
 Diocletian, Emper
 in War and
 Persia—Histo
 ror—New Sy
 and two Cas
 The Difficultie
 vernment—
 Lord's Co
 Church—
 Christian
 Recovery
 mence
 Christia
 nation
 The Emp
 his E

CHAP.	PAGE.
cian Persecution—The Martyrs—Cyprian—Falling away from the Truth—First Separation of Christians—The Church at Rome—First Christian Hermit—Penance—Confession	416
XXXIV. Valerian, Emperor—Labours of Cyprian—Renewed Persecution—Captivity of Valerian—Character of Gallienus—The New Platonists—Ravages of the Franks and Allemanni—Usurpers of the Provinces—General Calamities—Story of Odenathus and Zenobia.....	429
XXXV. Claudius, Emperor—War with the Goths—Aurelian, Emperor—Victory over Zenobia—Aurelian's Triumph—Death of Aurelian—No Emperor for Eight Months.....	440
XXXVI. Roman Roads—Progress of Civilisation—Commerce—Cities of Asia Minor—Roman Slaves—Remarks on Slavery—Moral and Intellectual Decay—Ancient Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and Britain—Moral State of the Romans	445
XXXVII. Tacitus, Emperor—Probus, Emperor—His labours in War and Peace—Carus, Emperor—War with Persia—History of Numerian—Dioletian, Emperor—New System of Government—Two Emperors and two Cæsars	452
XXXVIII. The Difficulties of a Christian under a Heathen Government—The Power of the Expectation of the Lord's Coming—The loss of the Hope of the Church—The increasing worldliness of Professing Christians—General Councils—Metropolitans	460
XXXIX. Recovery of Britain—The Persian War—Recommencement of Persecution—Edicts against the Christians—The Triumph of Diocletian—His Resignation of the Empire.....	467
XL. The Emperors and Cæsars—Constantine succeeds to his Father's dominions—Maxentius and his Father	

CHAP.	PAGE.
—Civil Wars—Persecution of the Christians—Terrible Death of Galerius.....	473
XLI. Constantine and Licinius—Maximin's Attempts against Christianity—Story of Constantine's Vision—Real Power of the Cross—Constantine's Victory—The Victory of Licinius—Renewal of Civil War—Death of Licinius	477
XLII. The Church of Christ—Remarks on the Apostasy—The Fathers—Books of the New Testament—State of the Church in the Reign of Constantine—The Edicts of Constantine—The Donatists—Arius—The Nicene Council—Helena—Progress of Superstition—Spread of the Gospel—Dominion of Rabbinism..	485
XLIII. Seat of Government removed to Byzantium—Churches—The New City, called Constantinople—Cruelty of Constantine—Goths and Sarmatians—Death of Arius—Political and Ecclesiastical Arrangements—Constantine's Appointment of his Successors—Character of his Religion and Laws	494
XLIV. Twofold Effect of the Establishment of Christianity—The Wisdom of Constantine as a Sovereign—Zeal without Knowledge—Nature of the Present Dispensation—Extent of a Believer's Power in advancing the spiritual good of others—Means of Conversion—Ignorance of the Pagans—Mystics and Monks—Guilt of the Church—God over all, blessed for ever	504
Conclusion	510
Appendix	511
Index	513

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UNIVERSAL HISTORY.

PART I.

FROM THE CREATION TO THE FIRST APPEARANCE
OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

WHENCE COMES MY HISTORY ?

THE habitable parts of the earth are fifty millions of square miles* in extent, and I have only seen a few hundreds—the world is at least 5847 years old, and I have only lived thirty of them ;—therefore I can but collect the information that I give you from the writings of others :—first, such as were written by holy men in the scriptures of truth, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;—secondly, the histories written by men according to their own pleasure, and most commonly with minds blinded by the god of this world.

In the earliest ages we have no light but the Scriptures : for though the Chinese, Egyptians, and others, have pretended that their histories are of greater antiquity, the extravagancy and inconsistencies of them prove the emptiness of such a boast ; and we are sure that all nations who have been without the revelation of God's word, have not known the secret of their own beginning.

Even my youngest reader would smile at the folly of the Arcadians, a people of Greece, who said that their ancestors were older than the moon : and things not less absurd have been affirmed by others. Herodotus, a Greek, who lived about the time of Malachi, was the first who tried to collect the historical records of Egypt, Italy, and Greece. For that purpose he travelled throughout those countries ; and

* A square mile is a square piece of ground, measuring a mile on every side.

having gathered together their traditions, which were mostly preserved by the repetition of stories from father to son, he wrote a history in his own language : he says, however, some of the accounts given him by the inhabitants of these countries, were too wonderful even for him to believe.

Thucydides, another Greek, who heard Herodotus repeat his history at a place of public amusement, was so pleased with the work, that he was encouraged to search for fresh materials, and wrote a history shortly afterwards.

Xenophon, a warrior, was the next Greek historian ; he wrote the history of the times, a few years later, in much of which he was personally interested. Polybius of Greece died only 100 B.C. and the fragments of his history which remain, are considered very correct. Among the Romans, the names of Julius Cæsar, Livy, Quintus Curtius, Tacitus, Suetonius, etc. are best known as historians ; and from the translations of their works the histories in use are mostly compiled. The monuments of the ancients which still remain, and the coins in use among them, that have been found buried in the earth, confirm or correct many of the facts related by historians : but still we cannot receive their writings without suspicion ; as so many different motives induced them to write, and not being led by the Spirit of truth, they would naturally colour their history according to their own taste and disposition. The earliest writings were made on tables of stone, brass, or wood, covered with wax : prepared skins were also used, but among the Egyptians the use of the plant *papyrus* was soon discovered, and from that our word *paper* is derived. The inner bark of the trees, or *liber*, was anciently used by the Romans ; hence in the Latin tongue *liber* still means a book, and our word *library* is derived from it. It is said that an ancient copy of the books of Moses was found written on sheep or goatskin. In Ceylon, the leaves of the talipat tree are still used instead of paper, and being rubbed with oil, they are preserved from decay, and books are found there of a great age. The natives write in the ancient manner, with a style or sharp-pointed instrument which scratches or graves the letters very neatly. We read of ink, however, at an early period, and it is mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah (xxxvi. 18).

CHAP. II.

THE BEGINNING OF HISTORY.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. xi. 3).

WHEN we talk of making bread, building houses, &c. it is understood there must be suitable and sufficient materials for our work: the flour is a visible thing, before the loaf is formed; the stones, wood, mortar, &c. are on the spot ready for use before the building can be constructed. But when God made the world, there was nothing visible out of which the things we now see could be made: his work therefore is called creation, and can only be understood by faith. The believer rejoices that his Lord, as one with the Father, was occupied in this wondrous work, as it is written, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John i. 3). It is also certain that the Holy Ghost, as one with the Father and the Son, was present in the work; for it is written, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. i. 2). Thus, we know the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, as one God who is Love, created this world, as well as the heavens, with the innumerable stars; and this habitable earth was fitted up to be the place wherein he would show forth his manifold wisdom, grace, and glory.

It is said that there are now more than 800,000,000 of inhabitants in the world, and we know millions of millions have dwelt in it whose bodies are now mingled with the dust: yet all these myriads descended from one common stock, and are all the children of Adam. The difference of climate and other circumstances have caused the varieties which are now seen in the appearance of the dwellers upon earth; and those who have studied the subject divide mankind into several classes:—1. The Polar or Lapland Race, whose short stature may be accounted for, by the blighting cold in those regions;—2. The Mongol or Tartar race, inhabiting the whole of central Asia;—3. The Negro or Ethiopian;—4. The Red or Copper-coloured North American Indians;—and 5. The White Race.

Chronology is a word derived from the Greek, signifying the art of reckoning the events of time. The common or vulgar reckoning is, that 4004 years passed away before the birth of Christ; and this is the only calculation that I shall make use of in the present volume. These years added to 1843, which have elapsed since that period, show that we are living in the year of the world 5847. The Jews reckon it to be 5604, and according to the Septuagint, or Greek version of the Bible, it is some hundred years more. All nations have reckoned time in reference to events most important in their esteem; the chief era of the Romans was the year of the building of Rome, &c. Those who bear the name of Christians date thus—B. C. before Christ, and A. D. Anno Domini, that is, in the year of the Lord.

For the use of my young readers, who find it difficult to remember dates, an easy plan of fixing them in the memory is added at the end of the book.

CHAP. III.

THE FIRST DISPENSATION.

It has pleased God at different periods of the world's age to act in various ways towards the human family; and these various ways of ordering the affairs of the earth are commonly called dispensations. In the first dispensation every thing was pronounced by God to be *very good*. Man, created in the image of God, with a help fitted for him, had dominion over every living thing; and no groan was heard throughout the whole creation, for the fruits were man's meat, and the herbs were the food of every other creature. It pleased the Lord to lay one command upon Adam and Eve, on the keeping of which their life depended; they were required to refrain from eating the fruit of one particular tree, and the continuance of their happiness depended on the subjection of their wills to God. How long it lasted we cannot tell; poets have supposed it was for a considerable period: but in the simple narrative, though the completion of six days is recorded Gen. i. 31, nothing is said about the

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close of the seventh day ; and some have thought that God's rest in his works was broken by man's sin on that first sabbath. From the failure of Adam and Eve, we learn the lesson that must be impressed on our mind throughout all history : " All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of grass ;" " the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." They only are safe who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ; they only are strong who are made partakers of the divine nature by living union with Christ, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

CHAP. IV.

FALLEN MAN.

FROM the story of Adam's fall, it is plain that a will opposed to God is the root of sin. Adam's self-will made him listen to his wife, who was given him only for a help, and was not to stand in the Lord's place : and Eve's self-will led her to hearken to the serpent, the devil, who taught her to please herself rather than the Lord, and thereby she seemed to choose him for her Master. The exact contrast to this independent will is only found in the man Christ Jesus, who said, " Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God !"

The striking features of fallen man, painted in Gen. iii., are common to every child of Adam, up to the present day :—1. the attempt to cure the evil they cannot help discovering ;—2. fear which hath torment ;—3. a desire to shun the Lord ;—4. self-justification, which often leads even to the accusation of God himself. Such a state is indeed death towards God ; and he alone can quicken the dead. By this short but solemn trial in the garden of the Lord, we learn what creature-strength is, and also that there is one stronger and more cunning than man, seeking to destroy him. But if this were the only lesson to be learned in Eden, it would be sorrowful indeed. It is after we have learned ourselves, we are prepared to learn God. While Adam and his wife stood convicted and ashamed, the Lord spoke that blessed prophecy

which is the comfort of every believer. He said that the woman's seed, that is, Christ Jesus, should bruise the serpent's head, even though he himself should suffer bruising in the work. After pronouncing the curse upon the ground, the sorrow and subjection of the woman, and the future toilsome labour of man, as also his return to dust, it pleased the Lord graciously to comfort them by shadowing forth to them the promised redemption. The blood of an animal must have been shed on the spot—and this plainly prefigured the sacrifice of Christ; and these poor sinners were clothed by God in the skin, just as all who are now saved stand only in the perfectness of Christ's righteousness. Have you, my readers, ever stood before God as sinners, condemned by your own confession as well as by his word? Have you found peace through faith in the precious blood of the Lamb of God; and are you standing in the righteousness of another, even Jesus, having thrown away for ever the leaf-like covering you may have sought to make for yourselves? It is to be noticed that Adam now called his wife's name Eve (Heb. living), as if to mark his belief in the way of life promised by God through her seed.

CHAP. V.

THE SECOND DISPENSATION.—THE CORRUPT EARTH.

In the first dispensation, God had proved that it was impossible man could stand in his own strength, and his second dispensation towards them was *as weak ones*, whose only hope of escape from their strong enemy, the devil, was by faith in the power of One who was to bruise him, the promised Saviour. Now Cain, the first man born into the world as a sinner, was an example of unbelief and its dreadful consequences; and Abel, the second man born in sin, was an example of faith, and its blessed end, for he was accounted righteous before God. It is well to consider these two brothers, because all who have been born since are unbelievers like the one, or believers like the other. Cain wanted God

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to accept him on account of the fruit* of *his own labours*; whereas his very *toil* should have been a continual remembrance that he was a sinner, for the ground had been cursed for man's sake. Abel, on the contrary, brought no work of his own hands, but a lamb which was God's gift to him, and the offering appointed by God to shadow forth the precious Lamb he had promised to provide.

Between these two classes of persons, one born after the flesh and the other born after the Spirit, there is always an enmity, though it is shown more or less according to circumstances and opportunities. In Cain and Abel, as the first specimen of each, we see the full working of the flesh and of the Spirit. Cain obeyed the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning; Abel obeyed the will of God, doing well and suffering even unto the death of the body. The first class must depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; the last, having received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by Jesus Christ. Very few of the descendants of Adam have followed Abel; but multitudes have gone in the way of Cain: and only fifteen hundred years after the creation, the earth was corrupt before God, and filled with violence. The Lord was grieved at the sight of a world of sinners, for men were greatly multiplied: and in his long-suffering he had delayed to pay the wages of sin, which is death, so that all lived for some hundreds of years. But they did not use this time to seek salvation; and their hearts were only more fully set in them to do evil, because the sentence against their evil works was not executed speedily. Still there are many sinners when they are dying, who long to live, thinking they should live better: one wretched infidel on his death-bed promised his doctor his whole fortune if he could prolong his life a few days, or even one hour! But from the history of the antediluvians (as those are called who lived before the flood), we learn that grace, and not time, is needed to change the heart; and it is certain that even little children may be

*God could accept the fruits of the earth on an altar previously sprinkled with blood (Lev. ii. 14): and so does he delight in the obedience which follows faith in Jesus.

complete in Christ, and bring forth much fruit to the glory of God.

In the days before the flood, amidst the multitude of evil-doers, there were still a few who called upon the name of the Lord; and Enoch, one among them, is said to have walked with God three hundred years. Now it is written, "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" therefore we see that Enoch must have agreed with the thoughts and ways of God, in order to walk with him. By faith Enoch pleased God, even in the corrupt earth; and his rich reward was in being taken away to be with the Lord, without seeing death. In like manner all the children of God who please him now by faith, will be caught up out of this wicked world to meet the Lord Jesus at his coming, whilst those who are fallen asleep God will bring with him.

It was Enoch who prophesied concerning that day which so many of the Lord's people are now expecting (Jude 14, 15).

The holy Lord God could not leave the world in the state of corruption which has been described, for "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." He determined to purify the earth by destroying those who corrupted it; but there was mercy as well as judgment in the heart of God, and he gave a proof of his long-suffering towards this evil generation. For 120 years, Noah, through the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter. iii. 19), became a preacher of righteousness, but his words were unheeded by those who set themselves up as *mighty men*, and were *men of renown* in each other's esteem. Noah, by the grace of God, showed his own faith in the threatened judgment by preparing an ark for the saving of his house, according to the Lord's commandment: but his work made as little impression as his words; and all the dwellers upon earth went on indulging all the lusts of the flesh, bent only on pleasing themselves, till the very day when the seven of Noah's family, who, with himself, made up the spared remnant, went into the ark, and the world being overflowed with water, perished. And thus again it will be, in the coming day of threatened judgment by fire (2 Pet. iii.; Matt. xxiv. 37). Many will be saying "Peace and safety!" when sudden destruction comes upon them; many will be cleaving most closely to the things of this world, just as they

are on the point of losing them for ever, and of losing also their own souls (1 Thess. v. 3; Rev. xviii. 7 &c.). There is one way of escape; namely, by faith in Christ Jesus; and those who take refuge in Jesus cannot be hurt by the flaming fire which goes before Him, any more than Noah and his family could be touched by the destroying waters.

The flood took place B. C. 2348.

Thus the Second Dispensation ended in judgment mingled with mercy, as well as the First; proving how abominable is sin in the sight of the Lord, and how great is his salvation.

CHAP. VI.

THE THIRD DISPENSATION—UNDER WHICH *THE EARTH* STILL REMAINS.

NOAH, in coming out of the ark, was, as it were, in new circumstances: the state of the world was altered; for the wicked had been swept away by the flood, and now it pleased God to act according to a new dispensation. Man's dominion over the creatures had become a dominion of fear; for the sin which made man try to hide from the Lord's presence, caused the creatures to flee from him. Thus, when God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, as to Adam at first, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth," he adds, that the *fear* and *dread* of them should be upon every living creature. To Adam, the fruits were given for food, but now the Lord said, "*Every* moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, *even as* the green herb, I have given you all things." Blood alone was forbidden food; because it was the life which God reserved as due to himself alone; and he purposed it should shadow forth the necessity of the atonement to be made by his well beloved Son. Again, it does not appear that during the last dispensation life had been given for life; the murderer was permitted to live, as in the case of Cain, and probably Lamech, and the earth was *filled* with violence. *Now*, it pleased God to require blood for blood; and to show the value of human life, even the beast who destroyed a man was to be put to death. Immediately on coming out of the ark, Noah built an altar, and

offered upon it the proper sacrifices. This act of faith was sweet to the Lord, because the savour of Christ was in it; and he promised that he would not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, neither would he again smite every living thing as he had done. These promises are to be carefully noticed, as well as the concluding words, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease" (Gen. viii. 22).

This was the everlasting covenant established between God and all flesh that is upon the earth; and the rainbow is the sign given as God's security that it shall stand.

But we must remember it comes to man as every blessing must alone come, through the sacrifice of Christ, which was promised and shadowed forth then, for ever settled in God's eternal counsels, but now actually fulfilled. It was the Lord Jesus who said, "This is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" (John vi. 51); and of him it is written, "He is before all things, and by him all things *consist*, [or, keep together]" (Col. i. 17). That is, if it were not for the work of Christ the whole world would be in ruins, or cease to exist; thus is he in one sense the Saviour or Preserver of all; but they who believe are saved eternally.

CHAP. VII.

THE RE-PEOPLING OF THE EARTH.

We have now to consider, not merely the children of one man, but, as it were, the descendants of four distinct families; those of Noah's three sons, and his own sons and daughters born after the flood. But before they spread abroad through the earth, we have some useful lessons taught us by their history.

When the earth was corrupt before God, Noah found grace in his eyes, and his faith condemned the unbelieving world (Heb. xi. 7). It is written, "he was a just man, and walked with God." But the first event recorded after his sacrifice to the Lord, and the blessing pronounced upon him, is that he planted a vineyard, and instead of enjoying the

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comfort of the fresh fruits of the ground in moderation, he drank of the wine from it, and was drunken. For the time, it would seem his state was worse than that of Adam after his fall; for the latter *knew* he was naked; whereas Noah lay uncovered without any sense of his shame, for his sin had reduced him to the state of a beast. Here we learn, what it is so needful to remember, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." "To which of the saints wilt thou turn?" No, we must turn from the brightest that ever lived, and find perfection only in Christ Jesus. Moreover, the sin of a child of God does always appear worse than that committed in a natural state, because it is in such contrast with his holy calling, and the righteousness imputed to him by faith. But how blessed was the part taken by Shem and Japhet, in seeking to hide their father's shame! It was *God* who clothed Adam and Eve; they, as the *children* of God, took a garment, and laid it on both their shoulders, and went backwards to cover Noah. It seemed as if they knew that God had covered all his sins, and cast them behind *his* back, and as if they felt in spirit this precious word, "Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." At any rate their conduct was according to the Lord's mind, and may rightly be imitated. Ham, on the contrary, saw his father's state, and told it to his brethren; a sin which was visited by the curse uttered by Noah in the remarkable prophecy, after his recovery (Gen. ix. 24—27). It is probable from the mention of Ham's youngest son Canaan, that he was of the same character as his father; and we shall presently find what his descendants were, and how they became servants. The chosen people of God descended in a direct line from Shem, and it pleased him to be called, "the Lord God of Shem." The perfect recovery of Noah's soul seems to be marked by his calling the name of the Lord "blessed," just as David, after his restoration, cried, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities!" The prophecy concerning Japhet is very remarkable, considering him to be the father of the chief European nations; for they are greatly enlarged beyond all others, and have spread so far as to dwell in the countries of Asia, where we may believe the children of Shem first pitched their tents.

It is generally supposed that the children of Japhet settled in Europe; those of Shem in Asia; and those of Ham in Africa. America and the islands seem to have been peopled, at an unknown period, from these different quarters: America most probably by the Asiatics.

CHAP. VIII.

NATIONS AND LANGUAGES.

ACCORDING to God's purpose, man, as well as every other living creature, greatly multiplied in the earth; and the age of man was only shortened by degrees, as the world was peopled. Noah lived 350 years after the flood, and Shem outlived his father 150 years. During his life-time occurred the next event recorded in the Bible, which proves that though the face of the earth was renewed, and fresh generations dwelt upon it, man was not a new creature,—as the Lord said, “the imagination of man's heart is *evil* from his youth.” While those were yet living who had witnessed such terrible judgment upon the mighty men of old, the pride and rebellion of these fresh inhabitants of the earth appeared in a new form.

The ark had rested on Mount Ararat, and the families of Noah and his sons, as they multiplied, spread through the region which lies between the Caspian sea and the Mediterranean, till they came to a fertile plain more than two hundred miles from the spot where their fathers had come out of the ark. This is called in the Bible the land of Shinar, a country watered by the river Euphrates. God purposed the earth should be filled; but the children of men resolved to build a city and tower on this pleasant spot, *lest they should be scattered* abroad over the whole earth (Gen. xi. 4). The first temptation in the garden had been the thought of being *as gods*; and in like manner the object of these children of Adam was to build a tower whose top might reach *unto heaven*. And this hope of reaching, as it were, to heaven, and getting a name in proud self-will and independence of God, has been shown forth in some shape or other ever

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since, and perhaps never more than in these last days, when it may be said, till God interfere, "nothing will be restrained from men which they have imagined to do." In all the busy stir of the present times, there is no thought of God's glory; "Let us do the work," say they, "and do it thoroughly well, that *our names* may be had in remembrance." Such were the thoughts of the builders of this tower, and such are the thoughts of projectors now; and so it will be till the Lord, whom they forget, comes, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low (Isa. ii.; Rev. xvi. 19). Every high tower, and all the boasted cities of the nations must then fall, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

The Lord did not visit these proud and foolish builders with any destroying judgment, but showed them his purpose should stand, by making them speak in so many different languages that they could not understand each other, and left off of their own accord. Those people of course would associate together who spoke the same language; and, separating into companies, they began to disperse on all sides. Learned men have often attempted to find out *which* was the one original language spoken by all the children of men; some have contended it was Hebrew; others, one of the Eastern languages; but this very difficulty is but a proof of the truth of God's word, as we find his purpose to confound their language is literally fulfilled.

On the day of Pentecost, the chosen witnesses of Christ's resurrection were enabled, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, to speak the languages of all to whom they were to preach the Gospel. Such was the love of God, in removing this obstacle to the proclamation of the glad tidings of salvation. And in heaven the innumerable company gathered out of all nations and languages, will unite in one common song (Rev. vii. 9, 10). And the people on earth will have a pure language restored to them by the Lord, that they may all call upon his name and serve him with one consent (Zeph. iii. 9).

But we have a long and dark period to consider in our history; and I shall only add, after speaking of the origin of the difference of nations and languages, that the trouble of learning a foreign language may remind us of the folly

of pride and rebellion against the Lord, and lead us to consider his words, "*My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*"

CHAP. IX.

THE FIRST EMPIRE.

THE city and tower built by men were known by the name of Babel, that is *Confusion*; and thence the name of Babylon was afterwards derived. We shall find in the whole history of it, as in its beginning, man's glory was the object in view, and God was speedily forgotten.

It has been thought that Asshur, the son of Shem, first settled his family in this tract of country, and that it was called after his name, Assyria. But Nimrod, the grandson of Ham, got possession of Babel, and soon made himself king of the surrounding country. He is the first after the flood who bears the same reputation as the evil-doers before it, for he is said to be a mighty one in the earth. Before the Lord, Nimrod was a mighty hunter; but this is the expression of the Lord's mind, "Let not the mighty man glory in his might—but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me" (Jer. ix. 23, 24). Fleeshly strength must perish with the flesh, but spiritual strength endures for ever. The all-important question is, Do you understand and know the Lord, so as to delight in those things which delight him?

"God taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man, but in them that fear him:" therefore Nimrod's fame is not to be desired; for the Spirit has recorded nothing concerning him in which God could be pleased. It is supposed that Nimrod reigned, B. C. 2204. He was worshipped after his death by the Assyrians, and the tower of Babel became an idolatrous temple, where he was honoured under the name of Bel or Baal, that is, *ruler*. The ruins of this tower or temple are still called Birs Nemroud by those who live near the spot.

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on the authority of men, I feel like a person going from the clear light of day into dim twilight, in which one may easily mistake one object for another. There are persons passing by with lanterns here and there, it is true; but then they just stop to light up those parts that they admire, and often dwell longest on those objects which are most painful to the eye of a Christian. The beginning of the Assyrian empire is mentioned in Scripture; but the records of it which we gather from historians, are but briefly glanced at here and there. The following stories are therefore taken from un-inspired writers.

CHAP. X.

THE STORY OF SEMIRAMIS.

THE universal practice of the great ones of the earth has been to call their lands and cities after their own names, or the names of characters that they admire: this is but another proof of that forgetfulness of God, and self-exaltation which is common to every natural man. Jerusalem, in its highest future glory, will be called after the name of the Lord; and in this, as in every thing else, it will be distinguished from the cities built for man's glory (Ezek. xlvi. 35).

It is supposed that the city of Nineveh, which was long more important than Babylon to the Assyrian Empire, was called after the name of Ninus, one of the successors of Nimrod. He conquered some of the neighbouring parts of Asia from the families who had settled there; for war soon became common in the earth, the stronger seizing more than they needed, and leaving the weaker in distress. Men "hating one another," expected to be attacked, even if they did not give the first offence; and on this account they built forts and castles, or strong walls around their rude habitations, to protect them from more powerful neighbours. Ninus, in one of his expeditions, met with a fortress of this kind which was too strong for him to break into. On this occasion it is said that Semiramis, the wife of one of his soldiers, offered to lead a party of men and show them how to break down

the castle. She succeeded in this bold undertaking; and Ninus was so pleased with her courage, that he obliged her husband to give her up to him as his wife: and when he died, she reigned over Assyria in his stead. The queen caused an immense mound of earth to be raised over his grave, which continued, after Nineveh was destroyed, to be the only remembrance of the city: and probably this story was thus preserved, for children would naturally ask their fathers what could be the intention of such a heap, and the history of Semiramis would be preserved from generation to generation. Semiramis occupied herself in the improvement of Babylon, and built a bridge over the Euphrates, the first attempt made to cross a river in this way. Till her time, Babylon seems to have been only a cluster of huts round the tower of Belus. She traced out the plan for a great city, and began the works which were finished by Nebuchadnezzar. She also went out to battle at the head of her armies, and by her conquests greatly extended the empire; but it is supposed that in endeavouring to subdue the people of India, she was driven back with great loss. The hope of Semiramis in all her actions, and her consolation in the thought of death, was that she should be worshipped by the Assyrians afterwards; for as men forgot the living God, they began to hold as gods such as they admired upon earth. This wretched queen of a people whose understandings were darkened like her own, was at last murdered by the command of Ninyas, the son of Ninus, who had been put under her care by his father, as the heir of the empire.

It has been said that Semiramis was afterwards worshipped by the Assyrians under the figure of a dove; but perhaps no object could have been chosen less fit to represent her, as she rather resembled a tigress.

Ninyas was weak and sensual, and delighted in slothful self-indulgence rather than in robbing his neighbours. For this reason he and his successors who were of the same disposition, are little mentioned by historians, as those who do the most mischief are usually the most noted.

Three of them, however, living at different periods, are mentioned in the course of our history.

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CHAP. XI.

EGYPT.

MIZRAIM is the Hebrew word for Egypt, and hence it is supposed that the second son of Ham who bore that name, first settled in this part of the earth, and as the head of a family, became the first king; probably he was the first ruler in Egypt mentioned by Herodotus under the name of Menes, for the same person we shall often find is called by different names according to the difference of language. His reign has been fixed 2188, B.C. Idolatry was, alas! as common in this branch of Ham's family* as in the Assyrian; for even Menes is chiefly famed as the inventor of the ceremonies of idol worship, and for setting up the priests who sacrificed to their strange gods. The story of Ham's posterity may remind us of this Scripture, "the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned."

Egypt was a very fertile country, and contained a great number of inhabitants, who filled it with cities; and from their ancient monuments we learn more of their manner of life, the arts and sciences cultivated among them, and of the actions of their kings, as also of their abominable religion, than we can from any of the early nations.†

Ancient Egypt was divided into three parts, and often governed by different monarchs. 1. Upper Egypt, so called as nearest the source of the Nile. 2. Middle Egypt, the capital of which was Memphis, near the spot where Cairo now stands. 3. Lower Egypt or the Delta, in shape like the triangular Greek letter of that name, as two of the largest branches of the Nile flow on each side of it, and fall into the Mediterranean which washes the coast. Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt, built by king Busiris, who lived some ages after Menes, was the greatest city in the land, and the ancients esteemed it one of the wonders of the world. But the plague-spot of sin marks all the sculptures and paintings

* It is supposed that Ham himself was afterwards worshipped under the name of Jupiter Ammon.

† I shall refer my young readers to an interesting volume entitled, "Illustrations of the Bible from the Monuments of Egypt." C. Tilt, Fleet-street.

with which the ruins abound ; and it is plain that the Egyptians worshipped not only the images of corruptible man, but four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Now, the visible creation was enough to prove the eternal power and godhead of him whom they forgot, so, as the apostle says, "they are without excuse" (Rom. i. 20—23). Even their fruitful seasons left them not without a witness of the living God ; but by reason of sin, they did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge, so that at last he gave them up to their wilful ignorance and wicked ways. Throughout all history, we shall see what a terrible thing it is to be "without God in the world," and to be "without hope" concerning the future.

The first desire of all who forget God is to make themselves as great and happy as they can upon the earth, and most of the stories that you will read show the great variety of attempts, and the constant failure, to accomplish this purpose. In such a spirit, the kings of Egypt undertook all their great works ; the pyramids, and other proud monuments of human skill will probably remain around Cairo, till the Lord shakes the earth ; but what advantage are they to the kings who had them raised, or the people who gloried in them ? Those pyramids which appear so grand were indeed worse than useless ; for thousands of captives toiled in building them, and the kings who had desired to be buried in such magnificent tombs were so hated by their subjects for their cruelty, that their dying requests were not granted. The characters inscribed on these and other monuments are called hieroglyphics, or sacred signs, as they were considered such by the priests who used them, and differ from the written language of the country. In late years these hieroglyphics have been interpreted, but the discovery is more curious than profitable. Osymandyas, an Egyptian king, who formed the first library mentioned in history, placed a hieroglyphical inscription in front of the building, signifying, "This is the Treasury for the Diseases of the Soul." Thus is the wisdom of this world foolishness with God ; for the Bible, which alone contains God's remedy for the sin-sick soul, was not there. Another king, Mœris, is famed for causing an immense artificial lake to be made, which was called after his name : the purpose of it may be thus explained. No rain

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and it is plain that the Egyptian images of corruptible man, but not of things. Now, the visible image of the eternal power and godhead is the apostle says, "they are made in the image of God" (Col. 3:10-23). Even their fruitful witness of the living God; they were not like to retain God in their thoughts, gave them up to their wilful blindness. Throughout all history, we find that it is to be "without God in the world" and "without hope" concerning the future. To forget God is to make themselves gods; they can upon the earth, and all things read show the great variety of failure, to accomplish this purpose. The kings of Egypt undertook all manner of monuments, pyramids, obelisks, and other proud monuments, to remain around Cairo, till the day that advantage are they to the people who gloried in their power. They appear so grand were indeed the monuments of captives toiled in building, and desired to be buried in such a manner by their subjects for their sins were not granted. The monuments and other monuments are called obelisks, as they were considered such monuments and differ from the written monuments. In these years these hieroglyphics and their discovery is more curious than any other. The Egyptian king, who formed the hieroglyphics, placed a hieroglyphical sign, signifying, "This is the Soul." Thus is the wisdom of God; for the Bible, which is the sin-sick soul, was not formed for causing an image, which was called after his name, thus explained. No rain

falls in Egypt, but the country is fertilised by the annual overflowing of the Nile, which takes place after that river is swollen by the abundant rains that fall in the mountains of Ethiopia where it rises. When the river rose too high, this lake was opened to receive the superabundant water; but when the inundation was small, the lake Mœris supplied what was wanting, by means of canals through which its waters were discharged over the country.

In July and August, the period of the inundation, all Egypt looks like a vast lake, with numerous towns and villages scattered here and there, having raised causeways leading from one to the other; the groves and woods just appearing above the water. The thick mud which is left after the Nile has returned to its usual channel, spoils the beauty of the country for a while; yet at the same time it enriches the earth so much, that by the end of January the whole land is one scene of verdure. In February, the rich pastures are filled with flocks, the plains are flowery, and the trees loaded with blossoms. Such has been the bounty of God from age to age, for "He is kind to the unthankful and the evil."

Egypt was governed by native kings, till B.C. 2084, when some strangers from Arabia, known by the name of the Hycsos or shepherd-kings, seized upon lower Egypt, and would have taken possession of the whole, had not the kings of Thebes and Upper Egypt resisted the invaders. These foreign princes reigned more than two centuries, and during that period, B.C. 1920, Abraham came into the land. This leads us to a more interesting history,—a light shining in a dark place.

CHAP. XII.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

THE governments which arose in the earth, whether in Assyria, Egypt, or elsewhere, were doubtless ordained of God, that the earth might not be filled with violence as before the flood; but sin reigned in its many horrible forms, and all the world seemed fast forgetting God their Creator. And no remembrance of the Lord would have remained, had it

depended on man's keeping; for we have the direct testimony of the Holy Ghost, "*they did not like to retain God in their knowledge.*" Wonderful therefore was the love of God in raising up a set of living witnesses, moved by the Spirit, who could truly say, "*Our desire is unto thee, and to the remembrance of thy name.*" Abram was the tenth in a direct line from Shem; but even his fathers served strange gods. He was born in the land of Chaldea, which soon became a part of the Assyrian empire, B. C. 1996.

It pleased the Lord that this Chaldean should be the father of his chosen people; and when seventy-five years of age, he called him to be his Friend, and made a covenant with him (Gen. xii.). But Abram could not enjoy God's blessing without separating from his country and his kindred, and coming forth in simple dependance on heavenly guidance and teaching.

Assyria and Egypt were great kingdoms, and their monarchs thought very highly of themselves; yet there was nothing in them or their works which could please God: but Abram pleased him by faith, through grace, and became the chosen witness of his love. The promise to Abram at his call, is worthy of all attention: the Lord said, "I will make of thee a *great nation*, and I will bless thee, and *make thy name great*; and thou shalt be a *blessing*: and I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall *all the families of the earth* be blessed." God had not spoken thus to any other. You will observe, that Abram is not to resemble the builders of Babel and other ungodly men, who make their own names great; but God will make *his name great* and *his nation great*. We shall now therefore learn the true meaning of greatness; and this is very important, as the word is so often misused. Abram bore no proud earthly title; but his heavenly rank was high indeed—the Friend of God—in the midst of a world at enmity with him. He had neither an empire nor thousands of warriors at his command, but only a faithful household whom he instructed in the Lord's commandments; and the whole extent of land that he could leave to his family, as actually his own, was the field containing his burying-place. He did not take away the property of others by superior force but

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even gave the choice of the best pastures to Lot, his younger in years. The only time he was concerned in a battle was to deliver the suffering captives, and restore the stolen goods to their rightful owners; and on this occasion he would not share in the spoils of the enemy, nor receive riches from the hand of the wicked king of Sodom. In all these particulars he was an exact contrast to the men of this world. And as to the greatness of the nation descended from him, it has consisted, not in extent of territory, in numbers, or natural strength; but in being distinguished from all other nations by having the oracles of God. The character of its promised greatness, is *righteousness*; and this has belonged to no earthly people hitherto.

Abram, however, was by nature a sinner, like all the children of Adam; and in relating his history, the Spirit of Truth shows that he was not perfect, even in that for which he was particularly distinguished. The Lord had bid him dwell in the land of Canaan; but when a famine arose, through the failure of his faith, he went into Egypt seeking, in the abundance there, that supply for his need which God could have provided anywhere. One wrong step usually leads to another: being out of the position in which God had placed him, he could no longer look to him for defence, and he desired his wife to tell a lie which he thought would save him from harm. He knew the wickedness of the Egyptians; and, fearing that they would kill him in order to get his beautiful wife, he told her to say she was his sister. The Lord could not bless this contrivance, for it was of Satan; and as a chastening to Abram, he suffered the king of Egypt to deprive him of his wife for a little season: but he was soon constrained by the power of God to give her up unharmed, and Abram took her back safely to Canaan. We shall now consider the history of the land in which he was counted a stranger, though it was his own by the purpose and promise of God. All the children of God, like Abram, have to walk as strangers and pilgrims on the earth, though it is a part of their inheritance as joint-heirs with Christ, and they will reign over it with him (Rev. v. 10, &c.).

CHAP. XIII.

CANAAN.

It appears that the descendants of Ham's elder sons had settled in Assyria and Egypt. Canaan, the youngest, was the head of the seven nations who filled the land called by his name; and the city of Sidon, on the sea-coast, was probably named after his eldest son (Gen. x. 15—20). The land of Canaan is a small but beautiful country, occupying an advantageous and nearly central position with regard to the nations of Europe, Asia and Africa.

Canaan, properly so called, is not half so large as England; but the whole inheritance promised to Abraham's seed was only to be bounded by the river of Egypt on the one side, and the Euphrates on the other (see Gen. xv.). The youngest branch of Ham's family seems to have been the most wicked, and a peculiar curse rested on it; but the Canaanites were either careless or forgetful of this, and only occupied themselves in increasing their earthly prosperity, by taking every advantage of their fertile country and convenient situation. There were many cities there in Abraham's days, governed, it appears, for the most part, by kings independent of each other.

The sad story of the rich and populous cities of the plain is well known. We may just observe that the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah are but little samples of that which will take place when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel (Luke xvii. 30; 2 Thess. i. 8). Farther judgment was at that time delayed, because the iniquity of the Amorites, another branch of Canaan's family, was not full; but it was revealed to Abram, that after four hundred years of strangership and affliction in a land that was not theirs, his descendants in the line of Isaac should return to Canaan and receive it for their possession. The Lord suffered no man to wrong Abram; and it was acknowledged that God was with him in all things. He built altars to the Lord throughout this land, so that the people were not left without a witness of the true God.

CHAP. XIV.

THE DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM.

It is not my intention to go through all the beautiful stories found in the Bible, as other words than those chosen by the Spirit of God seem to spoil their force and simplicity: I would simply take up those points which are necessary to a correct view of general history. The Lord promised Abram that his seed or descendants should be in number as the stars of heaven, or the sand on the sea shore, long before he had any child. As years passed on he became impatient: and, by Sarah's desire, he married her servant Hagar, an Egyptian. This act, we find, disturbed their peace; and Ishmael, the son of Hagar, did not prove to be the promised seed, but they had to wait some years longer till Sarah had a child.

The prophecy concerning Ishmael was, that he should be a wild man, and the head of a numerous people like himself in character. When he was fourteen, the child of promise was born; and Ishmael was soon afterwards cast out of his father's house for mocking at Isaac. It is likely that he was proud of his greater age and strength; but the real superiority was Isaac's because he was born after the Spirit, and chosen as the father of God's peculiar people.

After this, Ishmael dwelt in the wilderness which borders on Canaan, and his mother took for him an Egyptian wife: he had twelve sons, who became princes, and built towns and castles. Their descendants, the wild Arabs of the present day, still bear the Ishmael character as robbers, and frequently assassins; their hand against every man's, and every man's hand against them. It is said however that they still observe circumcision, the sign of the covenant which was given to Abram just before the birth of Isaac, when his name was changed to Abraham, to signify he should be the father of a great multitude. Another portion of this great multitude descended from Isaac's elder son, Esau; he was the ancestor of the Edomites, of whom you will often read in connection with the history of God's people the children of his younger brother Jacob or Israel. Esau married two wives, one a Hittite, the other a Hivite, therefore, his posterity differed

little from the accursed Canaanites, though it seems that they preserved the ceremony of circumcision : but they also made themselves great, and many of Esau's grandsons bore the title of dukes, or leaders. Amalek, the eldest of them, was the head of the people noted for iniquity and opposition to the Lord. Thus, although Esau and Jacob were twin brothers, they were totally opposite characters ; and we shall find their children opposed to each other.

The history of the Israelitish branch of Abraham's family must be reserved. Another branch still remains to be noticed ; for, after Sarah's death, Abraham took Keturah as his wife ; and she was the mother of six sons, whom he sent away to settle in the East country. Midian, one of Abraham's youngest grandsons, was the father of a numerous people called Midianites, who were among the earliest merchants. Some other descendants of Abraham and Keturah seem to have settled in Arabia ; and it is probable that the wise men who came from the East to Jerusalem, at the time of the birth of Christ, were either of this branch of Abraham's family, or had been taught to expect the woman's seed through them. Some have imagined that the Brahmins in India were originally descended from Abraham, and derived their name from him.

The nations in general having become corrupt and ignorant of God, it was necessary that the chosen witnesses of Jehovah should be separated from among them, and receive peculiar teaching : and, as the land of Egypt was that in which their training began, and out of which they were taken, it is again a place of interest, and thither we shall return.

CHAP. XV.

THE STORY OF EGYPT RESUMED.

THE shepherd kings who reigned in Abraham's days were driven out by Amosis, an Egyptian, who made himself king of Lower Egypt. About a hundred years after this event, in 1729 B. C. Joseph was sold into this land. Justin, a heathen historian, speaks of his knowledge of future events, and his consequent rank in the kingdom ; but, being ignorant

of the power of God in his servant, he supposes that Joseph used some magical arts.

The twelve sons of Israel, after their settlement in Egypt, became the heads of distinct tribes, who rarely intermarried with each other, as it is said in the account of the parents of Moses: "There went a man of the house of *Levi*, and took to wife a daughter of *Levi*."

The history of Moses, born 1571 B. C., conveys most important instruction. During forty years he was educated as a king's son; and, as the adopted child of Pharaoh's daughter, it is possible that he might have obtained the throne of Egypt. But when it pleased God to open his eyes, and to give him faith in his promise, he saw that the pleasures of Egypt were the pleasures of sin, and its treasures not to be compared with the hope in Christ held by the suffering people whom Pharaoh persecuted. Thenceforth he was willing to take up their reproach and affliction, knowing that they were the people of God, the Giver of unspeakable blessings. But Moses made one great mistake in running to their help before the right time: he saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, and by his own will killed him, and then being afraid, hid his body in the sand. A preparation of forty years in the desert was needed to fit Moses for bringing God's people at last to see their enemies dead on the sea-shore, and for leading them during their forty years' education in the wilderness.

The Egyptians preserved no records of the plagues which desolated the country, nor of the destruction of the king and his armies in the Red Sea; for all their memorials were made to show the mighty deeds and conquests of their monarchs, not their losses and ruin. Diodorus, however, who travelled in Egypt, 400 B. C., says that a tradition was preserved through the whole country of an extraordinary ebb which once dried up the Red Sea, so that the bottom was seen, and that a violent flow brought the waters back to their usual channel.

The kings who reigned in Egypt are little noted, till the time of Sesostrius, who was at first only monarch of Upper Egypt; but soon after the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, it is probable he took possession of Lower

Egypt also : and this must have been an easy conquest, after the king and his chosen captains, with chariots and horse-men, had perished in the waters.

Sesostris then, we may suppose, was king of all Egypt while the Israelites were wandering through the wilderness.

They began their march B. C. 1491.

CHAP. XVI.

THE STORY OF SESOSTRIS.

It is said, that the father of Sesostris accustomed him to all kinds of hardships in his early years, wishing him to become a bold warrior ; and even as a boy he showed great strength and courage in hunting the lions and other wild beasts that abound in Africa. In his manhood he began to hunt men ; for the Hycsos having again invaded Egypt, he helped his father to chase them back to their castles in the mountains, just as one wild beast pursues another to his den ; the strongest, or the most cunning, gaining the mastery. In the sculptures describing the deeds of Sesostris, he is absurdly represented as big as a hundred other men, destroying multitudes, both by sea and land, with his gigantic bow and arrows. The Hycsos were never heard of after this time, so completely did he conquer them : but this was not enough for him when he became king, for he desired nothing short of the empire of the world. *He* did not know it would profit him nothing to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.

On an ancient palace amidst the ruins of Thebes, remain the paintings which describe the victories of Sesostris : and Herodotus, who lived a thousand years after him, says, that he saw in Asia Minor and Palestine, the pillars erected to mark his conquest, bearing inscriptions to this effect, "Sesostris, king of kings, and lord of lords, subdued this country by the power of his arms." From the form and features of the captives, and the animals which they lead, as painted on the building referred to, it appears, that the Ethiopians and Southern Africans were obliged to submit to Sesostris. In the inscriptions on the temples and other edifices built by

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XVI.

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his command, it is boasted that no *Egyptian* toiled in raising
 them; this alone would prove the multitudes he had seized
 as prisoners of war.

Towards the close of his reign, he was so puffed up with
 pride on account of his victories, that he yoked to his chariot
 the kings he had taken captive, and made them draw him to
 the temple of his idols. But in the midst of this imaginary
 glory, and with all this abused power, he was miserable,
 being only the slave of Satan after all. In his old age, it
 is said by some that he became blind, and destroyed himself
 in the vain hope of ending his wretchedness. Such was
 the end of one who had usurped the titles which belong
 only to Christ, for his written name is, "King of kings, and
 Lord of lords."

What a contrast between Sesostris, the most famous hero
 of antiquity, and the aged Jacob, who was happy even in his
 blindness: and in the midst of blessing his sons before his
 death, his heart was so much above, that he exclaimed, "I
 have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

CHAP. XVII.

THE JEWISH DISPENSATION.

THE earth at large still remains under the dispensation rest-
 ing on the covenant made with Noah; for even where God
 is entirely forgotten, and multitudes of strange gods or idols
 are set up in his place, he has not withheld rain from heaven,
 nor fruitful seasons; the changes of day and night, seed-
 time and harvest, &c., have not failed. God's covenant
 with Abraham only affected his descendants through Isaac
 and Jacob, and did not change the state of the world; yet
 there was a promise that in his seed, that is, in Christ, *all*
 the families of the earth should be blessed: and in the
 gospel, He is introduced to us, as "the son of Abraham."

The promise to Abraham, after his faith and obedience
 had been fully tried, and he had patiently endured the will
 of God, in preparing to offer up Isaac, comprehended these
 things. 1. The multiplication of his seed. 2. Possession
 of power over enemies. 3. Blessing to all the nations of

the earth (Gen. xxii. 16—18). And all these must remain unchangeable, being confirmed by the oath of God.

The same night in which Isaac acknowledged the faithfulness of God, and expressed *his* faith in him, the promise was repeated to him as respected the multiplication of his seed (Gen. xxvi. 22—24).

Again, when the Lord revealed himself to Jacob, the promise was confirmed to him. 1. The inheritance of the land. 2. The multiplication and spreading abroad. 3. The blessing to all the families of the earth through his seed. Such is the unalterable covenant confirmed by God in Christ, which the law, given by Moses four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul so as to make the promise of none effect (Gal. iii). But that which is properly called the *Jewish* dispensation, is the peculiar way in which it pleased God to order the affairs of the nation of Israel, as described in the law of Moses: and we shall now observe how *they* were prepared to become the Lord's witnesses.

Their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were God's faithful servants. As a nation they were disciplined by the hardships of Egypt; and when delivered from that iron furnace by the mighty hand of God, they learned day by day in the wilderness more of their own utter weakness and of the strength of Jehovah, who was pleased to be called *their* God. Miracle upon miracle was wrought to teach them his power; line upon line, precept upon precept, instructed them in his wisdom; forgiveness upon forgiveness witnessed that he is love; judgment upon judgment declared his righteousness. The Law was given to show them the exceeding sinfulness of sin; the Sacrifices pointed out the way of life; and the Sabbath was to be observed among them as a peculiar sign that the Lord had *set them apart* for himself, and that they might know he was *their* God (Ezek. xx. 12—20).

Man had been first *tried* in the garden of the Lord: a certain part of the human family was now to be tried in the Lord's land. In both trials obedience to God was the great point to be secured. We have seen the end of the first trial: and we shall now trace the story of the second, in the history of the Jews. The twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy explains most fully the character of the Jewish

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dispensation, and shows the distinct position which the
earthly people of God must ever occupy in the history of the
world. Every blessing was to depend upon their keeping
the Lord's commandments. Heavy curses and wonderful
plagues were to follow the breaking of the law.

I ask you to read this remarkable chapter, as I should
spoil its force in trying to abridge it: and it is not alto-
gether matter of history, though very important to the
understanding of the place held by the Jews among the
nations.

CHAP. XVIII.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS IN THE BIBLE.

THE Pentateuch or five Books of Moses contain the his-
tory of God's people in the world, and the revelation of his
will to them. The inspiration of God is evident in every
page; and did we not know that this holy man wrote as he
was moved by the Holy Ghost, we should never cease to
wonder at their marvellous contents.

In *Genesis* we read the *beginning* of all things, and the
early history of God's people, up to their settlement in Egypt.
In *Exodus* we read of their *going out* of Egypt, and the events
of the first year in the wilderness. In *Leviticus*, the services
belonging to the priests and *Levites*, &c. In *Numbers*, the
numbering of the people and their journeyings through the
wilderness, &c. In *Deuteronomy*, Moses' *repetition* of the
Lord's dealings with them, and his will concerning them.
The book of Joshua, the chosen captain of the Lord's armies,
describes a great destruction among the Canaanites, the par-
tial subjection of those who remained, and the possession of
their land by the children of Israel. And here we should
rest, in order to consider the difference between the wars nu-
dertaken by the Lord's command, and those which spring
from the sinful passions of men. We have noticed that the
long-suffering of God waited more than four hundred years;
and it was only when these nations had filled up the measure
of their sins, that the Israelites came as his righteous execu-
tioners to destroy them. They did not come in the ambi-

tious spirit of the heathen warriors ; for they were ready to turn back into Egypt. By their own will they would not have gone in to possess the land at all : and it was because they shrunk from it in terror and unbelief, that they were turned back into the wilderness for forty years. There all the men of might died ; and none of the old and experienced were left, except the true-hearted Joshua and Caleb. Again, no feeling of self-exaltation was cherished amongst them : their own strength and righteousness were always set down, and the plain truth stated, "*for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee*" (Deut. ix. 1—6).

In every battle, instead of the excitement of the carnal mind, and its forwardness in the work, there is the seriousness and solemnity of *God's judgment upon evil*. Before they began to fight the Lord's battles, they were all circumcised : a ceremony which, rightly understood, signifies the putting away the sins of the flesh (Josh. v). At the siege of Jericho, the walls fell by miracle ; and they were only commissioned entirely to destroy the *accursed* thing (chap. vi). And even when one of the people had been defiled by touching the unclean thing, the sin was chargeable on all because they were *one body* ; and their strength, which arose from the presence of the Holy One, could not be restored till the evil was put away (chap. vii).

If they were to execute judgment for the Lord, they also must be judged *by* the Lord.

If war now, or at any time could be carried on in this power, with these principles, and in submission to such judgment on those who fight, it might be called *right* ; but if under any different circumstances, how can the example of the Jews be so boldly pleaded ?

In the next book of the Bible we read of the judges who were raised up by the Spirit of the Lord, after the land had been divided by lot among the tribes of Israel. It is a history of continual failure : "the flesh profiteth nothing ;" "it is the Spirit that quickeneth :" these are the lessons to be learned. Some who are ignorant of their own hearts think that the Jews must be the worst people that ever lived upon the earth ; but it is written, "*There is no difference, for all*

are sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Are we better than they? We are proved both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. iii).

In whatever circumstances we find them, we find them all save being made like the Jews, uneducated, unthinking and saying things of no importance in the Bible. The Jews teaches us that God can save any sinner.

Personal things from Israel, we see the trial of Israel, and its failure to

The next proof of this is that they may still trace disobedience. The priests was very great

the thing it was said, "The Lord kept the commandment which he gave to his servants, the faithful High

appear ; and he was to be the Jews, as a nation, about the high-priest conde

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The books of Kings which and Israel, the book ; and it was almost apparent.

After tracing the history of the establishment of kingly power, we shall return to this subject.

warriors; for they were ready by their own will they would have the land at all: and it was because of their unbelief, that they were in the wilderness for forty years. There was none of the old and experienced Joshua and Caleb. Again, the man was cherished amongst the righteous were always set down "for the wickedness of these men I will drive them out from before thee" (Deut. 10: 16).

of the excitement of the campaign in the work, there is the serious judgment upon evil. Before the battles, they were all circumcised, which, as we have understood, signifies the putting off of the old nature (Josh. v). At the siege of Jericho, and they were only commissioned to do a certain thing (chap. vi). And even the ark had been defiled by touching the ground, which arose from the presence of the Lord, which was restored till the evil was purged.

judgment for the Lord, they also were not to be carried on in the same manner, and in submission to such judgment might be called right; but in such instances, how can the example be followed?

we read of the judges who were sent of the Lord, after the land had been divided to the tribes of Israel. It is a his- tory which shows that the flesh profiteth nothing; "for these are the lessons to be learned from the hearts of the ignorant of their own hearts than of any other people that ever lived upon the earth." There is no difference, for

have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And again, "Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Rom. iii).

In whatever circumstances man is placed, nothing will avail him save being made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Like the Jews, uninstructed by the Spirit of God, many are now thinking and saying that some outward sign or privilege is the important matter in salvation; but the whole history of the Jews teaches us that nothing but the sovereign grace of God can save any sinner, however he may be distinguished in external things from his fellow-sinners. In the history of Israel, we see the trial of the flesh under every possible advantage, and its failure under every trial.

The next proof of this is in the books of Samuel, where we may still trace disobedience and chastening: "The sin of the priests was very great before the Lord" (chap. ii): to the king it was said, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord" (chap. xiii). The "merciful and faithful High Priest" was, however yet to appear; and he was to be "born king of the Jews;" but the Jews, as a nation, abhorred him (Isaiah xlix. 7); their corrupt high-priest condemned him for blasphemy because he spoke of his coming glory; and the multitude cried out with one accord, "Let him be crucified! we have no king but Cæsar."

The history of the Kings I shall not abridge, because it is better to read it exactly as it is given by the Spirit of Truth. It is deeply instructive; because, however short the story of each, this important question is always settled—Did they do that which is right in the sight of the Lord?

The books of Kings contain the history of the kings of Judah and Israel, the books of Chronicles that of the former alone; and it was among them that the grace of God was most apparent.

After tracing the history of the nations till the time of the establishment of kingly government among the Israelites, we shall return to this subject.

CHAP. XIX.

ASIATIC NATIONS.

THOUGH the Assyrians occupied the most important place among the Asiatic nations, others had grown up far more numerous. Among these, the Chinese seem to have been the earliest who had any settled government. Their *own* histories however are too extravagant to be believed; but the fatherly kind of government always preserved among them, and the traditions concerning their first king, Fo-hi, with the date of his reign make it appear possible that it was Noah himself. Their mixture with the Tartars, who subdued their country in later years, makes them differ considerably from the Indians in their present appearance; but it seems likely that they had one common origin. Among the Indians there is a curious tradition that their first king taught them the use of wine.

Both in China and India, one living God was long owned; and that truth is contained in the writings of their most learned men. It was especially taught by the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, though mixed with many foolish superstitions. His works are still the Scriptures of the people, though the Bible has now been translated into their singular language, and efforts are made to distribute it among them. The Hindoos in after-ages worshipped the gods of the Greeks and Egyptians; and at this day it is said that their idols are innumerable.

It is supposed that the Persians descended from Shem's eldest son, Elam, because they are always distinguished by that name in the Hebrew. They believed in a good and an evil spirit of nearly equal power and always contending together; but expected the former would one day triumph. Possibly this belief arose from some tradition concerning God and his enemy the devil, with the promised victory to be won by Christ. The Persians say that God employed six seasons in the creation of the world; and they believe in a future judgment. The celebrated philosopher Zoroaster, the founder of their false religion, taught them to worship the sun and fire as emblems of God; and thus, probably, the

occupied the most important place, others had grown up far as the Chinese seem to have been settled government. Their government was so extravagant to be believed; their government always preserved ancient customs concerning their first king, so that it make it appear possible that a mixture with the Tartars, who a few years, makes them differ considerably from their present appearance; but they have one common origin. Among the Chinese tradition that their first king taught

one living God was long owned in the writings of their most ancient, especially taught by the Chinese people, who were mixed with many foolish superstitions. All the Scriptures of the people have been translated into their singular language, and made to distribute it among themselves, so that they worshipped the gods of the Greeks. On this day it is said that their idols

Persians descended from Shem, they are always distinguished: they believed in a good and powerful God, and always contending that the former would one day triumph over the latter. In some tradition concerning God, they promised victory to be won by the latter, and that God employed six seasons to do it; and they believe in a future resurrection, as the philosopher Zoroaster, the founder of the religion, taught them to worship the God; and thus, probably, the

more ignorant of them actually held these to be deities. Hence they were called fire-worshippers. How cunning has Satan been in the gradual introduction of error, making truth appear falsehood, and falsehood take the appearance of truth! And how much favoured are those who have the word of God as a lamp to their feet, and a light to their path through this dark world.

The origin of the Arabians we have already learned: they had no settled government, but acknowledged chiefs of their wandering tribes. The Medes were descended from Madai, Japhet's son, but soon resembled the Persians with whom they mixed.

CHAP. XX.

JAPHET'S eldest son, Gomer, is universally allowed to have been the ancestor of the Gomerians or Celtes, who spread gradually over the north of Europe, from the Danube to the farthest western extremity, and even peopled the British isles. The religion, language, and customs of the ancient inhabitants of these regions appear to have one common source. At first, they believed in one God, a spirit, and worshipped in groves or open plains, as more suitable than any temple; but as centuries passed on, those who had been useful or powerful men among them, were honoured as demi-gods after their death, and in the next generation, worshipped as gods. Saturn, Jupiter, Pluto, Mercury, &c. the chief gods of the Romans, Greeks, and others, are said to have been the earliest kings of the Celtes. For many centuries, however, the Celtes, unlike the Eastern nations, led a wandering life, without tilling the ground or building cities. They were satisfied with the produce of their flocks, wild fruits, and animals killed in hunting. As they multiplied, they found it necessary to have settled habitations, but knowing little of agriculture, they were barely supplied with food; and the other common arts of life were learned very slowly. Magog, the second son of Japhet, was the father of a people, as greatly spread and multiplied as the Gomerian

branch. The original inhabitants of Tartary call themselves Mogli, which may be a corruption of Magog; and the people of European and Asiatic Russia, and probably the Turks, seem to have had a common origin with them. In ancient history they are known by the general name of Scythians, from Scythes, their first king. Some have thought the two younger sons of Japhet, Tubal and Meshech, must also have settled in the northern regions, and trace a resemblance to their names in Tobolsk and Muscovy.

The Scythians led a wandering life long after the nations around them were settled into regular governments, and far advanced in civilisation. They used to carry about their families in waggons, and encamp wherever they could find pasture for the flocks, in which all their wealth consisted. They did not cultivate the ground, and avoided all commerce with other people: they were simple, temperate and honest, because they had few temptations to be otherwise. The luxury and abundance of Judea, Egypt, and Assyria, were unknown to them; and they had little cause to covet each other's possessions. They worshipped many false gods: the chief was Mars, to whom they raised an altar in every district. Only one or two tribes acknowledged anything like kingly government. Javan, the fourth son of Japhet, was the father of the Ionians, or ancient inhabitants of Greece. Among them the earliest monarchies were established, for there was a king of Sicyon, B.C. 2764. Argos was formed into a kingdom, B. C. 1856; but about the time of David's reign over Israel, the Argives chose a republican form of government. Cadmus, a Phœnician, founded the kingdom of Thebes in Bœotia, B. C. 1448, and introduced alphabetic writing. The first king of the Arcadians was Pelasgus, B. C. 1556. Athens was founded about the same year by Cecrops, an Egyptian, who brought a colony thither when his own country was thickly peopled, and during the bondage of the Israelites. He established the court of justice called Areopagus, which existed even in the days of the Apostles (Acts xvii. 19). The last king of Athens, Codrus, perished in the reign of Saul, B. C. 1069. The government of Sparta, or Lacedæmon, was established B. C. 1704, and continued to be monarchical for more than eight centuries. In Thessaly,

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a tradition was preserved of a deluge which had destroyed
all the inhabitants on account of their wickedness. Deuca-
lion, the king, with his wife Pyrrha, were saved by climbing
to the top of Mount Parnassus. This story is strangely
mixed with fable, and is a strong contrast to the simple re-
cord of the flood in the word of God. Some have considered
the deluge of Deucalion a corruption of the Scripture his-
tory of Noah; but others decide that it was occasioned by
the overflowing of the river Peneus, as its regular course was
stopped by an earthquake, in the year B. C. 1503.* Hav-
ing shewn the rise of the chief nations of the earth, I shall
describe to you the period of the greatest prosperity hitherto
known to the Jews, and you will be able to compare their
state with that of the rest of the world.

CHAP. XXI.

THE KINGDOM OF DAVID AND SOLOMON.

SAUL, the first king of all Israel, had been rejected by the
Lord on account of his disobedience. He was appointed as
the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon the
evil-doers: but in not destroying the sinners, the Amalekites,
he was as one who bore the sword in vain; and the Lord
sent his prophet to anoint David as king. Saul, however,
not submitting to the choice of God, nor owning that he
had a right to do what he would with his own, sought to
kill David, that he might never have the kingdom. No
power can be rightly held without perfect subjection to Him
from whom it comes: and in this Saul entirely failed. But
David, during the many years that he was exposed to trials
from without, seems to have been for the most part true to
God, and was called the man after His own heart: but
when at last David was welcomed as king over all Israel,
he fell into grievous sin through the unrestrained indulgence
of his natural desires—for the old nature, it is certain, is as
bad in the child of God as in an unregenerate person. That
true submission to the Lord's correction and deep repentance,

* The details of the early history of Greece are not given, because
they are not only unprofitable but mostly fabulous.

however, which always distinguish the child of God, followed the conviction of sin; and the blessed state of his soul, when humbled and restored, may be traced in the Psalms, though they are also prophetically designed to express the sufferings and "strong crying" of the son of David. King David did *not* shrink from the Lord's service: and we see him rooting up idolatry on all sides. But even in this, the carnal nature again appeared: and perhaps taking pride in his many victories, and in the glory that he had obtained, he was tempted to find out the *number* of his people, as if his might were in them, and not in the Spirit of the Lord. True repentance and submission to the Lord's correction followed this sin also; and he was willing to suffer in his own person, if the Lord would afflict him rather than the people. Solomon, the son of David, was made king in his father's old age, B. C. 1015, and his reign was a time of peace and glory, which seems in some measure to shadow forth the reign of Christ who shall yet sit on the throne of David (Luke i. 32). His first work was to build the Temple: and in order to accomplish it, he made an alliance with the king of Tyre, the chief city of the Phœnicians, a branch of Canaan's family dwelling on the sea-coast of Judea. It seems that he did not err in doing this: because he could speak freely to the king of Tyre about the work of the Lord, and Hiram acknowledged and blessed the name of Jehovah (1 Kings, v). Soon after this period, however, the Phœnicians sank into the grossest idolatry; and intercourse with them became very hurtful to the Jews.

The city of Sidon was the most ancient in Phœnicia, and Tyre was only a colony from thence: but its industrious inhabitants soon became rich, through the manufactures in which they excelled, and the commerce that they carried on with other nations. They were much skilled in navigation; and they must have gone to distant countries even in Solomon's time; for the animals and the gold which are mentioned could not have been procured in that land. It is probable that the merchants of Tyre then traded to India, Persia, Africa, and Spain, and the ships of Solomon joined their fleet in these voyages (1 Kings x. 22). In this manner the knowledge of the living God might have been

revived; as it is said, "All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom *that God had put into his heart.*" The visit of the Queen of Sheba is also very memorable: she must have come from one of the distant Eastern countries, as gold, precious stones, and abundance of spices were among her offerings to Solomon. The court at Jerusalem is indeed a most interesting scene at this time. Solomon's favorite wife was the daughter of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and that king put out his hand only to destroy the enemies of Israel. The remnant of the Canaanites left in the land no longer distressed the Jews, but remained only to be their *servants*; and Solomon reigned over all the kings from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt: and others still more distant sent him presents year by year. Everything was in the most beautiful order, both in the divine service and in the government: the priests and singers served in their courses in the magnificent temple, and the sacrifices were great and frequent; the twelve officers who took the charge of the monthly provision for the king and his household served in their places, and the scribes and the officers were at their posts; finally, Solomon's wisdom excelled all the wisdom of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt, and all people came to hear the wisdom of Solomon from all kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

This is indeed a fair picture: and when all this greatness, and wisdom, and blessing, is *secured* in the reign of Christ the son of David—and there will be much more—the cry may well go forth, "The Lord reigneth, *let the earth be glad; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof!*"

But the greater the height that sinful man reaches, the greater is the fall; and Solomon's old age is enough to show us, that "every man at his best estate is *altogether vanity.*"

His fall seems to have arisen from disobedience to the law of God, in three points concerning the right conduct of a king (Deut. xvii. 16, 17). 1. He multiplied horses, which again brought the people into that intercourse with the Egyptians, which they were commanded to avoid. 2. He greatly multiplied silver and gold. 3. And he multiplied wives, who turned his heart away from the Lord. If all his

former wisdom, and the instruction given to his own people and others had been ever so useful, we may judge that his later conduct would have made it of no effect. Indeed his reign seems to have been no lasting benefit to his nation, or to the rest of the world. Unless it were recorded by the Spirit of truth, we should hardly have thought it possible that *the wisest of men* would love so many idolaters, and above all that he should take seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines. Solomon—the builder of the Temple in which the cloud of glory from the Lord's presence was abiding—building a high place for the abominable objects of heathen worship, and to please his wives burning incense and sacrificing there—this is indeed a melancholy picture, and will furnish a striking lesson that “ALL FLESH IS GRASS, AND ALL THE GLORY OF MAN AS THE FLOWER OF GRASS.”

CHAP. XXII.

THE FAILURE OF ISRAEL.

SOLOMON, the head of the kingdom, having failed in the very point which was to distinguish Israel from all the rest of the world, namely, *owning no other god but Jehovah*, the righteous sentence of God was, that the kingdom should thenceforth be divided into two parts; and it could not be his faithful witness upon earth, after its unity was broken and its religion corrupted. Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was permitted to keep two of the tribes, namely, Judah and Benjamin, for his share; and they, with the Levites who waited on the temple service, made up the kingdom of Judah. This was to be preserved as the inheritance of the sons of David, in remembrance of the covenant God had made with their fathers (see Ps. lxxxix. 28—37). And though the whole line might fail, the promises would all be fulfilled in the only unfailing one, Christ Jesus; for he is introduced in the blessed gospel as the Son of David, as well as the son of Abraham.

Jeroboam, the servant of Solomon, whose name became a proverb for causing Israel to sin, was the first king of the other ten tribes, who are known henceforth as the kingdom

struction given to his own people so useful, we may judge that he made it of no effect. Indeed it had no lasting benefit to his nation.

Unless it were recorded by its history, we hardly have thought it possible that a king would love so many idolaters, and have seven hundred wives, and that a man should be the builder of the Temple from the Lord's presence was a curse for the abominable objects that he saw. His wives burning incense and the king's face a melancholy picture, are the things that are recorded at "ALL FLESH IS GRASS, AND ALL THAT IS THEREON IS THE FLOWER OF GRASS."

XXVII.

OF ISRAEL.

Kingdom, having failed in the eyes of the people, and the people had no other god but Jehovah, the Lord, that the kingdom should be divided into parts; and it could not be united again after its unity was broken. Jeroboam, the son of Solomon, set up graven images, namely, Judah and Ephraim, with the Levites who were set up the kingdom of Jeroboam as the inheritance of the people, according to the covenant God had made with them (1 Kings xix. 28—37). And the promises would all be fulfilled in Christ Jesus; for he is the Son of David, as well

whose name became the first king of the kingdom, and his birth as the kingdom

of Israel. Jeroboam, fearing that if his people went up to worship at Jerusalem, according to custom, they would reunite with Judah, made two calves of gold, and told them these were the gods who had brought them out of Egypt, and that it was too much trouble for them to go up to Jerusalem. He made also a kind of temple, appointed priests of the lowest rank of the people, and ordained a feast on a day of his own choosing; this was in order to draw away the hearts of his subjects from the temple of the Lord, the Levites chosen by Him, and the passover which He had commanded them to observe yearly in the right season. Thus the kingdom of Israel gradually fell into idolatry, though it pleased the Lord to preserve a faithful people among them for a long time; and in the days of Ahab—the worst of their kings, whose wife Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre, would have destroyed all who called on the name of the Lord—He had reserved to himself seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the abominable idol she had set up. And even after this, through Elijah's testimony, many declared themselves on the Lord's side. But the kings of Israel were all evil; and after much patience and long-suffering, the Lord, who is faithful and true, sent upon their kingdom the judgments so long threatened by his prophets, yet disbelieved by the people. Idolatry was, in their case, the condemning sin; because, in the event of other trespasses, there was a provision made in the sacrifices, and a day of atonement appointed; but, if they refused to go to the Lord, and chose dumb idols rather than Him, they rejected the only way of forgiveness or salvation, and there was no remedy. And now, when the only way of deliverance from the wrath to come is by faith in the Lord Jesus, if instead of valuing Him, our hearts were taken up with the things of time and sense, we should be in the same evil case as the poor Israelites. They wanted a god whom they could see, something to please their senses; whereas faith sees Him who is invisible, and by faith the children of God expect to see him face to face in the heavenly city that he has prepared for them. Those who are born after the flesh want something the flesh can enjoy: those who are born after the Spirit enjoy spiritual things, and only wait for that day when they shall be for ever with the Lord Jesus and made like Him, to be perfectly satisfied.

The good land in which the Jews dwelt was surrounded on all sides by idolaters ; and the two powerful nations of Assyria and Egypt were their neighbours on either side. These people were a continual source of trial to the Jews ; and so weak was their faith in God, that sometimes they sought help from the Egyptians against Assyria, and sometimes from the Assyrians against Egypt. But the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and that of the Assyrians in their camp before Jerusalem, should have been sufficient to prove that no enemy, however powerful, could touch them except it were the Lord's will to send them as a scourge to chasten them for their sins : and in that case it would be of no use to resist. It was by the hand of the Assyrians that they were finally to suffer : and first, the sad end of the kingdom of Israel by their means is recorded in 2 Kings xvii. At this time the monarchs of the Assyrian empire are called kings of Nineveh, as that was the royal city. That city, and the most remarkable Assyrian monarchs after the reign of Semiramis, will be the next subject of interest.

CHAP. XXIII.

THE KINGS OF NINEVEH.

THE most interesting story concerning the king and people of Nineveh is that related in the book of Jonah : and to show its importance, I need only remind you of the Lord's reference to it, when the unbelieving Jews rejected his word. It was a very unusual thing that a prophet of the Lord should be sent to a city of the Gentiles ; and Jonah, doubtless knowing the character of the people and being full of Jewish exclusiveness, did not like to go. You know, however, the remarkable manner in which he was taught that the will of the Lord must be done ; and how he was obliged to deliver God's message. The people of Israel were disobedient ; and the Lord would show it was possible to make those whom he was preparing to punish them more obedient. It is said that Nineveh was a walled city, sixty miles in extent ; for much land was enclosed and cultivated in fields

which the Jews dwelt was surrounded by two powerful nations; and the two powerful nations were their neighbours on either side. It was a continual source of trial to the Jews, that their faith in God, that sometimes the Egyptians against Assyria, and sometimes the Assyrians against Egypt. But the destructions at the Red Sea, and that of Jerusalem before Jerusalem, should have been a warning to the Lord's will to send them punishment for their sins: and in that they refused to resist. It was by the hand of the Lord they were finally to suffer: and first, the destruction of Israel by their means is recorded. At this time the monarchs of the Assyrians, the kings of Nineveh, as that was the name of the most remarkable Assyrian monarch Semiramis, will be the next subject.

CHAP. XXIII.

KINGS OF NINEVEH.

A story concerning the king and people of Nineveh is related in the book of Jonah: and I need only remind you of the Lord's punishment of the unbelieving Jews, rejected his word, and that a prophet of the Lord was sent to the Gentiles; and Jonah, doubting of the character of the people and being full of unbelief, did not like to go. You know, however, the manner in which he was taught that the people of Israel were disobedient to the Lord; and how he was obliged to deliver them, and show it was possible to make them obedient, and to punish them more obediently. Nineveh was a walled city, sixty miles in circumference, and was enclosed and cultivated in fields

and gardens, that the inhabitants might secure a supply of food if they were shut in by their enemies. The number of inhabitants must have been very great; for God told Jonah that there were 120,000 persons in it that could not tell their right hand from their left: and whether this expression signified very young children, or described the ignorance of the people, the mercy of God is equally conspicuous. He thought also of the much cattle feeding in the pastures within those walls; for not a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge. The Assyrians of Nineveh were very wicked people, and idolaters, like all their countrymen: but immediately that the Lord's message was proclaimed through their city, they began to repent; for they *believed* God. They proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the least even to the greatest: even the king rose from the throne and humbled himself with his people; and all of them turned from their evil way and the violence that was in their hands. (B.C. 862.) In consequence of this repentance, the destruction of the city was delayed till another generation. Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah ii. 9). He is a gracious God, merciful, *slow to anger*, and of great kindness, &c. (iv. 2). In B.C. 771, Pul, the king of Assyria, was suffered to enter the land of Israel; but Menahem, the reigning king, persuaded him to return home, by promising him a great sum of money: this he raised from the wealthiest of his subjects: and as it pleased the Lord to bear still longer with Israel, Pul retired quietly into his own country.

Sardanapalus (supposed to be the son of Pul) was the last of the kings of Nineveh. His immense riches were sadly misused; for he surpassed all who had gone before him in luxury and self-indulgence. He lived constantly in his sumptuous palace, spending his whole time in gross sins or childish follies. Semiramis had acted like a bold and wicked man: Sardanapalus dressed like a woman, and often amused himself in spinning amongst his many wives. Arbaces, the governor of Media, which was a part of his dominions, and Belesis, the governor of Babylon, the second city of his empire, united together, and taking advantage of the king's known weakness, attacked him in Nineveh. Sardanapalus,

feeling that he was about to lose everything which he valued, determined that his rebellious officers should not enjoy his treasures. He caused all his precious things to be heaped together in his palace; and then setting fire to the whole pile, he perished in the flames with his wives and servants. How fearful is such an end; yet how much worse will be the everlasting burnings! Where is your treasure? Not I hope in the world that will soon pass away. If your delight is in Jesus you will be happy; for at God's right hand, where Jesus is, there are "pleasures for evermore."

Arbaces (the Tiglath-Pileser of Scripture), who seized upon Nineveh after the dreadful death of Sardanapalus, was the next rod used by God to chasten Israel; he took possession of many of their cities, and carried away a number of the people as slaves. At this time the Syrians, an idolatrous people to the north of Judea who had risen into great power, were permitted by the Lord to afflict the people of Judah for the correction of their sins. Being distressed by the Syrian army, Ahaz, the king, foolishly sent to Tiglath-Pileser for help; but this only increased their troubles. Pekah, the king of Israel, though his people were brought low, came up against Judah; and 120,000 men of Judah were slain in one day, because they had forsaken the God of their fathers; for Ahaz himself was an idolater, and had encouraged them in this sin. At the same time, the Syrians carried away a great multitude of captives to their chief city, Damascus; and thus Judah was brought very low. The year after, Tiglath-Pileser entered Damascus with a great army, slew Rezin the king, and carried away all his people as captives: thus was fulfilled the prophecy concerning the end of this kingdom (Amos i. 4, 5).

While Ahaz was yet reigning over Judah, the king of Israel was killed; and, after some years of confusion, Hoshea, his murderer, obtained the kingdom. The miseries of Israel fast increased. Shalmaneser, who succeeded Tiglath-Pileser as king of Nineveh, first subjected them so far as to make Hoshea promise to hold the power as his servant, and pay him a yearly tribute. But Hoshea, soon becoming weary of the Assyrian rule, asked the help of the Egyptians. Shalmaneser then besieged Samaria, the royal city of Israel.

Hoshea resisted for three years ; but at the end of that time he was taken prisoner by the king of Nineveh, and carried captive to Assyria with almost all his people (B. C. 721). From that time, the great mass of the Ten Tribes have been lost and confounded among the nations, and not distinguished as the people of God. This was the sentence pronounced by the prophet Hosea—they should be called Lo-ammi, that is, “not my people :” but it is certain that the Lord knows where their descendants are ; and in due time he will recover the lost, and reunite them with Judah, under one head, even Christ, “and they shall be no more *two nations*, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all : neither shall they defile themselves with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions ; but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them : so *shall* they be my people, and I will be their God,” &c. (Eze. xxxvii). Hosea was especially the prophet of Israel ; and as the judgments which he foretold are literally fulfilled, so must we expect the promised blessings yet to come upon them.

The kingdom of Israel lasted two hundred and fifty years from the time of its separation from Judah.

The captives were at first chiefly settled in the cities of Media ; and that province formed a part of the Assyrian empire till it was erected into an independent kingdom by Dejoces, an ambitious Mede, who began to reign B. C. 710.

CHAP. XXIV.

THE FOUNDATION OF CARTHAGE AND OF ROME.

FROM the character of Jezebel, the Tyrian wife of Ahab, king of Israel (B. C. 918), we can form some idea of the state of Tyre at that period : and afterwards it grew worse and worse. A long line of kings had succeeded Hiram ; and Pygmalion, one of these, who probably lived in the next generation after Jezebel, murdered his brother-in-law Sichæus, in order to obtain his treasures ; but the widow of this prince, who was called Elisa or Dido, resolved to disappoint his hope ; and being assisted by her friends, concealed her husband's

riches, and carried them away from Phœnicia, by means of several ships. Dido and her party landed on the coast of Africa, and there founded the city, which bore the name of Carthage. These Tyrian colonists carried into their new country their abominable religion: and in the midst of all the outward prosperity which they enjoyed, they worshipped devils rather than God; and sometimes offered their own children as sacrifices.

About a hundred years after the foundation of Carthage, the building of the city of Rome began, under the following circumstances, as far as the truth can be separated from the fables with which it is mixed.

Homer, the earliest Greek poet, chose as the subject of his verse the ten years' siege of Troy, a city of Asia Minor, whose prince had grievously offended Menelaus, king of Sparta, by carrying away his beautiful wife, Helen, after he had kindly received him as his guest. All the Greeks took up the cause of the injured king, and employed their whole force against the Trojans; but their position, and the strong fortifications of the city, enabled them to withstand repeated attacks; and the battles under the walls were dreadfully fierce. At last, some of the inhabitants betrayed the city into the hands of the Greeks, who destroyed or enslaved all whom they could find. Some, however, escaped, and among them Æneas, one of the boldest warriors: he settled in Italy, and Romulus, the founder of Rome, was one of his descendants.

Probably these circumstances would have been little remembered had they not been celebrated by poets of great talent, whose writings are still read and admired. The period of the siege of Troy is fixed about 1184, B. C., and the Iliad of Homer was written as early as 907, B. C. Virgil also, the Roman poet, chose the adventures of Æneas as the subject matter of his chief poem the *Æneid*. The early history of Romulus is very obscure. He appears to have been no better than a captain of robbers; and the boasted city of Rome, which he founded, and called after his own name, was at first composed of about a thousand huts, the king's palace being only of reeds, thatched with straw. These rude dwellings were scattered on the side of the hill called Mount Pal-

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atine ; but as the city was enlarged, seven hills were gradually covered with houses. Rome was built B.C. 753, during the reigns of Pekah king of Israel, and Jotham of Judah, and while Isaiah was uttering his wonderful prophecies.

Having named the rise of the two cities afterwards so much noted in history, I shall speak to you of that which was the capital of the *first* great empire.

CHAP. XXV.

THE SEAT OF EMPIRE REMOVED FROM NINEVEH TO BABYLON.

THE king of Babylon who sent messengers to Hezekiah after his recovery from sickness, was probably the son of that Belesis or Baladan, who joined Arbaces or Tiglath-Pileser against his master, Sardanapalus, and afterwards took possession of Babylon. The Babylonians were the first who studied attentively the appearance of the heavens, and the motions of the heavenly bodies : therefore it was natural that their wonder and curiosity should be excited by hearing that the sun had gone back ten degrees, as the shadow on the sundial of Ahaz declared. But when they came to Jerusalem to inquire concerning the wonder that had been done in the land, Hezekiah being left by the Lord to try him, and to prove to him what his heart was, neglected this blessed opportunity of telling these poor heathens the power of the Lord his God, and only sought to exalt himself, by showing the ambassadors all his perishable treasures. It was not likely that their report of the riches seen in Jerusalem should ever be forgotten : and the Assyrian monarchs who succeeded Merodach-Baladan, only waited for the favourable moment to invade Judea, not knowing that the Lord in his counsels had settled that an Assyrian king should be the rod of his anger towards his disobedient people.

We have hitherto looked upon Nineveh as the chief centre of the Assyrian power : we shall now trace the circumstances whereby Babylon became the capital of an undivided empire. Sennacherib, the son of Shalmaneser, and his successor as king of Nineveh, took possession of many of the cities of

Judah and sent his captains against Jerusalem, bearing a bold and blasphemous message from him, requiring the submission of the Jews. On this occasion Hezekiah sent to Isaiah, asking him to unite with him in prayer : and the believing prayer of these two faithful servants of God was enough to bring the help of the Lord of Hosts in this day of trouble. The king of Assyria was not even permitted to besiege Jerusalem : for that same night the angel of the Lord* destroyed 185,000 in his camp ; and he departed hastily and went home to Nineveh. There, instead of owning the Lord whose power he had thus felt, he persisted in his idolatry ; and as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch, his god, two of his sons murdered him. After this deed they escaped, and Esarhaddon, another of his sons, succeeded to the kingdom. This prince became also master of Babylon, as the royal family was at an end and there had been great disturbances about the succession. Moreover he re-united Syria and Palestine to the Assyrian empire ; and entering the land of Israel, he cleared away the last remains of the people, and replaced them by colonies of idolaters. But God would not suffer the land to be inhabited by such as did not acknowledge his name, and sent lions to destroy some of the new settlers. Esarhaddon, hearing of this, desired that an Israelitish priest should be taken from among the captives, that he might teach the people of Samaria how to worship the God of Israel. From that time the religion of the Samaritans was a mixture of Judaism and idolatry : and this brought upon them the hatred of the Jews. In besieging Jerusalem, Esarhaddon was permitted to do that which was forbidden to his father : for the son of Hezekiah who reigned in that city, when Esarhaddon went up against it, was Manasseh, who followed the evil ways of his neighbours, and even exceeded them in his

* The people of Judah, who had not the simple faith of their king, had sent to the Egyptians for help ; and Sethon, the king of Egypt, had actually arrived with a large army when he saw the Assyrians preparing to depart. Herodotus says, the tradition was, that a vast number of rats (the *gods* of the Egyptians) gnawed to pieces the bow-strings of the Assyrians, as well as the leathern thongs by which they fastened their shields ; and this occurrence obliged them to return to their own land, as they could not fight.

wicked zeal for idolatry; for he made the people of Judah *do worse than the heathen* (2 Chron. xxxiii). In merciful chastening, Manasseh was carried in chains to Babylon: and in his prison there, he was given like precious faith with his father, and learned to pray with the same earnestness. The Lord's ear was not heavy that it could not hear: time or place changes not the heart of God. He would answer true prayer, whether from the kingly chamber at Jerusalem, or from the dungeon in Babylon; and he was pleased to incline Esarhaddon's heart to set his prisoner free. Manasseh returned to Jerusalem, as one delivered from "the power of darkness;" and this was infinitely better than mere escape from an earthly prison-house.

Esarhaddon was succeeded by his son Nebuchadnezzar I. In his reign, Dejoces, the upstart king of Media, invaded Assyria, hoping to subdue it: but as it was appointed by God to be the greatest power in this age of the world, none could hinder. Dejoces was killed in battle; and the next king of Media, his son Phraortes, was slain a few years afterwards in besieging Babylon. His successor, Cyaxares, thought it wiser to make an alliance with Nabopolassar,* and helped him in destroying Nineveh. Their only motive in undertaking this work was the fear lest so strong a city might oppose their ambitious views: but they were in fact executing judgment upon the wickedness of the people, which had now risen to the greatest height. The prophet Nahum described their work nearly a hundred years before; though his word seems to have farther meaning, and the perfect accomplishment of it may still remain.

Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt at this period, hearing of the increasing might of Assyria, determined to humble this rising power; and for this purpose marched towards the Euphrates with a powerful army. His route necessarily lay through Judea; and, bent on more important conquests, he would willingly have passed through that country in a peace-

* Nabopolassar had been only general in the army of Nebuchadnezzar I., and usurped the kingdom when it fell into the power of Saracus the king's son, a careless prince who was not disposed to defend his inheritance.

ful manner ; but Josiah, the reigning king, foolishly provoked him to battle, by putting himself in the way and attempting to prevent his passage. Until this time Josiah had done that which was right in the sight of the Lord. In his youth his heart was tender and humble ; he delighted in the Lord and trembled at his word : moreover, he had destroyed idolatry, and caused a most solemn passover to be held. His sin was in interfering in the quarrels of two heathen kings, which did not concern him, as the Lord's servant ; for, being under a distinct dispensation, he and his people were to be entirely separate from all nations. If Josiah wished to defend his country from the Egyptians, he did wrong in going forth without being sent : and the Lord had promised that the evil should not come upon Jerusalem in his days. But he refused the warning to be quiet, and lost his own life through his rashness. The ruin of his people was also hastened ; for his son Jehoahaz, their next king, was a wicked prince. Pharaoh-Necho, having defeated the Assyrians in a battle, returned in triumph through Judea, three months afterwards. He dethroned Jehoahaz and sent him to Egypt in chains, making his son king, under the name of Jehoiachim, upon condition that he would pay an annual tribute as an acknowledgment of inferiority. Nabopollassar, finding that he was fast losing his dominions after his defeat by Necho, made his son Nebuchadnezzar II. his partner in the empire, and sent him with an army against the Egyptians. Necho was defeated in his turn : and the land of Judea, with other countries that he had subdued, passed under the Assyrian power. Nebuchadnezzar entered Judea, besieged and took Jerusalem, and chose out some of the chief Jews, and some children of the royal family, including Daniel, as his captives. He permitted Jehoiachim to hold the kingdom on much the same terms as those made with him by the king of Egypt. About five years afterwards, Nebuchadnezzar became head of the Assyrian empire by the death of his father, and immediately left his foreign conquests and returned to Babylon, to settle the affairs of his government, B.C. 605.

CHAP. XXVI.

THE HEADSHIP OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

ACCORDING to the terms of the conditional covenant made with the children of Israel, *if* they were obedient to the Lord's commandments, he would make them the head and not the tail; and all the people of the earth should see that they were called by the name of the Lord, and would be afraid of them. In the reign of Solomon there seemed some prospect of this headship among the nations: but it was speedily obscured; and the eye of faith looks for "a greater than Solomon," who shall restore the kingdom to Israel, and make them a praise and a joy to himself and to the whole earth.

Having traced the disobedience and failure in Israel, it is not surprising that another becomes the head, while they are as it were, the tail.

In the fourth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, it pleased the Lord to show him in a dream the position that he was to hold as the head of the nations, and the events that should follow in the earth (Dan. ii). Nebuchadnezzar, however, saw these things darkly; and forgot his dream when he awoke in the morning. In the self-willed indulgence of absolute power, he would have destroyed all the wise men of his court, because they could not recall to him the vision; and Daniel, with his Jewish companions, who had been educated in the learning of the Chaldees, were in danger of perishing with the rest. But the Lord heard the united prayer of these believing youths, and revealed Nebuchadnezzar's vision to Daniel the same night, as it is written, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." The young prophet blessed the God of Heaven, and joyfully went in to be a witness, before the head of the first earthly empire, that there is a living God. The interpretation of this vision is very important, not only because it will give you a lively picture of the chief facts in the world's history up to this time, but because it touches upon the kingdom of Christ which is yet to be established in the earth.

As we proceed, we shall have frequent occasion to look

back to this picture ; but I can only now dwell upon that part of it which describes the headship of Nebuchadnezzar. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings ! for the God of Heaven hath *given* thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, &c. *Thou art this head of gold*" (Dan. ii. 37—38). Here we perceive that power is *given* into the hands of a Gentile by God ; and henceforth we shall have to trace the use made of this gift : it is, as it were, a fresh trial of what is in man.

The Jews had been repeatedly warned that they should be given over to Nebuchadnezzar ; and that they, with the rest of the nations, *must* submit to his yoke (Jer. xxvii. &c.). But they were very unwilling to submit to this deserved chastisement, and Jehoiakim struggled with the Assyrians till he died. After his son Jechoniah had reigned three troublous months, Nebuchadnezzar again took Jerusalem, and carried away another company of captives, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel, as the Lord would not leave his afflicted people without his word. Nebuchadnezzar again set up a Jewish king, the uncle of Jehoiakim, to whom he gave the name of Zedekiah. Jeremiah the prophet was still left as God's faithful witness in Jerusalem, and went on with his testimony to coming judgment, and earnest entreaties to his people to hear the word of the Lord, throughout the reign of Zedekiah, a period of eleven years. During the last two years, Jerusalem was besieged by the Assyrians ; for Zedekiah, not believing the Lord's messages by Jeremiah, had refused to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, and struggled on, still hoping for independence through the help of Aphis or Pharaoh-Hophra, the grandson of Necho, then ruling in Egypt. Hophra had made many conquests by land and sea ; and in the pride of his heart was quite ready to declare himself the protector of the Jews : but his attempt to deliver them was of no avail, and only led to his own destruction. Ezekiel declared God's judgment upon this proud king, and the accomplishment of it we shall presently notice. But now all our thoughts may be well engaged in the conclusion of the trial of man in the Lord's land : it only ends as that in the garden had ended. The man and woman were *driven out of the garden* ; and now the young

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man and maiden, old man and him that stoopeth for age (at least such as escaped the sword) were *driven out of the land*, and carried to Babylon as captives (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—17), B.C. 588. The temple which they had defiled was burnt; the goodly palaces in which they gloried were also consumed, and the walls in which they trusted as their defence were broken down. In this state of ruin the city remained for seventy years.

The law is holy: but as the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, we find it is but a ministration of condemnation, and could never give life. What hope then is there in creature-strength or human righteousness? “*If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain*” (Gal. ii. 21).

Nebuchadnezzar returned from Judea in all the pride of a conqueror, bringing the sightless king in chains, with a multitude of mourning captives of all ages and ranks, the spoils of Jerusalem, and the sacred vessels of the Temple. Shortly afterwards he set up a great image of gold in the plain of Dura, which he commanded all his subjects to worship. As it is very usual for persons to remember anything that exalts themselves, and to forget the glory of God, it is possible that on this occasion, Nebuchadnezzar might have thought of the dream wherein he appeared as the head of gold, while he would not remember that his power was the gift of God. Here then we see the *immediate abuse* of that power which was given to the Gentiles; this king who had so many nations under his rule, speaking different languages, and whose dominion was the greatest in the world, failed to acknowledge the God of heaven, and in the indulgence of self-will he set up an image which all his subjects must worship under pain of death. Three Jewish youths were the faithful witnesses of the living God on this occasion, and boldly refused to join the noisy multitude who, in their blindness and ignorance, were bowing before the golden image. Their miraculous deliverance from the burning fiery furnace, into which they were thrown by Nebuchadnezzar’s command, is well known to you; but I would call your attention to that king’s various acknowledgments of God. “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt; and

the form of the fourth is *like the Son of God.*" And in calling to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, he said, "Ye servants of the *most high* God, come forth." Finally, he exclaimed, "Blessed be *the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies that they might not serve or worship any god except *their own* God." And then he made a decree, that every people, nation, and language, who should speak anything amiss against *their* God, should be cut to pieces, &c. But in all this confession, full as it appears, you perceive that the king of Babylon never owned the LORD as *his* God; and it was that alone which could profit him anything.

To know God as *your* God is the all-important thing; and the only way in which this blessed knowledge can be obtained, is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, for He sent this message to those who believed in Him, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to *my* God and *your* God."

CHAP. XXVII.

THE RELIGION OF GOD AND THE RELIGION OF MAN CONTRASTED.

BEFORE I continue the history of Nebuchadnezzar, it will be well to look at the progress of the nations since the days of Solomon, that we may see whether they advanced nearer the truth of God, or declined still farther from it. Wherever God has been forgotten, or his mind not understood through the Spirit's teaching, men have set up a religion of their own; for the very nature of the human mind leads to the acknowledgment of some higher power. An obscure tradition of the earliest revealed religion must have been preserved among the ancient nations; for sacrifice was commonly offered, though the true object and meaning of it were altogether lost. A set of persons, whose office was to attend to these sacrifices and to the other ceremonies of religion, is also found among all the heathen nations. But the Jews' religion alone was of God's appointment, and that was never given to the Gentiles; the mischievous imitations or mockeries of God's truth seem therefore the favorite devices of

Satan, who has all the rulers of the darkness of this world at his command.

The Jewish Priesthood was a succession of men from the family of Aaron, the first high-priest called by God; and the whole tribe of Levi, to which Aaron belonged, were afterwards set apart by God to assist the priests in the numerous daily services. Thenceforth the Levites were not to be even numbered among the other tribes; and the division of Joseph's family into the tribes called after the name of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, made up the twelve in their room.

The whole arrangements for the service of God seemed intended to remind His people continually of their sinfulness; the priests and the sacrifices told them that they were sinners, if not, they might have worshipped God, without anything coming between: but they might also have learned, through these ordinances, to expect *the priest*, and the *one sacrifice*, provided to put away sin for ever, seeing it was *impossible* that the blood of bulls and goats could *take away* sins; since they needed not to be so constantly renewed if they were effectual.

The sacrifices, besides the morning and evening lamb, were chiefly offered in cases of transgression against the law; and their immense number showed the frequency of such transgression. We may suppose that if they were *duly* offered, the blood of some animal might be seen flowing at any hour of the day, and the altars were *always* stained by the continual sprinkling of the blood. Thus were continually proclaimed these great truths, "the wages of sin is *death*," and "*without shedding of blood there is no remission*." When the true worshipper brought his sacrifice and laid *his hands* upon it, this act was but a confession that he *deserved* to die, and that he *must* die unless another shed blood in *his* stead.

Throughout the ages which passed away before the coming of Christ, it pleased the Lord, in times of much darkness and evil, to raise up prophets who, by the Holy Spirit, could speak of coming events with as much certainty as if they were passed. Their *chief* subject was Christ and his work—his sufferings and the glories that should follow: but so

varied were their revelations, that in a general way it might be said, "Surely the Lord God will do *nothing*, but he revealeth his secrets unto his servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7).

These gifts of God to his chosen people were also mocked by the Satanic pretensions of the heathens; whose diviners, magicians, soothsayers, astrologers, &c., were supposed to be capable of foretelling future events, and of answering questions concerning the time to come. Of these we shall have frequent occasion to speak; and I shall now only add a short sketch of mythology, or the mysteries of the heathen religion, as a contrast to the beauty, holiness, and simplicity of the truths of Scripture on which I have been dwelling. Eastern mythology appears the most *extravagant*, as if there were something in the climate and scenery which was encouraging to the growth of fancy, after the imaginations of men were loosed from the bands of truth. At first, all the different attributes or excellencies of God were considered separately; his justice was honoured on one occasion—his power on another—and so on. But the farther the streams of truth flowed, through the corrupt channels of men's minds, the more defiled they became. In the next generation, perhaps, these different attributes were looked upon as different gods; and thus *polytheism*, or the acknowledgment of many gods, was introduced. By people of warm imaginations, natural objects and qualities were *personified*, or spoken of as persons; and these personifications were in time added to the number of their gods; moreover the rocks and woods, winds and trees, &c., were supposed to have their resident divinities. The art of sculpture rendered all these strange imaginations lasting; and the horrid idols of India which have been multiplying for ages remain to this day. The grand object of worship, however, in China, India, Tartary, &c. was, and still is, Fo, Buddh, or Vishnu. The popular doctrine concerning him was, that he could appear in any form that he pleased, and inhabit any of the creatures: hence they worship a variety of animals and creeping things, because Fo in his different incarnations, they say, has dwelt in them. The worship of the host of heaven, originally considered the fittest emblems of God, spread nearly through

the whole world ; and in most countries the sun and moon have been chief objects of worship under different names, the former as the god, the latter as the queen of heaven. The two first days of the week, Sunday and Monday, or Monday, are sad remembrances of the dark idolatry of our own ancestors. The Egyptians and Phœnicians, in the West, were the nurses of religions as false and abominable as those of the East ; to these I have already alluded. I need only now make a few remarks on the mythology of Greece, as it was there that the fables of other countries were collected by the early poets, and suited to the tastes of the people. It seems probable that the inventive genius of Homer and Hesiod founded the religion of the Greeks ; and the popular belief concerning the gods and goddesses originated in those poems, which were stored in so many memories. But there were always two classes among the Greeks : one composed of those whose minds rose above the common creed, and, in casting it aside, became either secret believers in one God, or altogether infidels ; the other, those who were blindly carried away to dumb idols even as they were led by the prince of darkness.

The Elysium, or heaven of the Greeks, was not a place of holiness but of sensual delight, such as could only please a carnal mind. Beautiful fields, evergreen bowers, groves filled with singing birds and pleasant streams ; these were the scenes filled with feasting, revelry, and licentiousness, in which they expected happiness. Hunting and horsemanship, with other favourite amusements, were to be enjoyed in the Elysian fields, with the society of gods, goddesses, and departed spirits, who by no means differed from the imperfect and sinful inhabitants of the earth.

Their idea of Tartarus or hell, seemed to be rather more in harmony with the word of God, though mixed with many vain imaginations. It was supposed to be a prison, as far from the earth as the earth is from the heavens : burning streams flowed round it ; and the entrance was hidden by a cloud of darkness, three times blacker than the gloomiest night. But the thought of a heaven, consisting in perfect holiness and nearness to God, where *nothing that defileth* can enter, never entered into the heart of man to con-

ceive : neither the simple thought, that the torment of hell is sin, and the separation from the holy Lord God which it causes.

The Greeks considered Jupiter to be the god of heaven ; and the story of his war with the giants, who tried to scale heaven, has been considered the corrupted tradition of the attempt of the builders of Babel.

The wicked passions attributed to Jupiter, and the ridiculous actions that he is said to have performed, are sufficient to show how corrupt were the notions of divinity entertained by the heathen : they might be addressed as the fool and the wicked (Ps. 1. 21), "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such a one as thyself.*"

But I cannot dwell longer on these fables ; and will only name one more of the strange imaginations of the heathens. Jupiter himself was supposed to have a wife ; and a great portion of heathen mythology is taken up with the loves and marriages among the gods and goddesses ! But "in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

There appears to be a Satanic imitation of the *holy* feasts, appointed by the Lord to be observed among his people, in the *unholy* feasts held by the heathens in honour of their imaginary gods. The grossest sins were publicly or privately committed at these seasons ; and at one particular festival their own historian, Plutarch, says he has seen all the people in Athens drunk. In these feasts, which they called the mysteries of their religion, they learned "to work all uncleanness with greediness." From these horrid scenes, how sweet to turn to the solemn passovers, which shadowed forth Christ as the Lamb of God ; the feast of Pentecost when the first-fruits were offered, typical of Christ and his church ; the feast of the blowing of trumpets, prefiguring a day of rejoicing yet to come ; and the feast of tabernacles, repeating from year to year, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God" ! and besides all these, the sabbaths, as continual shadows of things to come ! (Lev. xxiii. ; Col. ii. 17.) And these feasts were going on in Judah, and fasts too, no less solemn and significant, even during the times of the "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries" of the Gentiles.

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CHAP. XXVIII.

THE LAW OF GOD AND THE LAWS OF MAN CONTRASTED.

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HAVING shown you the contrast between the religion of God and that of man; I shall now draw a comparison between the spirit of his law and that of man's laws. The Lord's commandment is *exceedingly broad*; that is, it takes in everything, though it may be briefly comprehended in this, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." This was the whole spirit of the law given to the children of Israel; though on account of the hardness of their hearts, other precepts were added, and many particulars given by Moses, on the very ground that this spiritual law was sure to be broken. For example; if the ten commandments, as they are called, written in the twentieth of Exodus, could have been kept, there would have been no occasion to add the judgments set before them immediately afterwards (xxi., xxii). He that *smiteth*, he that *stealeth*, and he that *curseth*, are directly mentioned as persons that would be found among them; although, in ignorance of their own hearts, the whole people had cried out, shortly before, "*All that the Lord hath spoken to us we will do.*"

In the period which we have to consider, the laws, as well as the religion of the Greeks, seem to be best known, probably because the art of writing was most cultivated in that country.

Almost all the states of Greece had changed their form of government, from monarchy to republicanism, as that seemed to suit their independent minds better than the subjection to one head, which was common in other nations. But these different states were united by one language and religion; by the celebration of the public games, which were their common amusements; and by the Amphictyonic Council (an assembly so called from one of the ancient kings by whom it was instituted), to which all the states sent two representatives, as the counties and chief towns in our country send members to parliament. The twelve united states of Greece, though inhabiting a region not half so large as England, became powerful by uniting together, and were

afterwards reduced to weakness by frequent wars with each other. Of the two members sent by each state to the Amphictyonic council, one took care of the religion, the other of the civil affairs of his country: for these heathens, according to their measure of light, seemed wiser than those who bear the name of Christians in present governments. But I must pass on, and take for my examples of the laws of men, those of the two principal states of Greece — Sparta and Athens.

Lycurgus, the law-giver of Sparta, travelled through Asia and Egypt, seeking wisdom in the countries through which he passed, and at his return put forth his body of laws by the consent of the chief men of the state, B. C. 884.

We have observed that the law of God is "holy, just, and good," and the Lord's purpose was to form a peculiar people; that is, a *holy* people: for it was in holiness and righteousness that he would have his people distinguished from all the nations of the earth.

Now Lycurgus proposed to make the Spartans a distinguished people; but we shall see that holiness was not in one of his thoughts. He began with them from the earliest childhood (contrast Isaiah xxviii. 9), but it was in a barbarous manner. If the babes were weakly or deformed, they were exposed to perish in a cavern near Mount Taygetus: if they were strong and healthy, they were declared to be the children of the state and nursed in the hardest manner. They were frequently dipped in the river Eurotas, that washed the walls of the city; their food was coarse, their beds hard, their feet bare, their clothes the same in winter and summer, and they were not suffered to be fearful or peevish. At the age of seven their education became more severe; their heads were shaved, and they fought with each other naked. To accustom them to bear bodily pain, the boys were annually whipped at the altar of Diana; and he who bore the suffering with the greatest fortitude was esteemed victorious. Some children died under this cruel treatment. In order to prepare them for the arts of war, they were permitted to steal from each other; and only punished for want of skill if they were caught in the act. As a proof of the effects of such instruc-

tion, it is said, that a boy having one day stolen a fox, hid it under his garments, and chose rather to let the animal tear out his bowels than discover the theft. At twelve, their discipline was increased; and they had their mock fights together, in which sometimes they lost their eyes, and even their lives, rather than give up the contest. They did not marry, or become statesmen and soldiers, till the age of thirty. The females were brought up in as hardy a manner: they ran, wrestled, and pitched the bar, in public, and without any clothing. Hence the Spartan women seemed to lose all feelings of tenderness, and were chiefly noted for their strength and boldness. A mother gave her son his shield, as he was going to battle, saying to him, "Return with it, or return upon it;" meaning it was better to be borne home upon it dead, than to cast it away in flying from the enemy. Another, hearing that her son was killed, fighting for his country, replied without any emotion, "It was for this that he came into the world." Upon another occasion, after a defeat, the parents of those who had fallen in the battle went to the temples to thank the gods that their sons had done their duty; while those whose children survived were overwhelmed with grief and shame! By the laws of Lycurgus all the men of Sparta were obliged to eat in one common hall, whither they sent their quantity of provisions monthly. This was a kind of temperance society, and the object was, that none should eat or drink too much: black broth, a kind of vegetable soup, was their favourite dish, and they did not use flesh. A stranger, however, who found this fare very unpalatable, was assured by the cook, that the broth was nothing without the seasoning of hunger and fatigue. Another regulation of Lycurgus was the division of the land into equal parts that the citizens might all share alike, and no use be made of money. The Helots, or peasants of Sparta, were used as slaves, and tilled the ground for only a bare support; the citizens having plenty and leisure, spent most of their time in conversing together in their large common halls. Lycurgus, having established these laws, made his countrymen swear that they would observe them till his return, and then left them: it is said that he actually destroyed himself, thinking to ensure the happiness

of the Spartans by obliging them to obey his laws. It is clear, however, that neither love to God, nor man, was any part of his plan ; he only thought of making his countrymen stronger and fiercer than any other people : it was the sort of education that a lioness might give to her whelps, as thus described by the prophet, " She took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion ; and he went up and down among the lions : he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men."

Perceiving the success of the Spartans in war, after they adopted the laws of Lycurgus, the Athenians also desired written laws, and chose Draco as their legislator, B.C. 624. His laws were so severe, that they were said to be written with blood, rather than ink ; for he punished with death all crimes without exception, saying, " Small crimes deserve death, and I have no higher punishment for the greatest."

Man's laws can alone touch the outward actions ; the law of God searches the heart, and brings in all the world guilty, instead of *only* thieves, murderers, &c.

Crime was so common in Athens that the laws of Draco could not be obeyed : the people felt that they were unbearable, and the state of things became worse than if there had been none at all. But no farther attempt in legislation was made until Solon, the wisest man of his age in Greece, set forth some laws, which he gave to his countrymen, saying, " They were not the best of all possible laws, but the best that they were capable of receiving." This reformation however belonged to a later period ; and the two chief states of Greece were still under the laws of Lycurgus and Draco at the time that the Jews fell under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, on account of their multiplied offences against the holy law of God.

CHAP. XXIX.

THE EARLY STORIES OF ROME.

You will remember that Rome was founded about the time that the ten tribes of Israel were cast off, and ceased to exist as a kingdom. As there were no written records, the history

obliging them to obey his laws. It is neither love to God, nor man, was not only thought of making his countrymen more than any other people: it was the sternness might give to her whelps, as the prophet, "She took another of her whelps, a young lion; and he went up and down, and became a young lion, and learned to devour men."

In success of the Spartans in war, after the death of Lycurgus, the Athenians also desired to have Draco as their legislator, B.C. 685. It is here, that they were said to be written in ink; for he punished with death every crime, saying, "Small crimes deserve a higher punishment for the greatest." He touched the outward actions; the law touched the heart, and brings in all the world guilty of crimes, murderers, &c.

In Athens that the laws of Draco were so strict, that the people felt that they were unbecomingly things became worse than if there had been no farther attempt in legislation was made by the wisest man of his age in Greece, Solon, which he gave to his countrymen, saying, "The best of all possible laws, but the best that I can receive." This reformation however was not long; and the two chief states of Greece, Sparta and Athens, were reformed by the laws of Lycurgus and Draco at the time of the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, on account of the offences against the holy law.

CHAP. XXIX.

EARLY STORIES OF ROME.

At Rome was founded about the time that the Israelites were cast off, and ceased to exist. There were no written records, the history

of the early kings of Rome is of a very doubtful character, and I do not enter into the particulars of it; but I can mention a few of the stories of their times, which might easily have been preserved by tradition. Man, in his self-love, and the love of his country, which often seems, as it were, another self, since so nearly connected with him; man is so ready to repeat what seems for his own credit and for the honour of his country, that it is not likely that some of these early stories, which are so discreditable to human nature, and so dishonourable to any nation, would have been preserved from age to age, unless there were some truth in them.

Take for instance, the manner in which Rome was peopled, which is thus related. Romulus proclaimed that his new city should be a place of refuge for malefactors and runaway slaves, promising protection and liberty to all who would flee thither; in this way Rome was well filled with men; and when Romulus, as their king and law-giver, had brought them into some kind of order, he desired also to obtain female citizens. But as all the neighbouring people had refused to give their daughters in marriage to these Roman robbers, he determined to oblige them to do so by cunning united with force. To this end, he proclaimed a feast in honour of Neptune, one of the gods commonly worshipped in Italy; and the Sabines, who were considered the chief people of the country, came in crowds to Rome, bringing their wives and daughters.

The usual games of wrestling, running, races, &c., followed the religious ceremonies, and while the Sabines were intently looking at these sports, Romulus sent a band of armed men among them, to carry off the youngest and fairest of the women. The Sabine parents sought in vain to defend their children: and then hastened home to stir up all their countrymen to take revenge upon the Romans. But by the time they were prepared for battle, the Sabine women, through kind treatment, had become attached to their new husbands, and a curious scene took place when the two parties began the fight. The Roman wives rushed in among the combatants, and besought their husbands and fathers to lay down their arms and live as friends. To this they agreed, and the two nations became as one; Tatius, the old king of the Sabines, being united with Romulus in the government, during his life.

It seems probable that Romulus was murdered on account of the absolute power which he took upon himself after the death of Tatius ; but the deed was concealed by the invention of a story that he was taken up into heaven, which the ignorant people readily believed.* The Sabine party chose Numa Pompilius, the son-in-law of Tatius, as the next king, B. C. 711.

Romulus had occupied himself in settling the *government* of his people : Numa's chief object was to establish their *religion*. The former divided the Romans into two classes, the patricians or nobles, and the plebeians or common people ; a certain number of the patricians were chosen to assist him in the government under the name of the *senate*, and these were called "the fathers of the people." Each of the plebeians was afterwards permitted to choose a patrician protector, to whom he was bound to render many services in return for his guardianship : thus arose the mutual dependance between the rich and the poor, which is a happy thing if righteously exercised. Indeed, the Roman constitution would have been for the temporal well-being of the people, if there had been right subjection of will in the king, senators, patricians, and plebeians. The government and laws of England formerly bore even greater resemblance to those of Rome than that which still may be traced in our days.

The work of Numa, though much more admired by the people, was far from beneficial, as it only thickened the gross darkness that covered them, by giving a more distinct form to their wretched polytheism. And here, though I am rather anticipating, I must give you a slight sketch of the religion of the Romans when it came to its height : as it will be interesting to think it over, as a strong contrast with the religion of God, though a diabolical mockery of it may be observed in some external forms.

The Romans had many Pontifices, or priests, who had the entire charge of religion, and ordered all the feasts and sacrifices in their due seasons ; but the chief of them was called Pontifex Maximus, or high-priest ; and his office was considered the most honourable in the state, so that even the

* Some modern writers consider the histories of the kings of Rome as entirely fabulous.

Romulus was murdered on account of the blood he took upon himself after the deed was concealed by the incest which he had taken up into heaven, which the gods could not be pleased to receive.* The Sabine party chose the law of Tatius, as the next king.

himself in settling the government of the people. The object was to establish their rule over the Romans into two classes, the patricians and the plebeians or common people. The patricians were chosen to assist him in the government, and were called the *senate*, and these were the "patricians of the people." Each of the plebeians was to choose a patrician protector, and in return for many services in return for the mutual dependence between them. It is a happy thing if righteous laws and a good constitution would have been the result of the people, if there had been a king, senators, patricians, and laws of England former than those of Rome than the four days.

though much more admired by the people, as it only thickened the ground by giving a more distinct form.

And here, though I am rather partial to a slight sketch of the religion of the Romans, to its height: as it will be in a strong contrast with the religious mockery of it may be seen.

the sacrifices, or priests, who had the honor of ordering all the feasts and sacrifices, but the chief of them was called the *rex*; and his office was considered as the state, so that even in the histories of the kings of Rome

emperors took it, either actually or nominally. Besides these there were priestesses, called vestal virgins, appointed by Numa to keep a fire always burning in honour of the goddess Vesta: it was only lighted once a year by the rays of the sun, and if one of them suffered it to go out she was severely punished, as it was thought the safety of the state was endangered by such an accident. The priest, and the person who offered the sacrifice, wore white garments: the beast to be sacrificed, if an ox, bull, or cow, had its horns gilded; if a sheep, goat, or pig, it was crowned with the leaves of the tree in which the particular god to whom it was offered was said to delight. Corn and frankincense, with sacred cakes, were placed on the head of the victim, and wine sprinkled between the horns. When the beasts were slain, the Aruspices drew near, a class of persons who pretended to tell the success of any undertaking from the appearance of the inward parts, and the manner in which the portions laid on the altar were consumed, as also from the smell, taste, or colour of the meal, frankincense, &c. When the priests had burnt the parts which they thought proper, they went away and feasted on the rest. The chief interpreters of signs or omens were called Augurs: they professed to tell whether any action was right or wrong from the appearance of the heavens, peculiarities in the flight and singing of birds, and the manner in which certain chickens, which they held as sacred, picked up the crumbs or corn that was thrown to them. These Augurs were consulted on every occasion: and according to their judgment whether the omens were fortunate or otherwise, the most important undertakings were begun or ended. The Aruspices and Augurs were the soothsayers of Rome. Man has been described as a *religious animal*; for it appears that whether brutish and ferocious, or intellectual and refined, human nature cannot be satisfied without some kind of religion: but through the subtlety of Satan, man is satisfied with the many inventions sought out since he fell from his original uprightness. And the most religious among the heathens, Numa for example, were quite as devoted and self-denying, after their fashion, and as sure that they had secured heaven, as the devoutest nominal Christians of the present day. Moreover, one worshipper is

not more acceptable to God than another, though he may choose a form that appears purer, if the Spirit of the Son be wanting in him; for that alone can bring the true cry of "Abba, Father!" from any heart (Gal. iv. 6).

Numa built a great number of temples: one of them, the gates of which were to be shut in time of peace and opened during war, was dedicated to Janus,* a god who was represented with two faces, looking different ways, to show that he was acquainted with the past and future. Thus darkly did the Gentiles "feel after" that God, of whom they had lost the knowledge, "the Lord which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. i. 8).

The successor of Numa was Tullus, surnamed Hostilius, on account of his fondness for war. He began to reign, B. C. 666. The following story connected with his war with the Albans, a neighbouring people of Italy, gives us some idea of the ferocious manner of those times. There happened to be three brothers in the Roman army, called the Horatii—and three in that of the Albans, named the Curiatii—all of them remarkable for strength, courage, and activity. After some doubtful struggles, it was proposed that these brothers should serve as champions; and that the nation of the three who were overcome should submit. The combat began in sight of both the armies; and the ambitious king of Rome was discouraged in seeing two of the Horatii slain, and the other flying before the three Curiatii. But this proved to be only a trick on the part of Horatius, who was unhurt and knew his pursuers were all wounded; he pretended to run away in order to fatigue them, and then turning suddenly round, he killed each of the Curiatii as they came up to him faint and weary. The Albans consented to obey the Romans, and the latter were loud in their praises of the victorious youth. As he returned to the city, he met with his own sister, bitterly mourning the death of one of the Curiatii who had loved her. The fierce conqueror slew her in his rage, and for this act was condemned to die by the magistrates; but he obtained pardon by appealing to the

* The month of January was so named in honour of this imaginary god.

people, as they would not suffer their champion to be executed.

Tullus Hostilius subdued many of the neighbouring nations, during his warlike reign of thirty-two years.

Ancus Martius, Numa's grandson, was the next king. He conquered the Latins, and settled the people in Rome; it was from them, that the language spoken by the Romans was called the Latin tongue. Ancus increased the buildings of Rome, fortified the city walls, and built a sea-port at the mouth of the Tiber. At his death, B. C. 610, he left his children under the guardianship of Lucius Priscus, surnamed Tarquinius, who, in a short time, contrived to obtain the kingdom for himself. He is said to have been the first who wore a crown of gold and purple robes; and his ivory throne, and sceptre, ornamented with an eagle, were other marks of royalty not before used in Rome. He was victorious in war; and occupied his men in adorning the city in times of peace. He built the forum or market place; and the amphitheatre, an immense building of an oval form, filled with seats placed one above the other, having a space left in the centre for public shows: there, men and beasts were obliged to fight with each other; and such horrid amusements were popular at Rome for many centuries. This king also caused subterraneous canals to be made, which supplied the city with water; and others which carried away all impurities into the Tiber. Lucius Tarquinius was killed at the age of eighty, by the sons of Ancus, whom he had deprived of the kingdom. It was during the reign of Lucius that Nebuchadnezzar pursued his conquests; and to his remarkable history it will be well to return.

CHAP. XXX.

JUDGMENT EXECUTED ON TYRE AND EGYPT BY NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

FOUR years after Nebuchadnezzar had been used to chastise the Jews, he was employed in punishing the sins of Tyre, as that city also was ripe for judgment (Ezek. xxvi).

The Tyrians had looked on Jerusalem with envy; and when it was laid waste they rejoiced, thinking that they

should be benefited by its destruction. But this very rejoicing over the ruin of God's people, filled up the measure of their iniquities; for the Lord had said concerning Abraham's seed, "Cursed is he that curseth thee."

The commercial prosperity of Tyre was great; for it was the merchant-city of all nations (Ezek. xxvii.), and the Tyrian vessels traded to all parts of the known world. From distant Britain (the Cornish mines) they brought tin, and from every other country such things as were esteemed rare or precious. In this way they collected a most abundant store of all that could gratify the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Their ships either carried such merchandize to other nations, or Tyre became a market to which all nations came to buy. Thus corruption and evil only increased with the temporal prosperity of the world; for the Tyrian merchants were the busy servants of Satan.

London seems now to occupy the place of Tyre, as a merchant-city: but in our capital the Lord has many faithful people, who, as the scattered salt, preserve the whole from corruption: but the mass, and especially the traders, though called by the name of Christ, are for the most part as much wrapped up in their business as the Tyrians; and, like them, only bent on heaping up wealth. Their ships carry evil rather than blessing to the ends of the earth; they glory in their vessels and in their extensive commerce as much as the heathens did; and having so much more light and knowledge, the responsibility is greater, and the judgment must in the end be more terrible. They who love God, and seek his glory in all things, may carry on useful and honest trades, and serve Him in them; for when the heart is right in God's sight, the members will be yielded to Him, and the Christian merchant may leave a savour of Christ in every place.

From the peculiar situation of Tyre, and the strength of its fortifications, the inhabitants were able to resist all the efforts of Nebuchadnezzar for thirteen years; and his army suffered greatly in the hard labours of the siege. As the prophet Ezekiel said, "Every head was made bald, and every shoulder peeled;" for such was the effect of wearing their armour so long, and carrying burdens to build the high terrace, from which they were at length able to attack the walls

of Tyre. Before the city was taken, the inhabitants escaped in great numbers, with their wealth, to an island about half a mile from the shore; and there shortly after arose another city, called New Tyre, which became richer and stronger than that destroyed by the Assyrians.

Nebuchadnezzar was next employed to chastise Pharaoh-Hophra, the haughty king of Egypt who had thought that he could protect Jerusalem from the Assyrians. In his country the remnant of Jews left in the land had taken refuge, believing that the sound of war would not follow them there, notwithstanding the word of warning from the Lord, by Jeremiah (Jer. xlii—xlv). Herodotus says that this proud king of Egypt had boasted it was not in the power of the gods themselves to dethrone him; this agrees with the description given of him by Ezekiel, who, by the word of the Lord, compared him to a great dragon, lying in the midst of the streams, and saying, "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself" (Ezek. xxix).

Hophra was first disturbed by the rebellion of his own subjects: and Nebuchadnezzar, taking advantage of the tumultuous state of the country, subdued it with little difficulty, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, "He shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment, and he shall go forth in peace." The treasures that he obtained recompensed his soldiers for their hard service in taking Tyre. It is said, Egypt did not recover the effects of this desolation for forty years.*

Nebuchadnezzar made one of Hophra's rebel officers king, and caused Hophra to be strangled in his own palace, as it was written, "Behold I will give Pharaoh-Hophra into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life" (Jer. xlv. 30).

We have seen that Nebuchadnezzar was made use of to punish the pride of others; we shall now observe whether he learned humility by all these lessons, and whether he who was used as the *servant* of God, could escape the *judgment* of God.

* Soon after the expiration of that period, Egypt became a province of the Persian empire, to which its native kings had to pay tribute; and after the death of Nectanebus, the last of these, B.C. 350, Egypt was always governed by foreigners (Ezek. xxx. 13).

CHAP. XXXI.

BABYLON AND ITS KINGS.

WHEN Nebuchadnezzar had ended his foreign wars, and was established in his great empire, he returned to Babylon, and occupied himself in completing that city upon the plan laid down by Semiramis, and in adorning it in the most magnificent manner. You must picture to yourself this city, standing in the midst of a plain of the richest soil, and the river Euphrates flowing straight through it. Strong walls, eighty-seven feet thick, and three hundred and fifty in height, surrounded Babylon in an exact square, each side of it being fifteen miles long; there was a vast ditch outside the walls, as the earth of which the bricks were made had been dug from thence: the bricks were cemented together with bitumen, a slimy substance, common in that country, which, as it dries, becomes harder than stone. On each side of the city were twenty-five gates of solid brass; and the streets ran in straight lines from gate to gate, dividing the space of ground within the walls into six hundred and seventy-six squares. Round these squares were built houses three or four stories high, and richly ornamented, having meadows or gardens between them. A bridge had been thrown over the Euphrates by Semiramis; and Nebuchadnezzar made brazen gates at the end of every street, which came down to the river's side: these were open by day, and shut every night for the defence of the city. There were two immense palaces built at the ends of the bridge, one on each side of the river. The oldest belonged to the ancient kings of Assyria; the other was built by Nebuchadnezzar, and esteemed the chief wonder of Babylon. It is said that the daughter of the king of Media, his wife, weary of the flat appearance of the country, wished to see something like her own mountainous and woody land; and to please her, Nebuchadnezzar caused hanging gardens to be made in the following manner. Several large terraces were raised one above the other, supported by arches; that at the bottom was four hundred feet square, but they became gradually smaller towards the top, and stairs led from one to the other. In the spaces between

the arches were light and magnificent apartments ; and the terraces being sheeted with lead, and covered with mould, shrubs and flowers were planted upon them : and so strong was the building, that even the largest trees took root in the deep earth laid upon it.

Neither, in thinking of Babylon, can we forget the temple of Belus, which contained enormous riches, in statues of solid gold, and vessels used in the worship of the idol. On the top of the tower was an observatory, by the use of which the Babylonians became better skilled in astronomy.* The study of the stars was useful to them, in marking the seasons, before they discovered the true length of the year ; and had it not been for this science, they would have been at a loss in the cultivation of the ground. By remarking the position of certain stars, they knew that it was the right time to plough, sow, or reap, when they appeared, &c. The Babylonians also were probably the inventors of the false science of astrology, whereby they pretended to foretell future events ; and some even dared to say, that by observing the position of the planets when an infant was born, they could tell the course of its whole life, and even the hour of its death.

To the other wonders of Babylon, I need only add the immense artificial lake, dug by the order of Semiramis to receive the waters of the Euphrates, when it was turned aside in order to build the bridge, and the quays which were on each side of it. This lake was always useful in preserving the city from being injured by the overflowing of the river ; this is very considerable when the snows melt in the mountains of Armenia, where it rises.

It seems as if Nebuchadnezzar were walking upon the roof of the palace (which overlooked the whole city and country), when he exclaimed, " Is not this *great* Babylon, that I have built for the house of my kingdom, and by the might of *my power*, and *for the honour of my majesty ?*" (Dan. iv. 30). This haughty question was answered in the same hour by the fulfilment of his second dream, which Daniel had interpreted the year before, though he refused the instruction of

* The clearness of the sky, and warmth of the air, even by night, led to very early observation of the heavenly bodies among the Assyrians, Egyptians, Chinese, &c.

God. He had seen a vision of himself, no longer as the head of gold; but as a strong, high, wide-spreading tree, which shewed the way in which his empire had increased, but at the same time should have convinced him that it was all perishable greatness: for the tree might be hewn down, so as to be level with the grass of the field. He was told also that the Holy One was watching him; and if he refused to acknowledge the rule of the God of heaven, he must learn that he was under it by painful experience. Daniel warned him to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if, perchance, it might be a lengthening of his tranquillity. The poor captive Jews were doubtless treated with great severity in Babylon; for the Lord said by Isaiah, "I was wroth with my people, and have given them into thy hand, thou didst show them *no mercy*; upon the ancient hast thou *very heavily* laid the yoke" (Is. xlvii. 6). And by Jeremiah, "Israel is a scattered sheep, the lions have driven him away; first, the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last, this Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, hath *broken his bones*" (Jer. l. 17).

It appears that some of the Jewish children were even dashed to pieces against the stones of Babylon (Ps. cxxxvii).

The judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar ought to silence all who boast of their power and honour. For seven years he was deprived of the understanding he had abused, and became like one of the beasts of the field (Dan. iv). At the end of that time he was restored to his right mind, and made a public confession of the dealings of God with him, in a letter addressed to all the subjects of his empire. It ends with these striking words, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven: all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: **AND THOSE THAT WALK IN PRIDE HE IS ABLE TO ABASE.**"

The year after this, Nebuchadnezzar died, B. C. 579.

The Lord said by Jeremiah, that all nations should serve this king of Babylon, and his *son*, and his *son's son*, until the very time of his land came; and then many nations and great kings should serve themselves of him, or of that which belonged to him. His *son*, Evil-Merodach, succeeded him

in the empire; and the first act of his reign was to release Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, from the prison in which he had been confined nearly thirty-seven years, and to place him at his own table. But from the character and conduct of the king of Babylon, this could have been no real blessing: indeed, he made himself so hateful to his subjects, that they put him to death at the end of two years. Neriglissor, one of the conspirators, made himself king: but was killed in a war with the Medes four years after, when the empire returned to Nebuchadnezzar's *grandson*, Labynitus, called Belshazzar by the Jews. His reign was to be the last, according to the prophecy quoted above; and the judgment upon him and upon Babylon I shall relate, when I have given you an account of the power which had been rising up to destroy and to succeed that of Assyria.

CHAP. XXXII.

RISE OF THE SECOND GREAT EMPIRE, AND THE STORY OF CYRUS.

ASTYAGES, the king of Media, whose daughter married Nebuchadnezzar, succeeded his father Cyaxares, whom I mentioned before as reigning in that country. In his time the former jealousy between the Medes and Assyrians was renewed; and it was in a battle, in which the former were victorious, that Neriglissor king of Babylon was slain. After being permitted this advantage over the greatest people of the East, the Medes only waited for an opportunity to subdue them altogether; and according to God's purpose, that empire was soon to pass into the hands of a conqueror "of the seed of the Medes" (Dan. ix. 1).*

Mandane, the daughter of Astyages, was married to Cambyses, who reigned as king over Persia, at that time a very small part of the country now called by this name † and so

* Cyaxares II., son of Astyages, is here called Darius; and Astyages, Ahasuerus; those being the two names commonly given by the Hebrews to the kings of those countries, as we shall have to notice hereafter.

† It is said, the Persians were not more than thirty thousand in number.

much like a province of Media, that the Medes and Persians might well be spoken of as a united people. The history of Cyrus, the son of Cambyses and Mandane, has been fully given by ancient writers; and some particulars of it will be interesting to us, as he was named by the Lord nearly two hundred years before he was born, as the chosen instrument to destroy Babylon, to deliver the Jews, and to command the Temple to be rebuilt. "For Jacob, my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, *though thou hast not known me*" (see Isaiah xlv. and xlv). We shall now observe that the disposition and education of Cyrus fitted him to be the executioner of God's righteous purposes. From his earliest youth he was trained for war according to the manner of the Persians, who, like the Spartans, accustomed their children to early hardships, in order to strengthen them for battle. It is said that Cyrus was of a beautiful person and sweet disposition, eager to learn all the lessons that were given him. When a boy, his food was usually only bread and cresses, and his chief lessons were in drawing the bow and flinging the javelin. At the age of twelve he was sent to the court of his grandfather Astyages for farther instruction, and particularly to learn riding, in which art the Medes excelled. There he attracted the love of all by his amiable conduct; and during his four years' visit his early habits of simplicity and moderation were not changed by the luxury of his grandfather's palace.

The following anecdote of the young Cyrus is related by Xenophon; and if not literally true, it must have been founded upon a close observation of the early character of this prince. Astyages had ordered a grand entertainment to please his young guest; but when Cyrus saw the great variety of rare and delicate food prepared for the feast, he exclaimed, "The Persians do not go such a round-about way to satisfy their hunger; bread and cresses answer the same end!" The king told him that he might dispose of the dishes as he pleased; upon which he gave them to the officers in waiting. To one, because he taught him to ride; to another, because he waited well on his grandfather; to a

third because he had taken care of his mother Mandane ; but to the cup-bearer, Sacas, he would give nothing, because he had not allowed him to go into the king's presence as often as he wished. Upon this Astyages remarked that he deserved a portion, for he was a valuable servant as a cup-bearer. "O grandpapa," cried Cyrus, "you shall see I will serve you better than he;" and taking up the cup, he presented it to the king so gracefully that he was rewarded by an embrace. "But," said Astyages, "you forgot to pour some of the wine into your left hand to taste it; for that is the custom of the cup-bearer." "No," replied Cyrus, "I did not forget, but I feared there was poison in the liquor." "Poison, child!" exclaimed the king with astonishment; "how could you think so?" "Because, grandpapa, I remember, at the last feast you gave to the lords of your court, all who drank of the wine seemed to have their heads turned; and even you appeared to forget that you were the king, and they only your subjects." "Has the same thing never happened to your father?" asked Astyages. "No; when he drinks, he satisfies his thirst, and that is all."

Such conduct and such words from a young heathen, may show the benefit of moral restraint; but how much more favoured are those children who, in addition to this, have the Lord Jesus continually set before them as a Saviour, a Lord, and an example. Cyrus had only the pattern of early warriors, and outdid all who had hitherto appeared; and when he reached manhood, he was sent at the head of the Persian army to assist his uncle Cyaxares or Darius, the Mede, in his war with the Assyrians. Neriglissor, king of Babylon, in order to resist them, formed an alliance with the king of Lydia. And his history I must give you, as he is one of the chief persons during this period: he continued to assist the Babylonian armies after Neriglissor was slain; Labynitus, or Belshazzar, not coming out to battle, but only sending forth troops from Babylon.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THE LYDIANS, AND THE STORY OF CRÆSUS.

HISTORIANS mention three distinct races of Lydian monarchs; therefore it is probable that a kingly government was established also in Lydia soon after the flood. The country was extremely fruitful in corn and wine, and contained many valuable mines. Sardis, the capital, was pleasantly situated on the banks of the Pactolus, a river that was anciently said to have golden sands; but Strabo, the geographer, says that there were not any in his time.

Some disturbances that had arisen in Greece, caused many of the inhabitants of that country to leave their homes and cross over to the opposite coast of Asia Minor, where they formed colonies in Ionia, Æolia, and Caria, and soon became very rich. In all the arts of life they were superior to most of their neighbours, but as they did not hold together, they were little able to resist the attacks of the Lydians, who would have subjected them in the reign of Alyattes, had not a war with the Medes turned their attention the other way. This war lasted six years, and was ended by the occurrence of a total eclipse of the sun just as the two armies were beginning to fight. Neither the Lydians nor the Medes could account for this appearance; but Thales, a Greek philosopher of Miletus in Asia Minor, had calculated that it would take place on that very day, May 28th, B. C. 601; which proves how far the Greeks had advanced in the science of astronomy.

Alyattes was succeeded by his son Cræsus (B. C. 562), and this prince added all the Greek cities in Asia to his dominions. He was much beloved by his subjects for his justice and fatherly kindness, and his court was a meeting-place for all the wise and learned men of his age: among these Solon, the Athenian law-giver, and Æsop, the Greek fabulist, were the most distinguished. The latter was by birth a Phrygian slave; and so exceedingly deformed that every body was shocked at the sight of him. But his extraordinary wit and the beauty of his mind overbalanced his frightful appearance; and a Greek philosopher to whom he was

sold would hardly be persuaded to set him at liberty. It is said, that his master having desired him to prepare a feast of the very best things that he could find, Æsop brought nothing but tongues, which he ordered the cook to serve up in a great many dishes with different sauces. When dinner came, his master passionately asked why he had not obeyed his commands? "I have," said Æsop; and began to speak of the value of the tongue in such an eloquent manner, that his master, delighted with his wit, desired him on the next day to provide the worst of every thing. On the morrow, when the dinner was served, the very same dishes were observed, when Æsop cleverly explained to the company all the evils of the tongue.

If Æsop was not the inventor of fables, as some have supposed, he was at least the author of some of the most instructive that have been written. He was highly esteemed at the court of Cræsus, as he knew how to make himself agreeable to a king; but Solon was less valued, as he would not admire the magnificence on which Cræsus so much prided himself, and would not gratify the king in agreeing with him that he was the happiest of mankind. Solon wisely told him of the changes that might happen to him, and observed that his immense riches could not secure lasting enjoyment. Solon, Thales, Chilo, Pittacus, Bias, Cleobulus, and Periander, called "the Seven Wise Men of Greece," all found a welcome at the palace of Cræsus; as did also Anacharsis, a Scythian, who was equal to any of them in talent. But their noted sayings only savour of the wisdom of this world, and of the self-exaltation which it was natural they should feel in finding themselves superior to their fellow-men. Morality, and the art of government, seem to have been the chief subjects of their conversation and writings. The few sparks of light struck out at this time were no help in bringing men nearer to God; yet they may serve to remind us of his image which they bear, though in such ruins through the fall. Æsop asked Chilo, one day, how Jupiter employed himself? He replied, "In humbling those that exalt themselves, and exalting those that abase themselves." This seems like a ray of truth gathered from God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, which

had been published abroad. But this Chilo, in his pride and blindness, said, as he was dying, that he was not conscious of having committed any fault through his whole life, except once, when he gave rather a partial judgment in favour of a friend.

Thales, the astronomer, used to thank the gods for three things : that he was born a reasonable being and not a beast ; a man and not a woman ; a Greek and not a barbarian.

Bias taught, that men should do all the good they can, and give the glory of it to the gods.

Anacharsis said to Solon, "Laws are like cobwebs, which entangle only little flies, while wasps and hornets break through them." Both these men felt how impossible it was to form any chains which would not be broken by the violence of men's passions.

The question being asked, which is the most perfect popular government ? "That," answered Solon, "where an injury done to any citizen is felt by the whole body : " "That," said Bias, "where the law has no superior : " "That," said Thales, "where the inhabitants are neither too rich nor too poor : " "That," cried Anacharsis, "where virtue is honoured and vice abhorred : " "That," said Pittacus, "where dignities are always conferred upon the virtuous, and never upon the wicked." Cleobulus added, "That where the citizens fear blame rather than punishment : " and Chilo, "Where the laws are more regarded than the orators."

Cræsus did not believe Solon's words, but his fancied happiness was soon interrupted. His first sorrow was in the death of his favourite son, who was accidentally killed whilst hunting a wild boar : his other son was dumb, and for two years Cræsus did not cease to mourn the loss of the young prince, to whom he had intended to leave all his possessions. But he was roused from his grief by hearing of the increased power of Cyrus ; for that prince had now established his uncle Cyaxares, as the Darius or king of the Medes, by defeating the Armenians, who had opposed him after the death of Astyages. Cræsus was glad to unite with the king of Babylon to check the farther advance of the Medes and Persians : and though in the first battle Neriglissor lay dead on the field with thousands of Assyrians

and Lydians, and Cræsus escaped with difficulty to Sardis, he was not discouraged from making still greater preparations, and took the office of generalissimo, or chief general of the allied armies which had been engaged by Belshazzar.

And here I would remark, that God's history, as given us in the Bible, and man's history of the events of time, differ in this remarkable manner: whereas, the holy men who were moved by the Holy Ghost loved not to rest on the details of war, but summed up their accounts of battles in a few words; other historians give the most minute particulars with as much coolness as if they were describing a harmless game.

Moreover, though man heaps the highest terms of praise and admiration on the great warriors of every age, we find them described in the word of God under the figures of wild beasts and birds of prey; as for instance, in the vision of Daniel: wherein he saw the four principal earthly kingdoms in the form of four great beasts, differing from each other, but all of the same ferocious disposition. We have already viewed the Assyrian empire under Nebuchadnezzar, like a lion in strength, and ready to exalt himself as upon eagle's wings; but his wings were plucked, his pride humbled, and at the close a man's heart was given him. The second great empire is seen as another beast; like a bear, raising up itself on one side (the Persian exalted above the Median dominion, though at first one with it), and the other nations around it are but as ribs between the teeth of this bear, to whom it was said, "Arise, devour much flesh" (Dan. vii. 1—5).

Cræsus, before he began this war, had been, as he thought, assured of victory by the oracle at Delphi, to which he sent to inquire what would be the success of his expedition. I have before mentioned the pretensions of the heathens to the knowledge of future events; I shall now give a description of the most celebrated oracle of Greece, as it may suffice for a general explanation. The temple at Delphi was dedicated to Apollo, who was considered the god of poetry, music, &c. and the one to whom Jupiter had given the power of knowing futurity. He was particularly worshipped in Egypt, Greece, and Italy; and his oracles were considered the most famous in the world. A priestess,

called Pythia, was said to be inspired by him at certain seasons, when she could answer any question concerning coming events. I can only attribute the power that there seems to have been, to the devil and his angels; and the description given of the state of the Pythia when she spoke, quite proves this (see Acts xvi. 16—18). The damsel out of whom Paul cast the spirit, in the name of Jesus, was a Pythia; and when the devil was cast out her power of soothsaying ceased. It is said that the Pythia at Delphi, in delivering the oracles, foamed at the mouth and trembled violently; her looks were wild, and great exhaustion always followed her strange utterances, and sometimes sudden death.

Every one who came to the temple brought rich gifts; and Cræsus had presented at different times treasures equal in value to some millions of our money.

How different to all this was the gift of God! His prophets delivered their oracles, not only without reward, but often at the risk of their lives, whether the people would hear or not; prefacing all that they spoke with these simple, solemn words, "Thus saith the Lord."

The obscurity and deceitfulness of the answers of these heathen oracles, also marked that they came from the rulers of the darkness of this world. For instance, the reply to Cræsus was, that by crossing the river Halys, the boundary of his dominions, he would overturn a great empire—not saying what empire. And when Cræsus sent to reproach the god for having given him a false expectation, with the cunning of the father of lies, it was said that the oracle meant the Lydian empire would be overthrown.

In the first battle Cræsus had been enabled to hire a vast number of men through his great wealth: it is said that he gathered round him 420,000 infantry, or foot-soldiers, and 60,000 cavalry, or horse-soldiers. The Egyptians, Arabians, Phœnicians, and almost all the states of Greece, assisted the Assyrians in their contest for the empire of the East. But these had been scattered; for speaking many different languages, and not understanding each other's mode of warfare, they were unable to resist the hardy Persians and the Median cavalry under the command of Cyrus.

Many of them submitted to the conqueror after Neri-gli-ssor was slain. Cræsus in the meanwhile escaped ; and was trying to collect a still larger army, when Cyrus unexpectedly appeared at Thymbra, near Sardis ; he had followed the king of Lydia, and was again ready to offer him battle in his own country.

No written description can give a full idea of the horrors of war. Here were thousands of men armed with long pikes to thrust into the bodies of their fellow-creatures, when in close combat ; thousands more, carrying bows to shoot arrows from a distance ; other thousands skilful in the use of the sling, wherewith to throw stones, though yet farther off. Then there were the heavy chariots armed with scythes, drawn by horses or oxen into the enemy's ranks, to mow down the men as the grass of the field. The hardy warriors glittering in their brazen armour, expert in the use of the sword, were to be seen face to face, ready to cut each other to pieces ! Only he who was a murderer from the beginning could have found delight in the invention of the arts of war ; and it is he who so blinds and deceives the hearts of men now, that it is thought not only a lawful, but an honourable employment. And even those who bear the name of Christ have been most forward on the battle field ; as if He had not been called the " Prince of Peace," or had never uttered such words as, " Love your enemies," with so many other precepts that would shut out every thought of war.

Historians have noticed the humanity of Cyrus in trying to lessen the loss of life as much as possible ; but though he was not of such a bloody disposition as many conquerors, the slaughter in these battles was terrible enough ; and we know that in God's sight, he was as a bear devouring *much flesh*. The battle of Thymbra took place B.C. 548, and put Cyrus in possession of the chief power and greatest wealth of the East.

When Cræsus was taken, Cyrus commanded his officers to put him in chains of gold, and to prepare a pile on which he should be burnt alive ! As they were on the point of executing this barbarous order, the Lydian king was heard to exclaim in a lamentable voice, " Ah, Solon, Solon ! "

Cyrus desired to know what name he called upon so earnestly. Cræsus replied, that a certain Greek philosopher, in the height of his prosperity, had assured him that all earthly grandeur might be lost; and waited to know the manner of his death before he would account him the happiest man in the world, which he had desired to be esteemed. Cyrus was so struck by this story, that he commanded the Lydian king to be set free, and treated him ever afterwards with much respect; reflecting that as Cræsus had been the richest king of the East, and had fallen, it was yet possible that a fall might await himself. Cræsus sent his golden chains as a present to the temple at Delphi, to rebuke the oracle for having misled him. It is said, that he outlived his conqueror; but he was never restored to any degree of power.

CHAP. XXXIV.

BABYLON TAKEN BY CYRUS.

CYRUS remained in Asia Minor till he had subdued all the nations from the Ægean sea to the Euphrates; and then advanced towards Babylon, the only city of the East that stood out against him. There, Belshazzar, who was of a slothful disposition, had shut himself up with an immense number of people, having stored up provisions for twenty years.

Cyrus saw that it was impossible to break down those strong walls by any of the engines usually successful in storming a city, and by which he had so lately taken Sardis. He therefore encamped in the plain, and employed his soldiers in digging a trench; as if he intended to remain there until the Babylonians were constrained by famine to come out and give their city up into his power. Thinking themselves out of all danger, the citizens insulted him from the towers that defended the high walls of Babylon, and laughed at all his labours.

But all the circumstances of the siege and taking of Babylon were written in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah long before; and nothing could alter the word of God

“The Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it. Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes; the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof” (Jer. li).

Cyrus, though at the head of the armies of Media and Persia, did every thing in the name of his uncle Cyaxares, the Darius of the Medes; and only waited for a fit opportunity to execute a plan for taking the city, which had long been concealed in his own bosom. The deep trench or canal which his men had formed, was intended to draw off the waters of the Euphrates from their usual channel, through the city, into the lake formerly dug by Semiramis; and if he could march his army into Babylon through the dry bed of the river, the brazen gates would be the only remaining defence of the city. At length hearing that a grand festival was to be held on a certain night, when it was probable all the citizens would be so occupied in feasting that they would forget to close the gates, he chose that evening for the time of his attack. This is the season described by Daniel (chapter v). The king, Belshazzar, made a feast to a thousand of his lords; and drank of the wine before any of them had tasted of it, as if to show that he was their lord. His many wives were also present at this entertainment; and not satisfied with the common provision for his company, he commanded his officers to bring the gold and silver vessels which had been taken from the Temple at Jerusalem, that they also might be used for drinking-cups: and as he and his nobles tasted the wine out of them, they praised the gods of gold, and silver, and brass, of iron, wood and stone.

In the same hour Belshazzar saw the fingers of a hand writing some characters on the opposite wall; and as Isaiah had prophesied, his heart panted, fearfulness affrighted him, and the night of his pleasure was turned into a night of fear (Isaiah xxi. 5). None of the magicians and astrologers, who were called on to explain the miraculous handwriting, were able to understand it; and in the general perplexity, Daniel, who was not at the revel, was sent for by the queen's advice, as she remembered his interpretation

of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. When Daniel arrived, the king promised to make him the third ruler of his kingdom, if he would read the handwriting, and explain its meaning. The prophet knew how worthless were the honours promised by one who was under sentence of judgment, and replied, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation."

Daniel then gave him the account of God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar; and told him that his sin was, whilst knowing all this, that he had not been humbled in heart; but had lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven, even that very evening, by drinking in His vessels, and praising the gods of silver, &c., whilst he had not glorified God, in whose hand was his breath, and by whom alone he could move.

The writing contained but these few words, **MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN**, which Daniel thus interpreted to Belshazzar:—1. God hath numbered thy kingdom, and *finished* it. 2. Thou art weighed in the balances, and *found wanting*. 3. Thy kingdom is divided, and *given* to the Medes and Persians.

Belshazzar seemed to be little moved by this message from God: possibly he did not think his end so near, for he caused Daniel to be proclaimed third ruler of his kingdom, and clothed him in scarlet, as if he did not believe that his kingdom was finished. It might have been done in drunken madness; for it is said by historians that when Cyrus came up to the palace, which you will remember was in the centre of the city, he met with no resistance, and finding the king and his guests in the banquet-room overcome with wine, he slew them all on the spot.

Babylon was taken about fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar had left Jerusalem in ruins, B. C. 538.

It was plain that the Lord had prepared the way of Cyrus according to his word by Isaiah (xlv. 1, 2); for the gates were *not shut*. We have now observed the *finishing* of the first great empire: the head of it was *found wanting*, and his kingdom *given* to others. We shall now have to trace the use of this gift of God in the history of the second

great empire. Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream, that the great image of excellent brightness and terrible form, had its breast and arms of silver; and Daniel told him that another inferior kingdom, which should arise after him, was thus represented. Accordingly, we shall find that the Medo-Persian empire never equalled the Assyrian: but the most striking inferiority was, that there was less acknowledgment of God in its head, notwithstanding all the advantages he had; and even the name of the Lord was soon altogether lost in this empire.

CHAP. XXXV.

THE MEDO-PERSIAN EMPIRE.

ALTHOUGH Cyrus was the first in battle, and God's instrument in executing judgment upon Babylon, he did not at once take the headship: and in Scripture, this period, till the death of Cyaxares, is called the reign of Darius the Mede (Dan. v. 31, and vi).

It is probable that Cyrus, who had prepared a palace for his uncle at Babylon, and established him there, was gone to settle his own affairs in Persia, at the time that Daniel was thrown into the den of lions. The vast empire had been divided into one hundred and twenty provinces: and the princes appointed to govern in each, had three superior officers set over them, of whom Daniel was the chief. It is but natural that these rulers should be jealous of the power given to a stranger, whose religion and manners differed so much from their own: and the darkness that was in them hated the light in him. First, they tried to find some fault with his management of the kingdom; but his faithfulness disappointing them, they thought of a plan for his destruction. Knowing that it would be likely to win the king's approbation, they made a decree, that whoever should ask any thing from God or man, save from *him*, during thirty days, should be cast into the den of lions. The king, pleased to be thus set up above all, willingly signed the decree; and, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, an act of this kind could not be altered.

Daniel, unmoved by the command that had gone forth, continued to pray three times a day in his house, with his chamber windows open towards Jerusalem.

This was just what his enemies wanted; and, having found him on his knees making supplication to God, they complained that he did not regard the king. Darius, on hearing this, was *sore displeased with himself*, and laboured till the evening to deliver Daniel whom he loved; and when he found himself obliged to order him to be thrown into the lions' den, he said to him, "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, will deliver thee." The king passed the night sleepless and fasting; and very early in the morning went hastily to see what had become of *the servant of the living God*. He was exceedingly glad to find him unhurt; and having caused all his accusers to be thrown to the lions, he wrote a letter addressed, like that of Nebuchadnezzar, to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth, saying, "I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the **LIVING GOD**, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end," &c. (Dan. vi. 26). Thus we see at the commencement of the Medo-Persian empire, as at the height of the Assyrian empire, the Living God was nominally owned, and the Spirit of Christ in Daniel (for it was that alone which made him to differ) was acknowledged by these heathen kings to *excel* all others.

Yet after all it was again but confessing the truth with the lips; for even after this strong testimony, the whole empire continued in idolatry, and only went on growing worse and worse till its iniquity came to the full.

CHAP. XXXVI.

THE CAPTIVE JEWS SET FREE BY THE COMMAND OF CYRUS.

IN the first year of the reign of Cyaxares, Daniel understood, by reading the book of the prophet Jeremiah, that it was the Lord's will that Jerusalem should remain desolate seventy years: and although twenty of these years remained

to be fulfilled, he set himself to seek the Lord ; in deep humility confessing the sins of the people as his own, and acknowledging that the dealings of God had been in perfect righteousness (Dan. ix). He ended his earnest prayers with these words, " O Lord, hear ; O Lord, forgive : O Lord, hearken and do, *defer not for thine own sake*, O my God ; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." And he had just before pleaded "*for the Lord's sake* ;" the first instance we have of such an expression. This true prayer was speedily answered, by the appearance of an angel from heaven, who was sent to tell him his voice was heard : and, as one greatly beloved, it pleased God to reveal to him his future purposes towards Jerusalem, and the glorious work of Christ.

In the same year Daniel uttered the prophecies, which I shall have occasion to mention hereafter (chap. xi. xii).

Cyrus, upon his return to Babylon, reviewed his troops, and then subdued Syria and the countries bordering on the Red Sea, as far as the boundaries of Ethiopia. In order to keep up continual communication with every part of the empire, he caused post-houses to be built at proper distances, where horses were always in waiting for the use of the couriers who travelled day and night, carrying his orders to the governors of the most distant provinces. At the end of two years, Cyaxares died ; and Cyrus losing his own father, Cambyses, shortly after, became sole king of the united empire of the Medes and Persians, b. c. 536. He reigned in peace seven years ; but the most remarkable and glorious event in his reign occurred in the first year, when the Lord stirred up his spirit, according to his promise, so that he wrote these words, and caused them to be proclaimed throughout his whole kingdom : " Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth ; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem" (Ezra i). We may well believe that the prophet Daniel who was in such high honour, had told Cyrus the prophecies concerning this work ; and the Lord inclined his heart to perform it.

By this proclamation he set free any of the captive Jews, within his dominions, who desired to go up to Jerusalem,

to rebuild the Temple; and commanded such as chose to remain in the places where they had settled to help their brethren with gold, silver, beasts, or any thing that they needed. At the same time he gave all the vessels of the Temple, remaining in Babylon, into the hand of Sheshbazzar or Zorobabel, *the prince of Judah*; for even during the captivity the royal line of David had been held in respect.

Some persons have thought that all the twelve tribes returned to Jerusalem at this time; and that the prophecies concerning them are therefore accomplished. But it is written, "The Lord removed Israel (or the Ten Tribes) *out of his sight*, as he had said by all his servants, the prophets" (2 Kings xvii. 23). This was B. C. 721; and it is likely that Ezra himself added the next words, "So was Israel carried away out of their own land, to Assyria, unto this day."

On the contrary, when the Lord declared that the people of Judah should be carried away captive, he expressly said it was for their good; and added, "*I will acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah—and I will bring them again to this land*" (Jer. xxiv. 5). In fulfilment of this promise it is expressly written (Ezra ii. 1), that those who went up to Jerusalem, were those who had been carried away by *Nebuchadnezzar*.

The smallness of the numbers of the returning remnant, and a part of the tribe of Benjamin being afterwards heard of in Persia, shows that not even the whole of Judah went back.

Besides, Israel had now been taken out of the land a hundred and eighty-five years: no prophet remained among them, and no king; for they were no longer to be distinguished as the Lord's people, nor to be restored till the reign of Christ in the latter days (Hos. i—iii.; Acts i. 6).

It was not likely that they should either understand, or obey the proclamation of Cyrus; for even had they known the stock from which they descended, lost as they were among the heathen, they would have had no interest in the Temple at Jerusalem, where their fathers, for so many generations, had not worshipped.

On the contrary, some of the older captives at Babylon could remember Jerusalem and the Temple, and the faithful ser-

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vants and prophets of God had the younger Jews under their teaching. However, such is the slothfulness of every heart, and so great the power of unbelief, that none would have been found ready to leave the comparative ease of Babylon, for a toilsome and dangerous journey to their ruined city, had they not been moved to do so by God. For it is written, "Then rose up the *chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the Priests, and the Levites*, with all them *whose spirit God had raised*, to go up to build the house of the Lord, which is at Jerusalem." If they had not been inclined by the Lord to prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy, they might have turned back in disappointment at the trial they met with on their return to the land. It was but a small and feeble remnant; for the whole congregation was only 42,360 in number, besides servants and maids 7,337: and the beasts given them, amounting to 8,136, were quite insufficient to set them at ease, so that the greater number must have gone on foot. The time for the desolation of Jerusalem was not yet fulfilled, and the remnant went through great distress for twenty years; and the building went on very slowly, as the Jews were hindered by their old enemies, the Samaritans, who accused them falsely before the king of Persia. This was probably the cause of Daniel's mourning in the third year of Cyrus (Dan. x).

When Cyrus came into full possession of the power and wealth of the empire, he laid aside his simple manner of living, and took up all the luxurious habits of the Babylonians, among whom he principally dwelt. Neither did he educate his children in the Persian manner; but left them chiefly to the care of the women, and without any restraint. The change of manners thus introduced, and the neglect of the royal children's training, seem to have led to the decline and fall of the empire which we have to trace. Though Cyrus had been constrained to execute the Lord's purposes, it was not in love to Him, but to gratify his own desire for power; and though he had owned Him as the God of heaven, he did not own Him as *his* God, but continued in idolatry, and offered public sacrifices, with great pomp, and at an immense cost, both to the Earth and to the Sun. And when he died he expressed no joy but in resting in the bosom of the Earth,

which he had honoured instead of God ; and his last wish was to be buried there, without anything to enclose his body.

Historians have not been sparing in their praises of Cyrus: many have reckoned him the best and wisest of *kings* ; but that which is the highest point of earthly greatness is nothing in comparison with that blessed hope of resurrection, which belongs to the weakest believers in the Lord Jesus Christ ; and how can any be truly wise without the Spirit of "the only wise God" !

Cyrus died, B. C. 529.

CHAP. XXXVII.

THE REIGNS OF CAMBYSES AND SMERDIS.

IN the first year of the reign of Cyaxares, or Darius, at Babylon, Daniel told him that there should yet stand up *three* kings in Persia, and the *fourth* should be richer than they all ; and by his strength, through his riches, he should *stir up all* against the realm of Grecia.

We have considered the history of the first of these kings, in the person of Cyrus ; it remains for us to notice the others.

Cambyses* succeeded his father Cyrus, B. C. 529.

His reign was one course of mad and wicked actions ; he caused the most dreadful murders to be committed, and even sacrificed his own brother, Smerdis, for fear he should disturb his kingdom. Other crimes, of which he was guilty, are too horrible to be named. He made war on the Egyptians without any cause ; and though his ways were as wicked as theirs, he ridiculed their strange religion, and took advantage of their foolish superstitions in making himself master of the country. Amasis, the successor of Hophra, had reigned forty years, and was succeeded by Psammenitis. He came out with an army against Cambyses ; but the latter, knowing that the Egyptians worshipped four-footed creatures, placed

* Cambyses is called Ahasuerus (Ezra iv. 4, 6). The Temple went on very slowly in his reign.

cats, dogs, and other animals, in front of his troops, so that the Egyptians dared not to fling a dart, or shoot an arrow, for fear of wounding their gods. Psammenitis was slain, and all Egypt fell into the power of the conqueror. He robbed all their rich temples; and at Memphis, killed with his own hand, a bull which was worshipped as a god under the name of Apis. Cambyses then went forward in the hope of subduing the Ethiopians, who were at that time a strong nation; but many thousands of his men were buried in the sand of the desert, with which a violent wind overwhelmed them; and the rest were brought to such extremity through hunger, that after feeding on their beasts of burden, they agreed that every tenth man should be killed for food! At this very time, the king, in his wicked selfishness, kept a number of camels for his own use, loaded with every delicacy. At last he returned to Thebes, having lost the greater part of his army in this mad expedition. There, the news reached him that Smerdis had been proclaimed king of Persia in his absence: and as he knew his own brother of that name had been murdered, he was sure the usurper must be one of the Magi, or priests, whose ears he had formerly caused to be cut off, and resolved to return home to expose him. However he was not permitted to do so; for in mounting his horse, his sword slipped out of the scabbard, and wounded him so severely that he died soon after. The Egyptians, in their attachment to their false religion, believed that this was a judgment upon Cambyses for the murder of Apis, which they considered the most wicked of all his actions.

The priests of Persia formed one tribe of the people, and had great influence through their superior learning; but all their boasted wisdom only increased the darkness of the people. It appears that they were established by Zoroaster the First about 1104 B.C., and of his doctrine I have spoken before. From the arts of the Magi arose the use of the term Magicians, usually applied to those who do wonderful things, which cannot be accounted for in any natural way; but when these arts are not merely tricks, we can only believe that they are practised by the power of the devil. These Magi taught, at least up to the time of Smerdis, that

the Evil Spirit was to be worshipped as well as the Good Spirit. Smerdis concealed himself as much as possible in his palace, that it might not be known he was a Magian, and he did everything to win the affections of the people. He is mentioned, under the name of Artaxerxes (Ezra iv. 7—24), as listening to the complaints of the Samaritans against the Jews; and forbidding them to proceed with the building of the Temple.

At the end of seven months the Persian nobles discovered that the king was not the son of Cyrus, by finding that he had lost his ears; he was put to death, and one of them contrived to make himself king. This was Darius Hystaspes, the *fourth* king mentioned by Daniel. At this time a great number of the Magi were destroyed, because Smerdis had been one of them; and they were therefore suspected of seeking the civil, as well as religious government of the people. A second Zoroaster now arose, who professed to reform the religion of the Magi. He taught that there was one self-existent God from all eternity; and under him two angels, one of darkness, the other of light, continually struggling with each other. He held that there would be a general resurrection and day of judgment, at the end of which the angel of light and his disciples would go to a world of their own, where they should receive the reward of their deeds in everlasting light; and the angel of darkness and his disciples should suffer everlasting darkness and punishment in a world of their own: and light and darkness be separate for all eternity. There can be no doubt that these doctrines were partly learned from the Jews, with whom Zoroaster II. might have had frequent intercourse.

Darius Hystaspes began to reign, B.C. 522. Susa was at this time the royal city of Persia; and immense treasures were collected there. The province around it was called Susiana. Before I give you the history of Darius we must consider the progress of other nations since the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

END OF KINGLY GOVERNMENT AT ROME.

THE Romans had little intercourse during this age with other nations : they had no ships, and were only thought of as barbarians, by the Greeks. Yet it is said that there were eighty thousand men in Rome capable of bearing arms, only one hundred and seventy-five years after the city was built ; that is, in the reign of Servius Tullius, who succeeded his father-in-law, Lucius Tarquinius, B. C. 573. This king divided the people into six classes, according to their wealth ; and each class into centuries or hundreds, headed by centurions, who took the command in time of war. He made a law also, that all the citizens should assemble once in five years,* in a plain called Campus Martius, in complete armour, to give an account of their families and fortunes.

Servius had married his two daughters to the sons of the late king, hoping to secure peace ; but the pairs were ill suited for each other, being of the most contrary dispositions. The younger, Servia Tullia, murdered her own husband ; and the elder was murdered by young Tarquin, to whom she had been married. Servia and Tarquin were then united, and being hardened in crime, caused the king to be put to death in the public streets ; and the former ordered her chariot-driver to pass over her father's dead body as it lay in the way. Even the consciences of the heathen were shocked by such unnatural wickedness, and spoke of the guilty pair with the greatest abhorrence. Their throne, which they sought to establish with blood, could not stand. Tarquinius was surnamed Superbus, or the Proud, by his subjects : and after groaning under his tyranny a little while, one Junius Brutus, stirred them up to seek freedom, and Tarquinius was driven out of Rome, B. C. 509.

Kingly government was thus ended, and the people agreed to choose two magistrates, year by year, called Consuls. This arrangement was made whilst Darius Hystaspes was reigning in Persia.

A similar struggle for liberty was taking place in Greece

* This period was called a Lustrum, and was one mode of measuring time, used by the Romans.

the same year ; and we may now consider the state of that country.

CHAP. XXXIX.

THE STATES OF GREECE.

IN the Eastern countries, in those great empires which we have been considering, we have seen the absolute rule of one man, and the submission of the rest. That one was to be obeyed and gratified at any cost, let the others suffer what they might. The subjects of Nebuchadnezzar, and his successors, and even those of Cyrus and his followers, were little better than slaves. There was nothing like cultivation of mind among them, and when the desires of the body were satisfied, they were content. In Greece we perceive a very different state of things ; the desires of the *mind* seemed uppermost, and much more strength of spirit and independence of character appeared among the multitude. Hence the states, one after another, shook off kingly government, and established one more suited to their tastes.

In this evil world it will be ever a matter of dispute amongst men, which is the best mode of government ; but the Christian need not concern himself about it, but only submit to that under which he may be placed, and be subject to "the powers that be," as far as possible, without disobeying God (see Rom. xiii).

The last words of David, God's anointed king, seem to be the revelation of God's mind upon this subject (2 Sam. xxiii. 1—5) ; "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God : and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds," &c. None could ever answer to this description but Christ himself, whose reign we wait ; and David, under a deep sense of his own short-coming, adds, "Although *my house* be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant : " and in that covenant, Christ was promised as his **SEED**, the Head of an everlasting kingdom.

We cannot expect a perfectly Just Ruler till he comes ; for he is "the Holy One, and the Just : " and "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not."

The object of the Greeks was to make themselves great and happy in this world, and to mend or conceal the evils which they could not help discovering were common to human nature.

The Spartans, we have seen, thought health and strength of body the great good, and their liberty the dearest possession. But the freedom they enjoyed themselves, they were not willing to grant to others; they would willingly have taken the whole power of Greece into their own hands, and it was their great ambition to keep at the head of all the other states.

The superiority boasted by Athens, was in the intelligence and cultivation of mind common to all its citizens; so that it was called, "one of the eyes of Greece," and "the school of the world." Their power consisted chiefly in their fleet; and though they did not seek to extend their dominions, they were most anxious to defend them. The chief governor was elected yearly, and called the Archon. Solon was chosen to this office, B.C. 594; and put forth his celebrated laws, which were the foundation of the Roman laws, and afterwards of the civil laws established throughout Europe. He encouraged industry; protected agriculture and trade; and secured the rights of property. Life was only to be forfeited upon the commission of murder; and for all other offences there were different degrees of punishment. While Solon was absent, visiting Egypt and Lydia, Pisistratus, his cousin, usurped the chief power at Athens; and at his return, not being able to persuade him to give it up, he left the city in disappointment, and never returned to witness the evils he could not prevent.

Pisistratus was called a tyrant, a name given by the Greeks to all who held supreme power; but it appears that he was very popular and moderate. He died in peace after a reign of thirty years, and left the sovereignty to his sons Hippias and Hipparchus, B.C. 526. The latter was killed in a tumult some years after; and Hippias becoming really a tyrant, and using his power very cruelly, was driven out of Athens the same year in which Tarquin was expelled from Rome, B.C. 509.

The latter employed himself in exciting the king of

Etruria to make war with the Romans; and Hippias, having taken refuge at the Persian court, took the first opportunity of trying to revenge himself upon the Athenians.

CHAP. XL.

REIGN OF DARIUS HYSTASPES.

THE history of the kings of Persia comes to us entirely through the Greeks, as that preserved in their own country is so mixed with poetry, that it seems hopeless to attempt to find out the truth it contains. However in one point it is a help to us at this time. It has long been a matter of dispute among the learned, whether Hystaspes, or a later king, is the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. The native history inclines one to think it was not Hystaspes; therefore I shall pursue his story, only remarking that it was he who admitted the seven nobles, who had united with him against Smerdis, into close friendship; and hence probably arose the custom of having seven princes as councillors, which was common with his successors (Esther i. 14). At the beginning of his reign the governor of the province of Judea sent a letter, telling him of the work that had been carried on by the elders of the Jews, and how it had been hindered; asking him whether it was true that Cyrus had given any command to them, as they said, for building their Temple (Ezra v). Darius caused the rolls at Babylon to be searched; but the decree of Cyrus was found among those at Ecbatana in Media. Having read it, he desired that with all speed the Jews should be furnished with everything that they needed to complete the Temple, and to offer the sacrifices. The seventy years of desolation were fulfilled, B. C. 518; and from that period the building went on prosperously, and was finished in the sixth year of Darius, B. C. 516. During this period the inhabitants of Babylon revolted; and for eighteen months the Persians made every effort to regain this strong city. In the providence of God, it appears that all the Jews had the opportunity of leaving Babylon before this second siege, when much heavier punishment was to fall upon it (Jer. li. 44—47) than that inflicted by Cyrus. As a proof of the desperate wickedness of the

Babylonians at this time, it is said that they killed all the inhabitants who could be of no use in defending the city, in order that their provisions might last a longer time.

Zopyrus, a Persian nobleman, seeing the vexation of his king in not being able to retake Babylon, thought of a plan for delivering it into his hands. He wounded himself severely, and had his own nose and ears cut off: in this state he told the king he should present himself before the city, begging them to receive him as one who had been thus treated by Darius. The citizens believed his story, and opened a gate to let him enter. He soon obtained their confidence; and under pretence of leading a party of soldiers to attack the troops on the outside, he opened a way for Darius to come in with his whole army. The walls and gates were broken down, and the Babylonians slain without any mercy; but the king was heard to say, that he would rather have lost a hundred Babylons than that his friend Zopyrus should have gone through such suffering; and he heaped upon him all the honours he could bestow on a subject.

This instance of self-devotion for an earthly master may put to shame any of the servants of Christ, who shrink from suffering for His sake who has promised they shall be glorified and reign with Him.

Darius next endeavoured to subdue the Scythians; but those wild people fled before him, and stopped up the springs to prevent a pursuit. The whole army was in danger of perishing: and it is said that Darius himself would have died of thirst in this barren country, if it had not been for a camel laden with water, which followed him in his perilous march. In remembrance of this, upon his safe return home, he set aside a portion of land, the profits of which were to be used for the animal's provision as long as it lived.

In the thirteenth year of his reign he fitted out a fleet and army against India; and his riches were greatly increased by gaining a part of that country. But, never satisfied with conquest, he set his heart upon Greece, and only wanted an opportunity to invade it. This he thought was justly given him, when the Athenians burnt Sardis, because the governor of that city had protected their exiled tyrant, Hippias, and

wished to force them to receive him again as their king. From that time Darius was wholly bent in stirring up all his subjects, and preparing to make war upon Greece; and in order to induce the people of New Tyre to assist him with their ships, he gave them permission to have a king of their own, and restored all the privileges enjoyed by the old city. It is said, Darius required one of his officers to cry out to him every night at supper-time, "Sire, remember the Athenians." Thus revenge as well as ambition, led to a long and bloody war, which was only to end in the destruction of the second Great Empire. The first expedition was unsuccessful; but Darius thinking that the inexperience of his son-in-law, Mardonius, had caused the defeat of the Persian fleet, resolved to send his best generals, Datis and Artaphernes, at the head of a more powerful armament. But first, in the pride of the greatest monarch in the world, he sent heralds into Greece, demanding from the different states a portion of earth and water, by way of confession that he was their lord by land and sea. It is said, the Athenians cast the messengers into a ditch, desiring them to take earth and water from thence; and Darius was so enraged at their boldness, that he sent off his fleet and army at once, desiring them to burn Athens—to carry chains enough for the prisoners—and marble to erect a monument of the victory he was so sure they would obtain. Hippias promised to lead the Persians against his countrymen, and actually brought them into a large plain near the little village of Marathon, in Attica, not far from Athens. There the Athenians came out only ten thousand in number, to meet a hundred thousand of their enemies. The Spartans intended to join them; but as it was their custom not to march till the moon was at the full, they did not come in time. But the Athenian warriors, under the command of Miltiades and Themistocles, attacked their enemies with such fury, and terrified them so much by their stern countenances, and resolute conduct, that they fled to their ships, after many thousands had been killed on the plain. The Greeks were fighting for their lives and their country, whilst the Persians were away from their homes, and only fought as slaves obeying a hard master; besides, they had only been accustomed

to combat with the Eastern nations, who resembled themselves, and little expected the bold resistance that they met with from these hardy Grecians.

But whatever natural cause may be given for the event of this battle, we cannot but trace the over-ruling hand of God, who had purposed that the Persian empire should come to an end, as well as that of Assyria.

The battle of Marathon took place, B. c. 490.

Darius renewed his preparations against Greece, and resolved to go thither in person; but death prevented, and he died in the same spirit in which he had lived, leaving as his last command to his son and successor, Xerxes, that he should not fail to subdue the Grecian states. (B. c. 485.)

CHAP. XLI.

GREEKS AND PERSIANS.

THE Greeks were now rising into the greatest earthly fame; their wealth and commerce, as well as their success in arms, gave them a name in the world: and still more, the excellence that they had attained in all the arts and sciences. Poetry, painting, and music, came almost to perfection in Greece; and no country ever equalled it in sculpture. Oratory, or the art of public speaking, was also much cultivated, as it was very important in influencing the opinions of the people, who had so large a share in the government. But whilst all these things gained for them the admiration of the world, and a fame that is not forgotten at the present day, what was their state towards God?

If a battle were gained, they said, Mars, the god of war, had favoured them; if a man spoke well, Mercury, the god of eloquence, had helped him, and so on. Every science, every natural object, and even the faculties of the mind, had deities peculiar to them, and God, the Creator of all, was forgotten.

The very richness of the gifts of God in this fair land, and the beauty of mind which distinguished the people, makes the history of all only more sad; because the Giver was, as it were, entirely shut out, and the powers of Satan willingly

submitted to in his stead. Again, looking upon these famous Greeks merely as men, living without God in the world, their actions and conduct cannot be viewed with approbation, even in the light they had, and it is by that we must measure them; for "*the times of this ignorance God winked at,*" that is, he did not send destroying judgments upon them, and deal with them as he did with the Jews: though, as many as sinned without law, perished without law.

It is a singular and instructive fact, that the Greeks who boasted most of their great men and able warriors, treated them during their lives with the greatest ingratitude; and we see in their history how hard is the service of the world and the devil.

Miltiades, for instance, who was so much honoured after his victory at Marathon, was soon afterwards falsely accused; and so heavily fined that he died in prison, unable to pay the sum required. Aristides too, another Marathon general, was banished from Athens for recommending an aristocratical form of government: that is, that a few of the noblest of the people should be the chief rulers. In those days, when attachment to their native place seemed one of their strongest feelings, banishment was a grievous punishment; and in the Grecian states the people used this means of getting rid of any whom they feared would obtain too much power. At Athens, the mode of banishment was called ostracism, from the kind of shell on which the name of the condemned person was written by those who desired to give their judgment against him. These shells were collected and counted, and the number of them decided the sentence. It happened that Aristides was asked to write his own name on a shell by a citizen who did not know him, and could not write himself. "Has he done you any harm?" asked Aristides; "No," replied the man, "but I am tired of hearing him called the Just." Aristides, upon this, quietly did as he was desired; and, satisfied with his own character, went into banishment. Thus, wherever there was even a glimmer of light, or superior uprightness, it was hated.

But the Greeks in their selfishness were soon glad to recall Aristides; as they were threatened with an invasion by the whole force of Persia. Xerxes had sought the help

of the Carthaginians, who had become very powerful by their conquests in Spain, Africa, &c. ; and they promised to attack the Greek colonies which were prospering in Sicily and Italy. It seemed, indeed, as if the chief part of the world were interested in the dreadful struggle between the Greeks and Persians.

It has been stated that Xerxes arrived at Thermopylæ, a narrow pass in the mountains of Thessaly, with more than two millions of men ; but it is probable that the numbers were greatly exaggerated by the Greek writers, who wished to exalt the bravery of their countrymen. The kings of Thrace and Macedon had however submitted to the Persian king : and his vast army had increased by the way. Strange stories are told of the pride and pomp of Xerxes, of which the following is an example. In order to transport his troops from Asia into Europe, he ordered a temporary bridge to be formed of boats linked together, reaching about a mile across the Hellespont, now the straits of Dardanelles. But this bridge being carried away by the current, it is said that he beheaded the workmen, scourged the sea, and had fetters thrown into it that it might not rebel against him again. A stronger bridge of boats was built, and the whole army were permitted to pass safely ; but how little did they think it was for their own destruction !

Four thousand Spartans, commanded by Leonidas, one of their kings, posted themselves at Thermopylæ, in the clefts of the rocks, to hinder the progress of the Persians. There they stood, hard and immovable as those very rocks ; and when called to deliver up their arms, Leonidas replied with contempt, "Come and take them." For three days they kept their ground ; and thousands of the Persians were killed by the stones, arrows, &c. which they flung from the heights. At last a deserter showed their enemies a by-path to the mountains above them ; and from thence they were overcome by numbers. On the same day the Persian fleet was defeated, B. C. 480.

Xerxes and his host passed onwards ; but when they arrived at Athens, most of the inhabitants had escaped in their ships, by the advice of Themistocles ; as he told them that the oracle which had said they should be saved by

“wooden walls,” signified their vessels by that expression. But some stayed behind, and fortified themselves within palisades: these were all destroyed, and the city burnt. The Persians laid waste the country: but their triumph was short, and they were finally defeated in a naval battle near Salamis. The Athenians were masters of the sea; and even the Phœnician and Egyptian fleet, on the side of Xerxes, could do little against them. It must have been a dreadful sight to have seen the narrow sea in which they fought strewn with wrecks and floating carcases; and it is not surprising that the Persian king immediately ordered his army to retreat. The greater part perished from famine and plague before they reached the Hellespont; and Xerxes passed into Asia in a fishing boat, leaving a few troops, which were soon after defeated by the Greeks at Plataea in Bœotia: the remainder of the fleet was destroyed the same day at Mycale, a promontory of Asia.

Xerxes, being disappointed by the end of this war, made no farther attempt upon Greece, but gave himself up to sensual pleasures: his conduct was hateful to all his subjects, and he was at length murdered by his chief favourite Artabanus. This man tried to persuade the king's third son, Artaxerxes, that his elder brothers were guilty of this deed; and upon this pretence he caused them to be put to death, and then by the destruction of Artabanus also, established himself in the empire, B. C. 473. Thus we find the lust of power continually leading to bloodshed: and when the Lord said, “Thou shalt not *covet*,” his law struck at the very root of sin, which is in the first desire of the heart. Artaxerxes was surnamed Longimanus, on account of his arms: for it is said that his hands touched his knees when he was standing upright. The Persian historians call their king Ardeshir (which seems to resemble Ahasuerus), Dirazdest, or Long-handed; and say that he married a beautiful damsel, named Esther, whom he found among the Jewish captives. This record leads to the conclusion that Artaxerxes Longimanus is the king Ahasuerus of the book of Esther. The extent of his dominions also agrees with the Scripture account. In the days of Cyrus, the Persian empire was divided into one hundred and twenty provinces; and the conquests

of Cambyses, who reached the borders of Ethiopia, and of Darius, who extended his dominion to India, might well have swelled these provinces to the number of a hundred and twenty-nine (see Esther i. 1).

And as it is said that the king of Persia married Esther in the seventh year of his reign, it is possible that Mordecai might have been encouraged to present her to the king on account of the favour he had shown to the Jews just before: for in that same year Ezra was permitted to depart from Babylon, which was again a quiet settlement, with the few hundreds of his brethren whom he could collect (Esther ii. 16; Ezra vii. 8, &c.). In the twelfth year, the danger and deliverance of the Jews took place (Esther iii. 3); and at the close of this interesting fragment of history, it is said, "Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus; and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, *seeking the wealth of his people*, and speaking peace to all his seed." It can then be easily understood that Nehemiah, a Jew, should have been cup-bearer, which was a high office at the Persian court (Esther i. 2—8; Neh. i. 1).

The fact, that the officers were not obliged to *compel* any one to drink, but that the law was, that out of the abundance each should take what he pleased, shows that a godly man might have been in such an office without sin, as he need not encourage drunkenness. Nehemiah, too, especially mentions, that when he presented his request to the king that he might go to assist in rebuilding Jerusalem, the queen was sitting by him. This occurred in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes,* B. C. 453. Nehemiah's complaint was, that the *wall* of Jerusalem was broken down; and when Artaxerxes sent captains of the army, and horsemen with him, and he came to Jerusalem, his object was to view the wall; and the first thing done under his direction was *the wall* (Neh. i. 3; ii. 13; and iii).

* This date is important, because of the revelation to Daniel concerning Christ (Dan. ix. 35). From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, and the building of *the wall* in troublous times, till the cutting off of Messiah, sixty-nine weeks of years, *i. e.* four hundred and eighty-three years, should pass away; and it is at the close of this period Christ was rejected by the Jews.

I have now considered the history of Artaxerxes, as far as we can gather it from the Scriptures. The accounts given by the Grecian historians prove that he was just the person who would put to death any who displeased him, or came into his presence unbidden (Esther iv. 11); and that Nehemiah had cause to be *very* sore afraid in making his request, and to pray that he might find *mercy* in the sight of this man, and also to own such a king's grant as being only according to the good hand of God, who can turn any heart whithersoever he will.

Themistocles, the Athenian, having been banished from Greece, found safety at the court of Artaxerxes, and was treated with the greatest honour: but when, some years after, he was required by that king to lead an army against his own country, he poisoned himself to escape from obeying the command.

During the forty years' reign of Artaxerxes, the empire began to be shaken by rebellions in Egypt and elsewhere.

His son and successor, Xerxes II., was murdered in a state of drunkenness after reigning forty-five days. The revenger of his death, who reigned under the name of Darius Nothus, felt still more the trembling state of the empire. The Egyptians shook off the Persian yoke, and the Medes revolted.

He was succeeded by his son Artaxerxes Mnemon, B. C. 404. The horrible sins which now became common in the empire were enough to show that it could not last much longer; and in the royal family the measure of iniquity seemed to be almost full.

Cyrus, surnamed the Younger, the brother of Mnemon, to whom the command of Asia Minor had been given, desired to obtain the whole of his brother's dominions; and to that end procured a number of Grecian troops, under a false pretence, and led them against Artaxerxes. A battle was fought at Cunaxa, near Babylon; and in the midst of it, Cyrus attacked his brother in person, with the greatest fury, and was killed by the king's guards. The Greeks, finding themselves thus left in the midst of an enemy's country, chose Xenophon as their leader, and retreated safely to the number of ten thousand. It was a memorable escape, and

another proof of that skill in war for which they were so famous. They passed through the greatest perils, of which their leader wrote a spirited account; and describes the transport of joy with which they beheld the sea, as they approached the coasts of Asia.

Artaxerxes II. was continually at war with Egypt and Greece, till the latter end of his reign, when a Spartan ambassador procured peace by giving up to him the Greek cities in Asia. This peace-making was considered the greatest stain upon the glory of Greece, so contrary are the principles of the world to the principles of Christ! It is said that Artaxerxes II. died of grief, after the death of three of his sons, who perished in their violent struggles for the succession. The cruelties of Ochus, his successor, are too dreadful to relate; his barbarity filled the whole empire with misery. The many wives of the Persian kings, and the contentions of their numerous children for the throne, seemed to be the cause of such frequent murders in the royal family.

Bagoas, an Egyptian officer, poisoned Ochus, B. C. 338, and placed Darius Codomannus on the throne. For him also, he soon afterwards prepared a deadly draught; but being discovered, he was obliged to drink it himself. Of Darius, we shall hear much hereafter; but as the Persian empire is now drawing to its close, we must trace the rise of that which was to destroy and succeed it: and, in order to do this, it is necessary to consider the affairs of Greece a little more narrowly.

CHAP. XLII.

THE CHIEF MEN OF GREECE.

As some of the most extraordinary characters arose in Greece, from the time that the Persians were driven out of that country till the fall of the empire, I shall notice a few whose names are most familiar.

Athens was rebuilt, after it had been burnt by the command of Xerxes, and became the most splendid city of Greece; but it did not attain the height of its prosperity till the age of Pericles, about 440 B. C.: for as he had then

the chief power, he resolved to employ the public money in adorning the city; and in this, Phidias, the most celebrated Grecian sculptor, was his greatest help. Under his direction those beautiful buildings were erected, whose ruins still attract the admiration of travellers, as the finest in the world. The materials were found on the spot, and within a few years these works of art were completed. It is said that the Acropolis, or citadel of Athens, six miles in circumference, was filled with statues and paintings, celebrating the chief persons and events in Grecian history; but the Odeum, or musical theatre, and the Parthenon, or temple of Minerva, were the most elegant edifices. As I have observed before, in speaking of the Egyptian pyramids, these buildings were worse than useless. The beauty of the statues and temples caused the city to be "*wholly* given to idolatry;" and the performances in the theatres, of which the people were excessively fond, led to the grossest evils. Theatrical representations, still so common in our land, first began in Greece.

Thespis, the inventor of Tragedy, lived in the days of Solon; he composed verses descriptive of past events, which were to be sung by a set of actors, who imitated that which they described. Solon, upon seeing one of these plays performed, angrily struck his staff upon the ground, asking the performers how they dared to tell so many lies before such a company; and added that if they were pleased with falsehoods in jest, they would soon be careless about truth in serious matters. If such were the opinion of a heathen lawgiver, shall those who profess to know the God of Truth, be less wise!

The chief tragic poets were Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; their great aim was to stir up all the passions of the human heart, and especially terror and pity, by the representation of mournful and terrible events. Aristophanes introduced upon the theatre the opposite subjects, and tried to make everything appear ridiculous or amusing; he was the inventor of Comedy, and the foolish and wicked compositions called by this name, only increased the mischief. The manner in which the multitude were excited at the theatres, was one cause of the swift ruin even of the temporal

prosperity of Athens. But whilst we need not be astonished that those living without God in the world should find pleasure in such things as amuse the eye and ear, it is surprising that any Christians should be found taking delight in the theatre; and it can only be when the soul is so little occupied with the things above, that its desires are unsatisfied.

Pericles having adorned Athens, and raised it so high, tried to form all the Grecian states into one commonwealth, of which this city should be the head. But the Spartans were too proud to consent to such an arrangement; and the disputes that arose led to the Peloponnesian war, which lasted twenty-seven years! The general suffering during this period was immense. In the second year of it, the plague broke out at Athens in such a violent manner, that the best physicians * used their skill in vain. The very temples were filled with dead bodies, and the dying lay in the streets. The citizens soon became hardened, and lived in the most abandoned manner, careless of the sufferings of their nearest relations, or of approaching death.

Pericles, having lost all his family, was attacked with the disease; many stood round his bed praising his justice as a statesman, and relating his victories as commander by sea and land. The dying man exclaimed, "You forget the best part of my character; no action of mine ever caused a fellow-citizen to wear a mourning robe." These much admired words resemble the self-righteous cry of many a perishing sinner now-a-days, "I never did any body any harm;" as if a holy God could pass over their enmity against Him, and save them on account of that righteousness which he has declared to be as filthy rags.

All the other states had joined with Sparta to overthrow

* Hippocrates, the most eminent Greek physician, devoted himself entirely to the care of the sick, and was much famed for his skill. It is said, Æsculapius, who lived B. C. 1184, was the inventor of the art of physic; and on this account he was honoured as a demi-god, and a temple built to him, in which sacrifices were offered. Sick persons who had been cured, used to hang up tablets in this temple, descriptive of their disease, and the remedy they had used. Hippocrates profited greatly by copying out these prescriptions. The Babylonians anciently exposed their sick in the streets, in order that any passenger, who had suffered from the same disease, might point out a remedy.

the power of Athens ; and at length that city was besieged and taken by Lysander, the Spartan admiral. He caused the walls to be destroyed at the sound of music : thus can man rejoice over the sufferings and losses of his fellow-creatures. Thirty ferocious men became the tyrants of Athens, and in a short space put to death and banished some thousands of the citizens : blind to their own character, they caused Alcibiades, the Athenian general, to be destroyed, saying that he was a lion to be feared. Thrasybulus at length stirred up the citizens to expel the Thirty ; and the republican form of government was re-established. Soon after this, Socrates, the wisest of the Grecian philosophers, was condemned to death upon a false accusation. Such was the darkness around him, that the little light he held forth was hated, and his many enemies determined to put it out. He had been teaching in Athens for forty years ; and took every opportunity of instructing youth, in the streets, in public walks, and in every company. From his example we learn, that even the natural mind may arrive at many truths, such as the unity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the principles of morality ; but we see also that the natural mind cannot use these truths rightly. Though Socrates *knew* there was but one God, he went through all the ceremonies of idol-worship, and professed to hold the common creed of gross polytheism ; and it is said, his moral conduct was not unblameable. There appears also in his conversations, which were written by his disciples, Plato and Xenophon, such an entire self-satisfaction, and such an assurance of winning eternal blessedness by his righteous actions, that the difference is plain between the weakest believer in Christ, and the best of the heathen philosophers. He spent his last days, in prison, in instructing and comforting his friends. His sayings were carefully preserved, and certainly showed that his thoughts were far beyond all that passed through the minds of any of his countrymen. His friend Crito having asked, where he would be buried ? He replied, " Where you please, if you can lay hold of me ;" and turning to the others, said, " Crito imagines that the Socrates with whom he now converses, is the same as he whom he will soon see lying dead : he

confounds *me* with my carcase." His unjust judges had sentenced him to die by poison. When the cup of hemlock juice was brought him, he drank it cheerfully, whilst all his friends were weeping bitterly around him. He took a few turns, seeking to comfort them, and when one of his friends lamented that he should die *innocent*, he said, "You would not have me die *guilty*." On feeling the poison begin to affect his frame, he laid down on his bed and covered his face; but just before he died he called to Crito, "We owe a cock to Æsculapius, do not forget to pay it;" thus showing, by his last words, that he either believed in their false deities, or what was as bad, would not confess that he honoured one God. Socrates died at the age of seventy, B. C. 400.*

A few years after, the Athenians began to regret him, and being convinced that he had been unjustly condemned, they caused all his accusers to be put to death, raised a statue in remembrance of him, and some even worshipped him as a demi-god.

About this time a dreadful contest took place between the Thebans and Spartans. Agesilaus, king of Sparta, had enslaved the Thebans by the help of Persian power; but they were set free by Epaminondas, who defeated the Spartans at Leuctra, and again at Mantinea, where he was slain as the battle ended. This warrior is much celebrated as a patriot, or lover of his country; but in supporting this character he was led to acts of cruelty and injustice.

The Grecian states seemed now to be getting weary of their bloody struggles, and were desiring a union which might enable them to direct all their strength against Persia. In this state of things the Macedonian people, feeling their need of a leader, chose Philip as their king, B. C. 360. From the commanding position of Macedon, it was very natural that a warlike, ambitious monarch of that country, should first fix his eye on the goodly possessions of his southern neighbours; and Philip could not rest satisfied till he obtained the command of Greece. He only waited till another war had weakened the States still

* About the period of the last prophet of the Old Testament.

farther. This began B. C. 356. It was called the Sacred War, as it arose from a dispute about a piece of land belonging to the Temple at Delphi, which was ploughed up by the Phocians. It was little less bloody or rational, than the sacred wars of modern times, the Crusades.

A person at this time appeared at Athens, whose power Philip dreaded more than that of the Grecian warriors. This was Demosthenes, the orator. It is said, that he had naturally an imperfect utterance and weak lungs; but he overcame the first defect by speaking with pebbles in his mouth, and the latter by exerting his voice in walking up hill, or by the sea-shore, as he well said, the roar of the waves resembled the tumult of a popular assembly. He obliged himself to study without distraction, by having an underground chamber; and as it was the custom to wear beards, he shaved his, that he might not be tempted to go out till it was grown. The public speeches of Demosthenes are preserved as models of eloquence, and those in which he exposed the views of Philip of Macedon (called Philip-pics) are particularly admired. It was through the force of his oratory that all the Greeks were persuaded to league together against Philip; but when they met his army at Chæronea, in Bœotia, they were completely defeated, and thus he obtained the power that he desired, B. C. 338. His next object was to conquer Persia; and the Greeks being willing enough to help him in such an undertaking, he was appointed general of their united armies. But before they were ready to set out, Philip was stabbed as he was walking in an idolatrous procession; and some say, presenting himself as equal with the twelve chief gods of Greece, B. C. 336. The Athenians danced for joy, and crowned themselves with wreaths of flowers when they heard of his death; but their joy at the expectation of freedom was of short duration, for his son Alexander, who succeeded him as king of Macedon, soon showed that he would be the master of Greece. We must also look upon him as the head of "the third kingdom."

CHAP. XLIII.

THE MACEDO-GRECIAN EMPIRE.

"A third kingdom of brass which should bear rule over all the earth" (Dan. ii. 40). "The third beast like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl: the beast had also four heads, and dominion was given unto it" (vii. 6).

MANY stories of Alexander's childhood show how far the character is formed in early life; and how important it is that a young mind should be under right training. Olympias, his mother, was an imperious woman; and she and his father took pleasure in encouraging the high spirit of their daring boy. Once on hearing that his father had gained a victory he said sorrowfully, "He will leave me nothing to conquer." On another occasion, when Philip was about to send away a fine Thessalian horse because he was so wild that no one could mount him, Alexander begged to be allowed to try; and seeing the animal had been frightened by his own shadow, he turned his face to the sun, soothed him with his voice, and then springing on his back, managed him with the utmost ease. It is said that Philip exclaimed, "My son, seek another kingdom, Macedon is unworthy of thee." At the age of fifteen, the celebrated Grecian philosopher, Aristotle,* was engaged as his tutor; and for five years he paid great attention to his instructions, and revered him as another father, saying, "To one he was indebted for living, to the other for living well." But we shall see how little he had learned that lesson. Aristotle instructed Alexander not only to speak with elegance, but to think and reason; but his favourite study was Homer's Iliad, a work which helped to form his character and nurtured his love of war.

*Almost all the writings of Aristotle are in being; and his art of reasoning has been considered for ages, the fit study of the schools, and the model to be imitated. A clever writer has observed, Aristotle tried to establish the same dominion over men's minds, as his pupil over nations. The philosophy of Aristotle was triumphant, when Luther arose and showed its deceitfulness, boldly testifying that it was the ruinous study of his age, and entreating those around him to study the word of God.

Alexander had a taste for all the arts and sciences, and in one of his eastern expeditions employed a thousand men to collect specimens to help Aristotle in writing his work on natural history. Once, during his father's absence, some Persian ambassadors arrived at Macedon, and were astonished at the reception that they received from the young prince; for, instead of asking them such questions as they expected concerning the palaces and treasures of their king, which were the wonder of the world, he inquired the best road into Asia, the real strength of the kingdom, the character of the government, &c. On their return home they remarked, "That prince will be a wise king, our's will be a rich one." It seems that even then Alexander coveted the Persian empire, and made these inquiries to find out the probable success of endeavouring to obtain it. The account that he had heard of the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks, still more encouraged his hopes that even an inferior army might defeat the Persian host in their own country.

It is very probable that Olympias had some hand in the murder of Philip, with the wish to establish her son as king of Macedon; for as Philip had taken another wife, she feared she might lose her influence over him. Alexander, on coming to the throne, was only twenty years of age; and the northern nations, as well as the Greeks, thought it would be easy to overcome such a youthful monarch. But they were mistaken: with wonderful speed he subdued all the tribes between the Strymon and the Danube, and even conquered a barbarous people beyond that river. In the meantime, the Greeks excited by Demosthenes, took up arms; and the Thebans were the first to revolt from the Macedonian power. Alexander was soon before the gates of Thebes; stormed the city, levelled it with the ground, and slew or led captive all the inhabitants. In his love for poetry, the descendants of the poet Pindar, who lived there, were alone spared.

The other Grecian states were terrified, and sought for peace, which he easily granted, that they might forget his cruelty to the Thebans. Having thus become master of Greece, he called an assembly at Corinth, one of the most wealthy and powerful cities, and there he was chosen to

lead the united Greek forces to take revenge on their old enemies the Persians. It was at this time that Alexander visited the famous philosopher Diogenes, who was the chief of the sect called Cynics. They taught that the perfection of wisdom was in *wanting nothing*; and to prove themselves wise, went without any of the comforts of life; their dress neglected, their beards long, their persons dirty, and ridiculing all who valued money or any other possession. The king found the philosopher sitting in the tub which was his only dwelling place, as he thought such a shelter as he could carry about on his head was all that was needful. Alexander asked if he could do any thing for him. "Get out of my sunshine," was the only reply. Alexander, who wanted the whole world, was so struck with the state of one who wanted nothing, that he exclaimed, "If I were not Alexander I would be Diogenes." In these two characters, indeed, we see opposite extremes of folly, wise as they accounted themselves.

The young king of Macedon now went to the oracle at Delphi to inquire what would be the success of his arms in Asia; but the priestess told him that Apollo did not inspire her that day, and that she could not mount the tripod, the seat on which her answers were commonly given. But when the king took her by the arm, and would have forced her to the place: she cried out, "My son thou art invincible!" and Alexander replied, "It is enough, the oracle favours me!" and filled with confidence, he determined to set out immediately for Asia.

However, it was the living God who had revealed to a true prophet, more than two hundred years before, the events of these days and their certain termination (see Dan. viii. 1—8).

Daniel was at Susa, in a vision, in the third year of Belshazzar's reign: this spot was to be the seat of empire: and under the figure of a ram with two horns,* the higher coming up last, the Medo-Persian kingdom was plainly represented; for Media, the higher power, arose last. He

*Horns seem to be always the emblems of power, as the strength of the animal is in its horns.

saw this ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; and so have we traced the growth of this empire, till no kingdom could stand before the king of it, and none could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will and became great. And as we have been considering this, we behold, arising in the west, the rough goat, representing the king of Greece, and the great horn, Alexander, commonly called the Great (viii. 20—21). He comes into Persia in the fury of his power, and meets with no resistance until he has crossed the river Granicus. There, the Persian generals, at the head of a large army, sought to oppose the Greeks. Alexander exposed himself in the front of the battle, and the plume of feathers at the top of his helmet was struck off by a Persian's battle-axe; this was again raised to cut off his head, when his friend Clitus severed the arm which threatened the life of his king. The Greeks were few indeed compared with the Persian hosts; but the latter were less able to fight, having lost the vigour which had been gained by hardy training in the days of Cyrus. The Greeks, too, fought in all the strength of revenge, which is one of the most violent passions of the human heart: for they had been taught from their childhood to nurse in their bosoms the remembrance of the injuries done to their country by this foreign power during the last hundred years. After the battle of the Granicus, the conqueror pressed forwards, many cities yielding in his progress. Darius, who at first thought lightly of this invasion, now set out to resist Alexander in person. The order of his march has been minutely described; but I shall only mention that part of the procession which was most remarkable. Silver altars on which burned the fire that they worshipped, were borne foremost, attended by the Magi, and as many youths as there are days in the year, clad in scarlet robes. Then came the Immortal Band, so called because if any of them were killed the ranks were immediately filled by other men; they were chiefly the king's relations, and wore robes wrought with gold. Darius himself was seated in a golden chariot, his dress glittering with costly jewels. His wife and mother, with many other women, were in his train; and every luxury was provided even in the camp. Possibly

Darius thought to astonish and frighten away the invaders ; but this display only encumbered his army, and tempted forwards the Greeks who were greedy for the prey.

At Issus, a city of Cilicia, the two armies met, B.C. 333. The Persians were completely defeated; and Darius mounting a swift horse, fled to the mountains with a few troops, leaving his rich camp and his beloved family in the hands of the enemy. As soon as he was in safety, he sent a letter to Alexander, offering him an immense ransom for the captives, and a part of his empire ; he was induced to do this from hearing that the conqueror had treated his wife and mother with the greatest kindness. Alexander proudly replied, "That as the heavens could not bear two suns, neither could the earth suffer two kings." Upon this, Darius resolved to collect all his remaining forces, and try the event of another battle. It seems surprising that the invader should have left him time for this, as he might have pursued him immediately : and we can only trace in it the providence of God. He intended to use the ambition of this king to punish the wickedness of others besides the Persians, and also to show His absolute power in stopping the scourge whenever He pleased.

This we may learn by watching Alexander at Tyre and Jerusalem.

CHAP. XLIV.

ALEXANDER AT TYRE AND JERUSALEM.

As we have noted a second siege of Babylon, so have we to record a second siege of Tyre ; and even in these double judgments it does not seem that the whole of the wrath, declared in the word of God was poured out, but that something remains to be fulfilled in the day of coming judgment.

For seven months Alexander and his whole army were kept before the walls of Tyre, though Sidon and all the neighbouring country had submitted. The only way of reaching the city was by forming a causeway through the sea which separated it from the continent. It was no easy matter to unite an island with the shore half a mile distant ;

and none but Alexander would have made such an attempt. The ruins of Old Tyre and cedars from Lebanon were the principal materials of which this immense dyke was formed; and all the soldiers were employed by turns in the work. On one occasion the violence of the waves swept it away; at another time, burning torches, thrown down by the Tyrians, set it on fire. But Alexander still persevered: the work was begun with greater spirit, and whole trees were cast into the sea at once. As they approached nearer and nearer the city, the danger increased; for the Tyrians scarcely ceased to hurl down firebrands, arrows, and hot sand; mocking their endeavours all the time, and saying, it was a fine sight to see the conquerors of the world toiling like beasts of burden, and asking if Alexander were stronger than Neptune, that he dared to contend with the god of the sea. In the meantime Alexander was seeking to destroy the Tyrian fleet, which was now the best in the world: and in this he was permitted to succeed; for the Lord had purposed that this destroyer from the land of Chittim should stain the pride of all glory, by wasting the merchant city (see Isa. xxiii). But even Alexander would have withdrawn his men at last from the attack, had he not feared that it would prove to the world he was not invincible; for the sufferings under the walls of Tyre were dreadful. The greatest pain was occasioned by the burning sand thrown from above; this penetrated every crevice in the armour of the besiegers, so that many in their tortures threw themselves into the sea. At last the battering engines made a breach in the high wall, and Alexander was the first to enter the city. His army followed, and the slaughter was terrible; for after the Macedonians had indulged the fierceness of wild beasts, their king commanded two thousand Tyrians to be fixed on crosses all along the sea-shore, and the rest were sold as slaves. This was the work of Alexander, as the great scourge of God!

From Tyre, he marched towards Jerusalem, firmly resolved to show it no greater mercy; the Jews had offended him by not sending corn for his army when he demanded it; they said that they had promised fidelity to Darius, and therefore could not obey any other monarch whilst he lived.

In order to understand the state of the Jews at this time, it is necessary to trace their condition since the captivity, during the period that they were under the rule of the governor of Syria appointed by the kings of Persia. Among themselves the high-priest had the chief power; though even he himself felt the heaviness of a foreign yoke. In the days of Nehemiah, the Persian government was most favourable to the Jews, and the blessing of the Lord was upon them: but the state of things soon changed; for though they did not fall into idolatry again, sin reigned among them in other forms not less displeasing to the Lord. The returned remnant had bound themselves under a curse to walk according to the law of Moses (Neh. x.); but very shortly after, Nehemiah found even the high-priest, Eliashib, allied to a heathen; and many of the priests had taken strange wives, notwithstanding all the care of Ezra to prevent such unions. Moreover, the portions of the Levites had not been given them; and there were men in Judah treading wine-presses, &c. on the Sabbath-day. Nehemiah, on his second visit to Jerusalem, corrected these evils as far as he could: but Malachi, the last of the prophets (400 B. C.), had cause to expose the corruption of the people in the strongest language, and gave as the only reason why they were not destroyed altogether: "I AM THE LORD, I CHANGE NOT; THEREFORE YE SONS OF JACOB ARE NOT CONSUMED." A few faithful witnesses of God always remained among them, the Lord's special treasure (Mal. iii. 16—18): and now and then a light beamed forth which still distinguished them from all nations upon earth.

The high-priests, from the time of Nehemiah to that of Alexander, were as follows. Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua.* After the death of Joiada, his eldest son Johanan succeeded him, according to custom (B. C. 373); but it pleased Bagoses, the governor of Syria at that time, to appoint his younger son, Joshua, eight years afterwards. Johanan, however, would not give up the office; and as

* Neh. xii. 10, 11, 22. The names seem to have been placed here at some later period; as it is not likely that Nehemiah lived during their priesthood.

they were struggling together in the holy place for the right of performing the service, Joshua was killed by his brother. Bagoses hastened to Jerusalem to revenge this contempt for his authority, and forced his way into the Temple: for, on being told by the Jews that he could not go beyond the outer court, he exclaimed, "Am not I purer than a murderer?" However, he allowed Johanan to keep the high-priesthood, on condition that a tax should be paid on every lamb that was sacrificed: it was about thirty shillings of our money for each, and this seemed a heavier burden, because the Persian government had until then assisted in paying the expenses of the Temple worship. Notwithstanding this the Jews continued faithful subjects of the Persian empire; and Jaddua, who succeeded his grandfather Johanan (B.C. 341), was a godly man and strong in faith, giving glory to God.

When he heard that Alexander was on his way to Jerusalem, he desired the people to unite with him in prayer; and then, having a conscience void of offence, he determined to set out to meet the conqueror. He put on his priestly robes, and bound upon his forehead the plate of gold on which was engraved, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD:" he desired all the priests to follow him clothed in their white linen robes; and a number of the people in their train. The gates of Jerusalem were thrown open, and no preparation whatever was made, to resist the power of the Greeks.

As Alexander approached the city, he met this extraordinary procession; and by the restraining power of God, and to the surprise of all his followers, his fury was changed into quiet reverence, and he bowed to Jaddua with the greatest respect. Upon this, the Jews thronged round Alexander and expressed their good-will towards him; whilst he promised to favour them, in the expectation that they would be as faithful to him as they had been to the kings of Persia.

When one of his friends, in much astonishment, asked him the meaning of his change of purpose towards the Jews, he told him that, before he came into Asia, he had seen in a vision a man dressed in those very robes, who told him to proceed without fear, as he should get the victory: he therefore believed that he was made the minister of the God.

of the Jews, and should surely conquer the Persians. He then walked into Jerusalem in the midst of the priestly band, and offered sacrifices in the Temple according to the manner appointed for strangers. It is said that Jaddua told him of the prophecy of Daniel concerning his conquest of Persia. During this visit he bid the Jews ask any favour they pleased: they requested liberty to follow the customs of their fathers, and especially desired freedom from tribute every seventh year, as they were forbidden to sow their fields that year, and could therefore have no harvest from which to raise the money. The latter request is much to be observed; because they had neglected that part of the law before the captivity, so that their land was left desolate seventy years to make up for the neglected sabbaths (2 Chron. xxxvi. 21).

The high-priest also desired Alexander to allow the Jews in Babylonia and Media to live according to their laws. All these requests were granted; and the king added, that any Jews who would serve in his army should observe their own customs undisturbed.* Thus the name of God was made known also to the head of the Third Great Empire, though he used this knowledge no better than those who had gone before him; and it only seems to blacken the evil of the rest of his course.

CHAP. XLV.

ALEXANDER'S CONQUESTS.

As if to prove that the moderation of Alexander at Jerusalem, and his humanity to the Jews, was the effect of the restraining power of God put forth to save his people, the conqueror never appears more barbarous than immediately before and after his visit to that city. It seemed even as if

* I have followed the story of Josephus, the Jewish historian, as to the leading facts of Alexander's conduct towards the Jews, and his remarkable interview with Jaddua. Herodotus just notices, that the governors of certain cities in Judah came out to meet Alexander with fillets round their heads; whereby he seems to describe the linen mitres.

all the moral lessons of Aristotle were forgotten, and his passions left without control.

Irritated by a severe wound that he received in besieging Gaza, a fortified city, before which he was stopped on his way into Egypt, he treated the governor with the fiercest cruelty, causing a rope to be passed through his heels, whereby he was fastened to a chariot, and dragged round the walls till he died. Such was Alexander the Great! He did not consider that this poor man had done no more for the king of Persia, than he would have expected from him had he himself been his master. After this he possessed himself of Egypt without opposition; and whilst there visited a temple in the Lybian deserts, which was probably one of the most ancient in the world, as it is supposed to have been built in honour of Ham, the inventor of idolatry. The object of Alexander in taking this dangerous journey across the burning sands, was to obtain the title of the son of Jupiter Ammon, the god who was worshipped there: for he had read in Homer's poems that all the great warriors were sons of some god. Thus, even among the heathens, the title of the sons of God was considered the highest dignity; and well might the beloved disciple say to his fellow-believers, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that *we* should be called the sons of God" (1 John iii. 1).

When Alexander reached the oasis, or green spot in the desert, on which the temple stood, he found the oracle willing enough to bestow on him the title that he desired, and to reply, as he wished, that he should be the monarch of the universe: for the crafty priests knew what would gratify his vanity. Thenceforth, he began all his letters and decrees, "Alexander, king, son of Jupiter Ammon."

The only use of this journey was the discovery of a situation on the coast which he saw would be very advantageous for the purposes of commerce; and there he laid down a plan for a city to be called after his own name. This was the origin of Alexandria; and he attracted many Jews to settle in his new city by offering them great privileges.

Having heard that Darius was raising an immense army

in the province of Babylon, Alexander determined to go to meet him there; knowing that he had prevented any attack upon Greece by getting the command of the neighbouring sea-coast. In his progress towards Assyria the wife of Darius died. She had been constantly treated with the greatest respect; and Alexander permitted her to be buried in the Persian manner with every mark of honour. When this news reached Darius, he was heard to say, that if his empire must end, he wished that none but Alexander might mount the throne of Cyrus. The Greeks proceeded until they reached the Tigris, the most rapid river of the East: Alexander was the first who gained the opposite bank, and his army followed with great difficulty. As they were resting a while to recover their fatigue, an eclipse of the moon caused great alarm; and the Macedonian soldiers complained bitterly that they had been dragged so far against the will of the gods: rivers opposed their progress, the moon was darkened, and only deserts lay in their front, whilst so many thousands had shed their blood to satisfy the ambition of one man who wished to pass for a god! Few of his followers, indeed, had anything of the spirit of Alexander: for he was one of those characters who have appeared from time to time upon the earth, showing forth, as it were, the energy of him who was a murderer from the beginning, and thus leading multitudes to destruction. On this occasion Alexander desired some Egyptians in his service to satisfy the minds of his countrymen; and although they well knew the cause of the eclipse, they were persuaded to tell the Macedonians that the moon was on the side of the Persians, and they would surely be conquered because she was darkened.

Upon hearing this, the superstitious soldiers were filled with extraordinary boldness, and their success agreed with their certain expectation of it: they marched onwards, and though Darius met them, near the city of Arbela, with ten times their number, they were completely victorious; and the Persian king again fled, leaving an immense spoil for the enemy, B. C. 330.

It is said, the multitude of dead bodies so corrupted the air, that a dreadful disease began to spread in the camp of

the conqueror, and he was obliged to move onwards. At Babylon he was received as a sovereign; and amidst the luxuries for which that city was always famous, his army would have rested from the fatigues of war: but there were farther conquests in Alexander's mind, and still richer possessions in view. Susa with its immense treasures fell into his hands; and amidst the spoil a vast quantity of that costly purple dye, which was the rarest product of the East. But Persepolis was the richest and largest city in the empire; and in taking possession of it such horrible cruelties were committed that the streets flowed with blood. One evening, as the conqueror was feasting with his court, crowned with flowers, and drinking to excess, a wicked woman in the company proposed that they should burn the palace of the Persian kings, to celebrate the victories of Alexander. Like a madman he rose from the table, the whole party following him with singing and dancing: he seized a torch and set fire to the palace, and others doing the same to the neighbouring buildings, all was soon in a blaze. Alexander then regretted his folly, but it was too late to save Persepolis.

In the meanwhile Darius had fled from place to place with a few faithful followers: but he was at length taken prisoner and put in chains by some traitors, the chief of whom, Bessus, one of his generals, wished to make himself king. As Alexander was pursuing them, Darius entreated that they would leave him to the mercy of an enemy who was of a more generous character. The traitors were so enraged by this request, that they threw their darts at him, and left him covered with wounds. A Macedonian soldier was the first to discover the Persian king in this wretched state, and received from him his dying message to Alexander, thanking him for his kindness to his family, and begging him to revenge his death. It is said that the king of Macedon came up soon after, and shed tears on finding Darius already dead: he threw his own cloak over the corpse, and sent it to the queen-mother for burial. Such moments have there been in the lives of all conquerors, when the natural conscience seems to be touched by the consequences of their ambition, and yet such convictions do not check their progress.

In Darius, the thirteenth king from Cyrus, the Persian empire ended.

CHAP. XLVI.

DEATH OF ALEXANDER, AND THE DIVISION OF
THE EMPIRE.

ALEXANDER did not fail to revenge the death of Darius, at the same time holding himself guiltless, though he had been the chief cause of the miseries and ruin of the king of Persia. After seizing Bessus, he put him to torture, and then gave him up to the mother of Darius. It is said that she caused his arms and legs to be fastened to four trees, which had been bent and tied together by a rope; thus when the rope was cut, and the trees returned to their natural position, the body was torn in four pieces. The more cruel the punishment, the more gratifying it was supposed to be, to the spirit of the departed which was to be revenged; and the most devilish inventions for the torture of criminals were used among the heathens on this account.

During Alexander's conquests in Asia, the Spartans had been seeking to free themselves from the dominion of Antipater, the officer left to govern them in the king's absence from Macedonia; but the struggle ended in their subjection, and this was hastened by the death of Agis their last king. Thus the empire of Alexander was extending and strengthening; and though his army desired to return home, his personal influence induced them to follow him still farther. The barbarous nations around the Caspian sea, and even the wild Scythians, were obliged to submit to his power; and he subdued the Indians as far as the Indus. There the Macedonians absolutely forced their leader to end his conquests, declaring that they would not go on; and after raising a monument in remembrance of his victories, and receiving the tribute and respect of the surrounding nations, he offered to lead them back. At Babylon they rested; and Alexander formed many plans for keeping the vast empire that he had obtained, and for uniting his subjects by the same laws and manners. To this end he married Roxana and Statira, the daughters of Darius; and all his favourite officers took Persian wives on the same day. He also adopted the Persian customs, and especially their habit of drinking to excess. At one of these drunken feasts he killed his friend

Clitus, with his own hand, because he refused him the praise he desired; and at another time he caused a philosopher, who was the wisest man in the court, to be put to death because he had prevented the Macedonians from burning incense to him. His great ambition was to be looked upon as a god; but while he was indulging the proudest thoughts, and planning great works at Babylon, which he intended as the capital of his empire, he was attacked with a fever. He who thought he could govern the world was now found unable to govern his own appetites; for he could not give up the use of wine, and thereby increased the fever to such a degree that it caused his death. He died in the thirty-third year of his age, and the thirteenth of his reign, B. C. 324.

It cannot be denied that Alexander was a very remarkable character; but throughout his history we perceive that he was *great* in the devil's service, and not made so by God. I omit the sad details of the bloody and violent deeds, which swept away thousands, and would dwell a little on the ruined fragments of that image in which man was made; for in Alexander such may be traced. His conduct towards the family of Darius, and his treatment of the nations that came under his government, showed that there were generous and kindly feelings in his heart: and many of his sayings prove that his natural affections were very strong. It is said, that having received a letter from Antipater, complaining that Olympias had taken too much power during his absence, he exclaimed, "A mother's tears can do away with a thousand such letters." Again, when some one sent him word that his friend and physician was bribed to poison him by the Persians, he kept the letter till he brought a draught; and whilst he swallowed it, passed it to him to read, proving to his astonished friend that he could not suspect him. There are many similar anecdotes; but I stop here, feeling how melancholy it is that the enemy of God should get such full possession of His own beautiful work the human soul, as to alienate it entirely from Him. The Spirit of life, which is in Christ Jesus, can alone restore any soul to God.

Just before his death, Alexander was asked by Perdiccas, to whom he would leave his empire; he replied, "To the

most worthy." These words excited great contention among his generals, as each thought himself the most deserving; but as all could not have the crown, they agreed that it should be given to Alexander's only brother, Philip Aridaeus, a man of weak intellects, under whose nominal government they felt that they could do as they pleased. Soon afterwards, Alexander's wife, Roxana, became the mother of a boy, whom she named Alexander; and Perdicas, to whom the late king had given his ring, was chosen regent. Roxana contrived to have the rest of Alexander's family murdered or set aside, including her own sister, who was also his wife, and the mother of another infant which she feared might interfere with her own child. The governors of the different provinces professed to own the young Alexander as their king; but Eumenes was the only one who exerted himself honestly to preserve the inheritance for his late master's family. At his death, Seleucus, who was governor of Babylon and the surrounding provinces, boldly took the title of king, B. C. 312. From him descended the line of the Seleucidæ, the kings of Syria.

During the next few years there was ceaseless contention and bloodshed. Cassander, the general who seized Macedon and Greece, was fiercely opposed by the mother of Alexander; but at last she was seized and put to death, and Roxana, with her young son, was murdered soon afterwards.

The final settlement of the empire took place, B. C. 301, when Cassander took the title of king of Macedon; Lysimachus claimed Thrace, Bithynia, and the adjoining provinces as his kingdom; and Ptolemy became king of Egypt, taking also the provinces of Judea, Syria, and Arabia.

Of his contentions with Seleucus we shall speak hereafter; as also of the other successors of Alexander. Every prophecy concerning the third empire leads us to expect that it would be divided into four parts; and thus it actually was, within twenty-three years after the death of Alexander (Dan. vii. 6, and viii. 8).

In fulfilment of this prophecy, when Alexander stood up, as it were, in his full strength, ruling with great dominion, and doing his own will, his kingdom was broken; and as

we have seen, it was divided to the four winds of heaven, and *not to his posterity*. We shall hereafter trace that the rule of his generals was not like *his* undisputed dominion; for it was plucked away from them by others.

In the days of Alexander, the greatest temptations to conquest were the rich countries of the East; so that the Romans and Carthaginians, the two most powerful people in the West, were left untouched. It was, however, in the conqueror's thoughts to stretch out his hands upon them also—but he died! We will now trace the growth of that power, which was to destroy and succeed that of the Third Great Empire.

CHAP. XLVII.

STORIES OF THE ROMANS.

ALTHOUGH the Romans were tired of kingly government, their banished king, Tarquin the Proud, was not tired of ruling; and used every effort to regain his power as long as he lived. And there were some in Rome who favoured him; but Brutus, the consul, and the major part of the people were so determined to shut him out, that they made a law which condemned to death any who should try to re-establish Tarquin. Brutus was sitting on the judgment-seat, when his two sons were brought before him, as among the number who were conspiring to restore the banished monarch. The consul of Rome was too proud to break his own law, and forgot his fatherly love in acting as a judge; he condemned the young men to death, with a countenance unaltered by their tears and prayers. The lictors, or public executioners, who were always in attendance, were ordered to unbind the *fasces*, which were bundles of rods with an axe in the centre, and the sons of Brutus were beheaded in his presence.

This and other anecdotes of the character of the early Romans, will be seen, by one who knows that the heart is deceitful above all things, as only different ways of pleasing self even when it may least appear so. The admiration of his fellow-citizens was dearer to Brutus than the lives of his children; and he sacrificed the better feeling to the worse.

Porsenna, king of Etruria, was persuaded by Tarquin to attack the Romans; and he brought his army so close to the city, that only the wooden bridge over the Tiber remained to be passed. Upon it stood a young warrior, Horatius Cocles, singly resisting the advancing enemy, whilst the part behind him was broken down by the citizens; then plunging into the river, he escaped to the city under a shower of arrows from the disappointed Etrurians. Another young Roman, called Mutius, soon afterwards found his way to the tent of Porsenna, with the intention of killing him; but not knowing the king personally, he stabbed one of his officers by mistake. Being seized by the guards, he declared that he had desired to destroy Porsenna; and though he had failed in the attempt, he hoped that others who would follow might be more successful. The king threatened to burn him alive, if he would not give up the names of those who had conspired against his life: Mutius replied, he had no fear of death, and immediately thrusting his hand into a pan of coals that stood near, he suffered it to be consumed without showing any sign of pain. Porsenna was so astonished by his firmness, that he set him free, and made peace with the Romans, supposing that a nation composed of such men was not to be conquered. Mutius was surnamed Scævola, or left-handed, in remembrance of this action; and this, with many such stories repeated from generation to generation, and the unbounded praise bestowed on the subjects of them, excited the spirit of those that came after, to imitate such daring actions. Tradition and history have thus been the nurses of all the strongest passions of the human heart. Measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, men are not wise; for God has but one standard, and can only commend those who are in Christ Jesus and walk after him.

Tarquin lived to be ninety years of age, and was so continually stirring up fresh enemies against the Romans, that they felt the need of a leader; and in times of danger, from this time forward, chose one whom they called Dictator, to rule with absolute power for a limited period. Titus Lartius was the first dictator, and held the office for six months, b. c. 495.

The quarrels between the plebeians and patricians long disturbed Rome; and at one time the former determined to quit the city, in order to punish the richer class for their oppression. The patricians soon found that they could not do without them, and sent one of their number to the mountain to which the people had retired, desiring them to return. For a long time they could not be persuaded; but at last the following fable, addressed to them by one of the senators, had the desired effect upon their minds. "Once upon a time, when every member could think for itself, and had a will of its own, all agreed to revolt against the body. They said, they knew no reason why they should toil for the lazy trunk, which was carried, and fed, and waited upon by them. The feet declared that they would bear up the burden no longer—the hands would help it no more—and the mouth refused to receive food for its support. They showed their spirit in acting upon these resolutions; but found, when too late, they were perishing through the want of that strength which had been communicated to them through the body." The plebeians acknowledged the benefit of the mutual help of the rich and poor; and agreed to return to their places, as the working class, on condition that two magistrates should be annually chosen from their body, having a right to examine the decrees of the senate, and to mark them with the word *Veto*, "I forbid," if they thought proper. The senate consented, and these magistrates were immediately chosen, and called Tribunes of the people, B. C. 490 (the same year as the battle of Marathon). A dreadful famine afflicted the Romans soon after; the two parties charged each other as the cause of it, and fresh strife continually arose. The newly elected Tribunes were violently opposed by Coriolanus, a patrician: and they, in revenge, procured his banishment. His proud spirit could not bear this treatment; and he offered himself to the Volsci, a neighbouring people at enmity with the Romans, as their leader against his countrymen. Pleased with such a commander, they eagerly followed him to the gates of Rome, ravaging all the lands belonging to the plebeians on their way. The city seemed just within their grasp, when

the mother and wife of Coriolanus came forth with his children, beseeching him to spare them and his country. The embraces of his wife, and the entreaties of his mother, overcame the stern resolution of the conqueror; and he exclaimed, "O my mother, thou hast saved Rome, but destroyed thy son." This was a true saying; for the disappointed Volscians, whom he led back, put him to death soon afterwards. The Roman matrons wore mourning for a year in remembrance of him; and a temple was built on the spot where his mother met him, dedicated to the goddess of female fortune, as a remembrance, they said, that women had preserved Rome! Thus far can the mind stray that has once forgotten God.

The next disturbance at Rome was caused by an attempt to pass the Agrarian law, by which the lands were to be divided into equal portions, that all might share alike.

It was only when the church at Jerusalem was gathered, in the power of the Spirit, into one body, and great grace was upon all, that even the Lord's people could have all things in common; and the attempt to force the men of the world to act upon the principles of love and righteousness, can only add to their strife. During the long contests at Rome about the Agrarian law, there was terrible violence: and whilst the people were struggling with each other, their foreign enemies came and took possession of the Capitol, a strong fortress which was the chief defence of Rome. In this peril, the Romans were obliged to agree; and they chose as their dictator, Cincinnatus, the most just and peaceful person among them. When the senate sent to seek him, he was found busily engaged in ploughing his little fields. He left his work with regret, saying to his wife, "I fear, my Racilia, our fields must remain untilled this year." However, in a short time, having turned out the invaders, he gladly gave up the dictatorship, and returned to his farm; but in after dangers he was often called for by his fellow-citizens, to take up the same office.

Quietness at Rome was ever of short duration; and, in their frequent distress, the citizens began to wish for written laws: for, like the Greeks, they were sufficiently sensible of

the evil of human nature, to see the necessity of making some kind of chains to restrain its lusts and passions. The Decemviri (*Lat.* ten men) were appointed, B. C. 450, to seek for laws from other countries: and it was on this occasion that they visited Athens, and adopted many of the laws of Solon. Having made the desired collection, they formed a body of laws, which were engraven on twelve tables, and hung up in the Forum. Many fragments of these remain among the nations of Europe to this day.

But when the Decemviri had done their work, they did not like to keep the laws they had formed, and began to rule the people in a tyrannical manner. When at length the people burst their chains, their liberty became unbounded license to work wickedness; and they were again obliged to have a dictator to settle their quarrels. Cincinnatus was chosen for the last time, being eighty years of age.

Camillus was appointed dictator, B. C. 408; but the jealous people soon treated him so ill, that he was glad to give up the command of the armies which had been victorious under him, and to retire from Rome. During his absence a fresh danger occurred. The Gauls, a branch of the Celtes, had come from the West about two centuries before; and settled in the north of Italy, the Roman side of the Alps. The climate and the wines had attracted them thither; and wherever they came they turned out the original inhabitants. They were men of extraordinary height, wild and ferocious, and superior in courage to the more civilized Romans; therefore, when they came down upon Rome, under the command of Brennus their king, the citizens were so terrified that they knew not how to resist them. Many concealed themselves, and the armed men determined to defend themselves in the capitol; but the senators and priests resolved to face the enemy, and it is said, they sat on their ivory chairs in the forum, clothed in their robes of state, quietly awaiting the approach of the Gauls. Brennus was surprised to find the gates open, and the city defenceless; but still more to see these venerable old men sitting motionless and silent. At first, the barbarians seemed inclined to worship them as gods; but one of them venturing to stroke the long white beard of Papyrius, one

of the senators, he was struck to the ground by his ivory sceptre. This occasioned a general slaughter; for *their* confidence was not in the living God, who could protect his priests, even from an Alexander. The Gauls next proceeded to burn the city, and then besieged the capitol. At the end of six months, want of provisions made the garrison think of surrendering, when a messenger reached them, who had climbed the rock on which the capitol stood, at the peril of his life, to tell them that Camillus was raising an army to deliver them. Encouraged by this, they threw some loaves down into the enemy's camp to deceive them as to their starving condition. Soon afterwards, Brennus employed some men to climb up the rock and mount the walls, by means of rope ladders fastened to iron hooks, which they fixed wherever it was possible; they were on the point of entering the capitol in the night, when the cackling of some geese awakened the Romans, and they threw down the assailants headlong. The invaders then promised to quit the Roman territory, on being paid a thousand pounds' weight of gold; and they had either received it, or it was about to be given them, when Camillus arrived, as he said, to ransom his country with *iron*, that is, with the edge of the sword. A furious battle followed, and the Gauls were so completely defeated, that they soon disappeared from Italy, B. C. 383. Camillus has been called the Second Founder of Rome, because he caused the city to be rebuilt in a handsome manner; and the people began to increase in power under his guidance. He died at an advanced age, during the reign of Philip of Macedon.

No other remarkable event occurred at Rome till the death of Alexander; but the people were continually engaged in petty wars with their neighbours.

Henceforth we shall find the Romans becoming a great nation, and answering exactly to the prophecy of Daniel (ii. 40, vii. 7). "The fourth kingdom shall be strong as *iron*: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it *break in pieces* and *bruise*."

"Behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly: and it had great iron teeth."

CHAP. XLVIII.

ALEXANDER'S SUCCESSORS.

"And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his [Alexander's] princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion: his dominion shall be a great dominion" (Dan. xi. 5).

As Ptolemy had heard, through the soothsayers, that the place of Alexander's burial must be prosperous, he contrived to get the body; and, after two years' preparation for a grand funeral, he had it transported from Babylon to Alexandria, his capital, with great pomp. He did not take the title of king of Egypt till nineteen years after Alexander's death; but he had all the power long before. Antigonus, another general, who wished to have a share of the empire, had taken possession of Judea, and for some years contended for that province and Syria, with Ptolemy and Seleucus: the poor inhabitants suffering much, from their country being the scene of war. Jerusalem was described then by Herodotus* under the name of Kadytis, (Heb. *Kedushah*, holy,) as a city little less than Sardis. When Ptolemy besieged it there were 20,000 inhabitants, and his attack was resisted; but hearing of their observance of the Sabbath-day, he waited till it returned, and then entering the city met with no opposition. He removed many of the Jews to Alexandria, where they became very rich and prosperous, by means of commerce. Ptolemy founded the famous Alexandrian library, and caused a lighthouse to be built on the island of Pharos, for the assistance of ships coming into the port. He overcame Antigonus entirely, became master of Judea, now commonly called Palestine, and set the Rhodians free from his tyranny: for this act, and his general character for

* He lived nearly a hundred years after the first historian of that name. He describes the city, temple, priests, and services of the Jews; and particularly notices that they had no image, grove, or plantation, and would rather suffer death than break any of the precepts of their law. He relates also this striking anecdote, proving the superiority of their religion. An augur had stopped a party of travellers, telling them to observe a certain bird, and according to the way it flew, they should proceed or return. A Jew in the company bent his bow and shot the bird, quietly asking the augur, how the bird could give them directions, when it could not save its own life.

kindness of disposition, he was surnamed Soter, or Saviour. All his successors bore the common name of Ptolemy; so I shall chiefly distinguish them by their surnames. Antigonus, disappointed in one quarter, tried in turn to displace Lysimachus, Cassander, and Seleucus; but was defeated, and finally slain in battle at Ipsus in Phrygia, B. C. 301. His son Demetrius escaped to Cyprus, which he held till the death of Cassander (B. C. 298) gave him an opportunity of seizing one of the four kingdoms, which his father had sought in vain. After the defeat of Antigonus, Seleucus became the greatest king in the divided empire of Alexander; he made himself master of Upper Syria, and there built the city of Antioch (B. C. 300), which soon became the metropolis of the East. Babylon was gradually deserted, though Seleucus had first made himself king there; the city which he had built on the Tigris, and called after his own name, Seleucia, drew away many of the inhabitants, and helped on its decay. Antioch was the royal city of the Seleucidæ; and they were literally the kings of the north, as it regards their position towards Judea.

Ptolemy Soter made his second son, P. Philadelphus, king, before his death, shutting out his eldest son, Keraunus, on account of his brutal disposition: he died the year after he had made this arrangement, B. C. 284.

Keraunus went to Lysimachus, the king of Thrace, who had married his sister; and stirred up strife between him and his brother-in-law, Agathocles, in which the latter was killed. He then fled to Antioch, and excited Seleucus to make war on Lysimachus. The king of Syria was glad of an opportunity to extend his dominions, and invaded Thrace. Lysimachus tried to defend his kingdom, and was slain in battle,* B. C. 281.

Seleucus was now the only survivor of the four kings who had shared Alexander's empire: and in the wicked pride of his heart he took the title of Nicator, or conqueror. But his triumph was of short duration, as he was assassinated

* After his death one portion of his kingdom, Bithynia, had a separate existence; and was governed by independent kings till it fell into the hands of the Romans.

by Keraunus only a few months after. This man is noted in history as a monster of cruelty ; he made himself king of Macedon by committing the most horrible murders ; but at the end of a year he was killed in fighting with the Gauls, who came down upon Macedonia in great numbers, wasting the country in all directions. Demetrius, the son of Antigonus, afterwards seized the kingdom ; but he had a powerful opponent in a neighbouring king, whose history I must relate more fully, as it links together that of the chief nations in the earth at this time.

CHAP. XLIX.

THE STORY OF PYRRHUS, KING OF EPIRUS.

THE people of Epirus were long considered as barbarians by the other Greeks ; and it was not till the end of the Peloponnesian war that they became civilized. The Macedonians and Epirotes were closely allied ; and when Cassander usurped the throne of Macedon, *Æacidas*, king of Epirus, resisted him ; Cassander, in revenge, encouraged *Neoptolemus*, one of the royal family, to rise against his sovereign and relative. *Æacidas* was murdered with all his children, except *Pyrrhus*, then an infant. A few faithful friends carried the child to *Illyria*, where he was kindly educated by the king as his own son ; and at twelve years of age placed on the throne of Epirus. But five years afterwards he was driven out by the party of *Neoptolemus*, and wandered from place to place, serving in the wars between *Alexander's* successors. He was fighting at the battle of *Ipsus** for *Antigonus* and *Demetrius*, and assisted the latter as far as he could afterwards. In his behalf he went to *Egypt*, and there pleased *Ptolemy* so much that he gave him the daughter of his queen by a former husband, as his wife, and supplied him with means for regaining the crown of Epirus. The changeable people received him very warmly ; and *Neoptolemus* agreed that they should reign jointly. But

* It has been called the battle of the kings, because all the Macedonian generals, who had taken royal titles, shared in it.

they soon plotted against each other : and Pyrrhus, being the most cunning, caused his rival to be murdered.

The wandering life that Pyrrhus had led, and his education as a soldier, with such a beginning to his reign, may prepare us to expect the dreadful course that he pursued.

His great aim was to imitate Alexander ; and it is clear that he had the same ambitious spirit as that monarch, though he did not equal him in talent and perseverance. It would be hard to say which of them caused the most ruin and bloodshed.

Twice he was engaged in war with his old friend, Demetrius, and was twice received as king of Macedon, the people thinking he resembled Alexander. On the first occasion he was driven out by Lysimachus, the king of Thrace, and Demetrius afterwards regained the kingdom : after his second victory Demetrius was obliged to escape, and at last ended his days as the prisoner of Seleucus ; but Pyrrhus kept nothing that he obtained, as some new conquest always filled his thoughts, and drew him away in another direction. Had it not been so he might have become the head of another great empire : but it was otherwise ordered, and all his efforts to overthrow the rising power of Rome were in vain. The Tarentines, a people of Italy, who, with all around them, were in danger of being broken to pieces by the Romans, sent to entreat the help of Pyrrhus, whose fame as a warrior had reached their ears. The young king was delighted with the invitation ; and set sail for Tarentum with all his best troops, and twenty elephants. But they suffered great losses on the voyage by a violent storm ; and the king's own ship being wrecked on the coast of Italy, he was only saved by swimming, and came to land in an exhausted state. As soon as he recovered his strength, he employed himself in training the Tarentines ; for he found the whole people indulging in the sensual pleasures which their rich country and delicious climate afforded, and wholly unprepared for war. In the meantime he sent ambassadors to Rome, offering to decide the contention between them and the Tarentines ; but the consul proudly replied, " The Romans neither valued him as a mediator, nor feared him as an enemy." Both parties then prepared for battle ; and

for the first time the Greeks and Romans were seen in opposition. Until this period the Greeks had looked upon them as barbarians, and treated them with contempt : but Pyrrhus, seeing the orderly array of the Roman legions, exclaimed with surprise, it was by no means barbarous, and began to doubt the event of the war in which he was engaged. However, his personal courage, and the terror caused to the enemy's horse by his elephants, decided the battle ; and after thousands had been slain on each side, the Romans retired only to prepare for another engagement. Pyrrhus was approaching the capital, and wasting the country : but the Romans were not cast down, for an old blind warrior had excited their courage, by reminding them, they had once boasted, that even Alexander would have lost the title of invincible, if he had attacked them, and their present invader had needed protection from one of his generals ! Cineas, an orator in the employment of Pyrrhus, was the next ambassador to Rome ; yet he brought back no answer of peace, but told his master that he feared he would fail in his hope of conquering the Romans, as the senators were like an assembly of kings, and the people so numerous, that, like the fabled hydra or many-headed monster, they seemed only to multiply as they were cut off. The chief of the Roman ambassadors was Fabricius, a poor man, but highly esteemed for his uprightness of character. Pyrrhus tried every means to win him over to his side, but in vain ; as the love of the praise of his countrymen was far stronger in the heart of Fabricius, than the love of money, or the fear of death. The king of Epirus began to admire the Romans greatly ; and finding it impossible to win their friendship, he was the more anxious to conquer them.

The following year, when Fabricius was made commander of the army, he received an offer from the king's physician to poison his master for the sake of a certain sum of money. Fabricius nobly wrote to Pyrrhus, warning him of his danger, and telling him that those with whom he was making war were more to be trusted than his friends. Upon this the king sent back all his prisoners without ransom, and again offered to make peace. But as the Romans would alone consent on condition of his return to Epirus, Pyrrhus de-

terminated to make one more attempt to gain the mastery. In the battle that followed, the Epirotes again broke the Roman ranks by means of their elephants: but the loss was so nearly equal, that when his officers were expressing their pleasure at his success, Pyrrhus exclaimed, "Such another victory, and we are ruined."

He now wished for some pretence to withdraw from Italy, as he was too proud to confess that he despaired of success in the war. Upon this account he was highly pleased with the arrival of a deputation from Sicily, offering him some of the chief cities, if he would drive the Carthaginians out of the island. Leaving a part of his army to defend the Tarentines, he embarked immediately for Sicily; thinking that a path to victory was now opened to him, and that he might proceed thence to Africa, and overcome a people considered little less powerful than the Romans. The home territory of the Carthaginians only comprehended that which now forms the kingdom of Tunis; but they possessed by conquest the greatest part of Spain, Sicily, and the islands of the Mediterranean. The government at Carthage was at first kingly, but it had become a republic like Rome; the senate was large, and the two chief magistrates, answering to the Roman consuls, were called *suffetes*: the people, however, had a great share of power; and the orators were as influential as among the Greeks. It was by extraordinary industry that the Carthaginians became rich; for though the ground about the capital produced abundant crops, the rest of the country was chiefly covered by burning sands. However the inhabitants took advantage of every watered spot, and built all their cities on the edges of the lakes, which were very favourable situations: by means of diligent labour, they even supplied other nations with wheat, fruits of every kind, wax, honey, oil, and skins of beasts: and they were as successful in trade as the Tyrians. From the Western coast they brought to the East, iron, tin, lead, and brass; and in return they gathered from Egypt, fine hemp, paper, and wheat: from the coasts of the Red Sea, spices, gold, pearls, and precious stones: and from Tyre, rich stuffs, and tapestry, and scarlet. Sicily, which was a very fertile island, was to the Carthaginians an important

possession, and had been the envy and desire of other nations. It had been long the place of contention in the Peloponnesian war, when Alcibiades fitted out an Athenian fleet, and took possession of Syracuse the chief city : many bloody battles took place with the Spartans in this island ; but at last the Syracusans entirely defeated the invaders. Agrigentum, the second city in the island, had been taken by the Carthaginians, but the Syracusans long resisted them. They were governed by a succession of tyrants or absolute monarchs, among whom Dionysius was the most celebrated for his cruelty. He was afraid to let any one approach him lest he should be murdered ; and usually spoke to the people from the top of a tower in which he defended himself by locks and bolts : the least noise near his retreat made him tremble. A great fondness for poetry, which has been thought to soften the feelings, did not make him more humane. Having won a prize for poetry at Athens, he spent an immense treasure in public feasts, and in the midst of his rejoicing was seized with an illness of which he died, B. C. 365. Some time after, Timoleon, a Corinthian, having heard of the miseries of the Syracusans, resolved to deliver them from their tyrants ; and for twenty years they and the other Sicilians enjoyed freedom by means of this deliverer. But B. C. 308, Syracuse again groaned under a tyrant named Agathocles, who was worse than all who had gone before him. Having lost two of his sons, whom he sent with an army against the Carthaginians, he ordered all the relatives of the Syracusans who had accompanied them to be put to death, from the eldest to the youngest. It is said, the slaughter was so dreadful that even the waters of the sea round the walls were tinged with blood. This monster of cruelty died in the most dreadful tortures, B. C. 289. It was after his death that the chief Syracusans sent to Pyrrhus, desiring his help against the Carthaginians. At first he won all hearts by his conduct, and was successful in setting the island free ; but when he proposed to carry the war into Africa, the Sicilians refused. Pyrrhus then became very absolute in his rule over them ; and would have been put to death as a tyrant, had he not escaped in time and returned to Tarentum.

His last battle with the Romans (B. C. 274) ended in his complete defeat, and made them masters of all Italy between the two seas: their success also against such an enemy as Pyrrhus gaining them a name as invincible. After six years spent in these fruitless wars, Pyrrhus returned to Greece, and tried to satisfy his restless ambition by recovering Macedonia. Having hired a body of Gauls to assist him, he succeeded; and then, under pretence of settling some quarrel among the Spartans, he marched southwards, hoping to gain the whole of Greece. But he only increased the miseries of the people wherever he went, and the bloodshedding was terrible. Having taken Argos, he was fighting his way into the city, when a poor woman watching from the top of the house, and seeing her son, a soldier, about to be attacked by the king, whom he had wounded, seized a large tile with both her hands and in the agony of the moment threw it down. It fell directly upon his helmet, and he sank from his horse in a moment. Thus perished another of the most famous heroes of ancient times, who, according to the solemn language of the prophet, are "gone down to hell with their weapons of war, though they caused terror in the land of the living" (Ezek. xxxii. 18, &c.).

CHAP. L.

THE KINGS OF SYRIA AND EGYPT.

THE history of the kings of Syria and Egypt, or the kings of the North and the kings of the South, has been commonly considered the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy, chap. xi.*

Porphyry, one of the first infidels who opposed Christianity, was so struck with the agreement between the history and the prophecy, that he ventured to say the latter was written afterwards, in order to escape conviction of the truth of revelation.

* A diversity of judgment has been recently expressed concerning this chapter. Some believers consider that the *past* contentions of these two powers are only a remarkable foreacting of those which will yet take place when the whole prophecy shall be literally and completely fulfilled. I add this note at the suggestion of a Christian friend, believing that prophecy demands the most serious and prayerful consideration, especially in these last days.

You will observe in your map, Syria is to the north, and Egypt to the south of Palestine, or the holy land: and it is on account of the connection of these kingdoms with the affairs of the Jews, that they seem to be so especially noticed in the word of God. Seleucus was succeeded by his son Antiochus Soter, who had married his mother-in-law by his father's consent; and from this unnatural union proceeded a race of kings noted for their wickedness. Antiochus Theos, his son, succeeded him, and following his father's evil example, took to wife his own sister Laodice. Ptolemy Philadelphus, who reigned at this time in Egypt, having made war with him and being victorious, concluded a peace only on condition that Antiochus Theos should put away Laodice, and take Berenice his daughter instead. Theos consented; but as soon as Philadelphus was dead, he sent away Berenice and her infant son, who was to have been heir to his throne, and recalled Laodice. But Laodice, expecting no good from her brother's former treatment, poisoned him, and caused her son Seleucus Callinicus to be placed on the throne. Berenice, who had taken refuge in a temple near Antioch, was also murdered by her orders, with her child and her Egyptian attendants. The following agreement has been observed between this part of our history and the prophecy:

And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm [of her father, for he died]; neither shall he [the king of the north] stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he whom she brought forth [margin], and he that strengthened her in these times (xi. 6).

Ptolemy Euergetes, the son of Philadelphus, upon his accession to the throne of Egypt, tried to rescue his sister; but coming too late to save her life, he ravaged Syria, destroyed the wretched Laodice, and having entered Babylon, which was still a fortified city, he raised a large tribute. Amongst the spoils that he carried away, were two thousand images of Egyptian gods which Cambyses had formerly stolen, and forty thousand talents of silver. A rebellion called him back to his own country. Callinicus, after a reign of twenty years, was succeeded by his own son Seleucus Keraunus; and Euergetes, after *four years more*, left his kingdom to his son Ptolemy Philopator.

But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his place, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: and shall also carry captive into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue *more years* than the king of the north. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land (xi. 7, 8, 9).

Seleucus Keraunus raised an army to recover the dominions which Euergetes had taken from his father, but died in the third year of his reign. His brother and successor, Antiochus Magnus, carried on the war, and took from the king of Pergamus almost all Asia Minor: he also recovered Media, Persia, and Babylonia from the governors who had revolted, and then returned to Antioch his capital. In the fifth year of his reign he got possession of part of Cœlo-Syria; and the next year returning to seize the rest, he defeated the army of Ptolemy Philopator near Berytus, one of his fortified towns. He then invaded Palestine and Arabia. Three years after, he returned with an army of seventy-eight thousand men, and Ptolemy Philopator met him with seventy-five thousand men near Gaza; and by gaining the battle recovered all Phœnicia and Cœlo-Syria. Puffed up with this victory, he began to indulge in all kinds of luxury, at which the Egyptians were so displeased that many revolted; and it is said that sixty thousand persons were killed in these domestic wars.

But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces [S. Keraunus and A. Magnus were the sons of Callinicus]. And one [A. Magnus] shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through, and return, and be stirred up to his fortress. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth, and shall fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude, but the multitude shall be given into his hand. And when he hath taken away the multitude his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it (xi. 10, 11, 12).

About twelve years after his victory over A. Magnus, Philopator died, and left his kingdom to his young son Ptolemy Epiphanes, b. c. 200. A. Magnus took advantage of his youth, and made an agreement with the king of Macedon that each of them should attack that part of his dominions which lay nearest their own. Phœnicia and

Cælo-Syria were therefore again the seat of war, and the inhabitants suffered much from each party. The Samaritans, who were always the enemies of the Jews, sought to gain independence in the general confusion; but were disappointed.

The Egyptian government applied to the Romans for help: and they sent Marcus Lepidus to be guardian of the young king, and to act for him. The Romans attacked and defeated the Macedonians, as I shall describe hereafter, B. C. 197. But their general Scopas, at the head of a large Egyptian army, was defeated near the fountains of Jordan by A. Magnus. He then besieged Scopas in Sidon, took the city, and recovered Syria and Phœnicia; upon which the Jews willingly submitted to him. He seized many of the Greek cities in Asia; but others were protected by the Romans. He then purposed to invade Italy; and therefore made peace with P. Epiphanes by giving him his daughter Cleopatra in marriage. But this did not attach the king of Egypt to his interests; and when he was defeated by the Romans, his son and daughter even sent an embassy to Rome to express their satisfaction, and to beg them to proceed with the war. The king of Pergamus also, dreading the power of his ambitious neighbour, assisted the Romans, and received as a reward all the dominions that they wrested from the king of Syria. The latter was obliged to pay a large tribute to the Romans; and was slain only two years afterwards in robbing a Persian temple to obtain the money which he needed. Seleucus Philopator, his son, succeeded him; and during a reign of twelve years was chiefly occupied in raising the necessary tribute money. He was slain by Heliodorus, whose story will be related hereafter.

For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former; and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches. And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south. Also the sons of the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities; and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand: but he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him; and he shall stand in the glorious land which by his hand shall be consumed. He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole king-

dom, and upright conditions with him: thus shall he do; and he shall give him the daughter of women to corrupt her [margin]: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and take many: but a prince, for his own behalf, shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him. Then shall he turn his face towards the fort of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom; but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle (xi.13—21).

This prophecy was written more than three hundred years before any of these events took place. Prophecy gives us some small idea of the vastness of the Eternal mind, that can comprehend at once the past, the present, and the future, as easily as we take in the event of the passing moment.

CHAP. LI.

JEWISH HIGH-PRIESTS.

IN order that you may have a clear understanding of the state of the Jews, I shall take up their history from the death of Jaddua, B. C. 321. He was succeeded by Onias; and after his death (B. C. 300) his son Simon held the office. He was surnamed "the Just," on account of his uprightness and holy life: he repaired and fortified Jerusalem, and was much beloved by the people. But his most important work was the final arrangement of the books of the Old Testament. He added to Ezra's collection the books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Malachi, with some few necessary historical explanations which occur here and there.

He was the last high-priest who held the office of president in the assembly of the seventy elders, called the Sanhedrin, to whom the power of judgment belonged.

When his brother Eleazar succeeded him as high-priest, at his death, B. C. 221, Sochœus, a man of learning and piety, became president of the Sanhedrin. He tried to set before the people the blessed principle of serving God purely out of love to him, and not for the sake of reward or for fear of punishment. But he was misunderstood by such as

were not spiritual ; and his disciples afterwards corrupted his doctrine so far as to say that there was no future reward or punishment.

Thus, with a mixture of Grecian philosophy, arose the sect of the Sadducees : for whilst the Greeks learned some truth by their intercourse with the Jews, they in return taught them much of their false philosophy ; and the sects which sprung up in Judea were but imitations of the schools of Greece.

The Pharisees, for instance, resembled the Platonists, or disciples of Socrates and Plato, who taught that virtue, or the command of the passions, was to be preferred to every thing else, and pretended that men might obtain happiness and perfection by their own efforts. The Sadducees rather resembled the Epicureans, whose doctrines had widely spread in Greece, and afterwards extended to Rome. They held that self-gratification was the only desirable thing ; and sought for present enjoyment because they believed every feeling must end after death. In the words quoted by the apostle, they said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The first did not know that enmity and corruption of their hearts which must cause separation from God, and become their eternal torment, when convinced of it by the glory of his power in the day of judgment : the latter felt the evil passions of their nature, and gave themselves up willingly to their indulgence, quieting their conscience by saying that all would end at death ; for there would be no resurrection.

It was in the time of Fabricius that the doctrines of the Epicureans were first taught in Rome ; and he foresaw that the adoption of such views would lead even to the temporal ruin and misery of his country.

During the priesthood of Eleazar, P. Philadelphus became king ; and the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures was begun in Egypt. It has been said that this king, who was bent on increasing the Alexandrian library, employed translators that he might add the Jewish writings to his books : but it is more probable that the Sanhedrin, or council of seventy, at Alexandria, had this translation made for the use of the many Jews in Egypt who could only speak Greek,

and that it was called the Septuagint (or Seventy) version on this account.

It is considered rather a free translation of the Hebrew, but very valuable, as it throws much light upon the Old and New Testament. It has been observed "the Pentateuch, perhaps from the simplicity of the original, is the best in the translation. The book of Proverbs is considered the next best; though many passages differ from the Hebrew text. Upon critical examination it is allowed that Job was translated by some one who was well acquainted with the Greek poets; but the meaning of the original is often mistaken. Joshua is supposed to be of later date, because it contains a Gaulish word which could not have been known in Egypt until B. C. 270, or later. A note at the end of the book of Esther states that it was finished in the fourth year of Ptolemy Philometor, or B. C. 177. An able critic has remarked that the Psalms and Prophets were translated by persons wholly unequal to the task: it is supposed that these, with the rest of the books, were completed about B. C. 170." The arrangement of the Psalms differs from that of the original; and one is added to their number which is apocryphal,* or of doubtful inspiration.

P. Philadelphus favoured the Jews; and built two cities in Palestine, one called after his name, Philadelphia, the other Ptolemais, now Acre.

Manasses, the brother of Eleazar, became high-priest, B. C. 276, and held his office through a period of quietness until B. C. 250. Onias II. son of Eleazar, succeeded his uncle, and from avarice kept back the usual tribute, though P. Euergetes had favoured the Jews, and even made large offerings to the Temple when he visited Jerusalem after his victories in the East, B. C. 245. At the end of twenty-four years, Euergetes threatened to seize the land unless the debt

* Certain books, called the Apocrypha, were added to the Greek version of the Bible; but were never written in Hebrew. Among these, the first book of Maccabees is valuable as history; but the difference between all these writings, and those given by inspiration of God, is very striking; and it is a cause for thankfulness that the Apocrypha has been banished from our Bibles during the last fifty years. As mere human compositions, however, they contain much that is instructive.

were discharged, and the payment made regularly in future. The love of money still made Onias obstinate in his refusal; and the people began to tremble for the consequences. In this extremity, Joseph, the high priest's nephew, proposed to go to Alexandria to settle the matter. There he acted in a very ungodly manner; conforming to the customs of the Greeks, and deceiving the king of Egypt as to his uncle's character. In the most artful manner he obtained the command of two thousand soldiers, promising to raise the tribute by force; and in this way he held the government of Judea for twenty years.

Simon II. became high priest B. C. 217, whilst Judea was the seat of war through the contentions of the kings of the North and South. P. Philopator, the victorious king of Egypt, was a vile character, and very differently disposed to the three Grecian kings who had gone before him. But having had his life saved by a Jew in one of his battles, he came to Jerusalem to offer gifts and sacrifices. Not contented with this, he wanted to force his way into the Holiest, saying that he had not been prevented from entering the temples in other countries. All Jerusalem was filled with lamentations, and the priests earnestly prayed the king to keep back; but he persisted in pressing forwards. Just as he reached the sanctuary he was suddenly deprived of the use of his limbs and the power of speech, so that his frightened attendants hastily bore him away. This stroke forced him to leave Jerusalem and go home; but when he recovered from it he began cruelly to persecute the Jews in Egypt. He decreed that they should be all treated as slaves; and even caused a great number of them to be branded by a red-hot iron with the figure of an ivy-leaf, in honour, as he said, of Bacchus, the god whom he pretended to worship in his drunken feasts. The Jews scattered throughout Egypt were sent in chains to Alexandria. They were shut up in a vast building called the Hippodrome, like the Roman Amphitheatre and used for the same purpose, and Philopator sentenced them to be trodden to death by elephants, made furious by wine and frankincense, as a public spectacle. For two days the execution of this barbarous command was delayed; and when at last the animals were

set upon them they turned upon the spectators and soldiers, without harming the Jews, who had prayed to the living God and were protected by Him. The king was so terrified by this second proof of the power which sheltered this peculiar people, that he caused them to be set at liberty, and changed all his decrees. He also gave permission to those who had been faithful to their religion to execute judgment on such as had forsaken it through fear of suffering; and it is said that some hundreds of apostates* were slain at this time, according to the law of Moses (Deut. xiii. 6—11).

In the reign of Antiochus Magnus, the Jews suffered greatly from the war between him and the king of the South; and their old enemies the Samaritans began to annoy them again. But at length A. Magnus, wishing to attach the Jews to his interest, forbid any stranger to enter their Temple; and favoured the settlement of colonies in Lydia, Phrygia, and other parts of his dominions. In those places, the Apostles found synagogues of Jews descended from these colonists.

Simon II. died b. c. 195, and was succeeded by Onias III., a more worthy high-priest. By this time Joseph, the governor, was dead, and his eldest son Hyrcanus, who was as ungodly as himself, so displeased the Jews by his deceitful conduct at the Egyptian court, that they refused to acknowledge him in the same office that his father had held; and were even disposed to put him to death. Hyrcanus took refuge in a strong fortress that he had built for himself; and left his immense treasures laid up in the Temple, thinking it was the safest place. But Simon, one of his brothers, who wished him to be robbed of his store, told the king of Syria, who so much needed money, what riches were concealed in the Temple: and he sent Heliodorus his treasurer to seize the whole. Upon his arrival at Jerusalem, Onias was much disturbed, and prayed earnestly that none might then be suffered to rob the holy place. His request was heard: for when the Syrians entered the Temple they were seized with faintness and terror; and Heliodorus saw a terrible vision, and was smitten to the ground. It is said

* An apostate is one who falls away from his profession.

that he recovered through the prayers of Onias ; and after offering sacrifices returned to his master, telling him that the power of God would destroy any one who attempted to spoil that Temple, B.C. 176. However, Heliodorus so little profited by this knowledge of the living God, that he poisoned the king a few years afterwards under the following circumstances. When the Romans defeated Antiochus Magnus they required him to send one of his sons to Rome as a hostage,* to secure the payment of the yearly tribute. He sent his son Antiochus : but after his death, and when his son Seleucus had reigned twelve years, Antiochus was suffered to return home on condition that Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, should come to Rome in his place. As soon as the heir to the throne was gone, Heliodorus murdered Seleucus, and seized upon the crown before Antiochus could arrive. But he did not hold the kingdom long, as you will learn in the history of Antiochus II.

CHAP. LII.

ROMANS AND CARTHAGINIANS.

It is painful to dwell so long on the evil ; but we can look no where without meeting it : " the earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof," and the renewed mind can find no resting-place upon it. But if these sad records should be the means of humbling any proud thoughts concerning human nature, and of making us loathe the sin that dwelleth in us also, our reading them will not be in vain.

We cannot trace the rise of the Roman empire without noticing the people whom its iron dominion breaks in pieces and bruises. After Pyrrhus was driven away, and all Italy subjected to the Romans, they began to covet the rich island of Sicily, which had been more than once their granary in time of famine.

Hiero, king of Syracuse (B. C. 255), had made an alliance

* The custom of giving hostages was very ancient: the persons most precious to the conquered party were usually chosen ; and they were ill or well treated according to the good or bad conduct of their friends at home.

with the Carthaginians, to strengthen him against his neighbours the Mamertines; and the latter put themselves under the protection of Rome. War was then declared between Rome and Carthage; and though it was a small beginning, the final struggle between them was for nothing less than universal empire. Up to this time the Romans had no ships, whilst the Carthaginians had the command of the sea: but one of their vessels having been cast on the shores of Italy by a storm, it was taken as a pattern, and in a very short space a whole fleet was ready to put to sea. An army of one hundred and forty thousand men, with three hundred sail, were first sent to Africa under the command of Regulus: upon landing in that country he had great success, and having taken eighty towns advanced towards Carthage. The people desired peace; but the hard conditions of the Romans could not be borne, so they resolved to continue the struggle. By the help of Xantippus, a general from Sparta, they afterwards defeated the invaders; and to their great joy Regulus was taken prisoner; but they were too proud to own a stranger as their deliverer; and when Xantippus, who perceived their jealousy, asked for a ship to convey him home, private orders were given to the sailors, and he was thrown overboard. This and other similar actions have made Punic or Carthaginian faith, a proverb to signify treachery.

Fourteen years' war, with varying success, so exhausted the forces of the Carthaginians, that they determined to send Regulus, whom they had confined in a dungeon four years, with a proposal of peace to Rome; making him promise to return if their conditions were not accepted. This extraordinary man appeared before the senate, only to persuade them to continue the war with Carthage; as he knew they might get entire victory if they persevered. In giving them, this advice, he sacrificed the love of life to the love of his country, or rather to that which he thought for his country's glory. In vain was he entreated not to give himself up into the hands of his cruel enemies; many telling him he was not obliged to keep a promise that had been forced from him. Regulus, to whom character was the next dearest thing to his country, replied, that he preferred all the tortures

awaiting him at Carthage, to the shame that would cover him even in his tomb at Rome, if he broke his engagement.

Rarely has more energy of spirit and uprightness of character been used in more wretched service ! The torments suffered by Regulus were not less than he expected ; and may give you some idea of the horrid barbarity of those times. Being taken out of the darkest dungeon, he was exposed to the burning rays of an African sun, with his eyelids cut off ; and then rolled down a precipice, enclosed in a box full of iron spikes. In revenge, the Roman senate gave the chiefs of the Carthaginian prisoners to his wife, to be tortured as she pleased ; and they were not more mercifully treated. Well might Solomon say concerning the sons of men, they might see that they themselves are beasts (Eccles. iii. 18).

At length the Carthaginians were glad to accept peace on any terms ; and the first Punic war ended, B. C. 229.

Six years after, the temple of Janus was shut, for the second time only, since the foundation of Rome ; so rarely had war ceased. At this period, the Gauls took the opportunity of crossing the Alps in large numbers, and began to waste Etruria with fire and sword. But the Romans soon took advantage of their want of armour, and ignorance of the arts of war, and a multitude of them were destroyed. They were glad to make peace by giving up some of their own territory ; and thus the Roman boundary was extended.

The second Punic war began, B. C. 205, principally through the influence of a young Carthaginian warrior, who longed to revenge the injuries of his country. This was Hannibal, whose father, a former general, had made him swear perpetual enmity to the Romans when he was a boy. He had solemnly promised that he would never fail to oppose their power till they or he should be no more ; and he kept his word. Next to Alexander and Pyrrhus, Hannibal is considered the most famous general of antiquity ; and he was indeed like them, a murderer and a robber in a large way ; for in this light alone can we righteously look upon either of them.

Hannibal was always the first to begin the fight, and the last to retreat ; and he could patiently bear any kind of

suffering to reach the end he had in view : he dressed and fared like a common soldier, and constantly slept on the ground with only a watch-coat wrapped round him. No disappointment seemed to break his spirits ; but he was cruel and faithless, though he artfully concealed his true character. He overran all Spain ; and raising a large army of various languages and nations, he crossed the Pyrenees into Gaul (now France), and found a passage through the Alps into Italy. But among those snow-covered mountains half of his army perished, either from cold and hunger, or the attacks of the natives ; those who remained, half Spaniards and half Africans, followed their daring leader, and recovered their strength in the fertile plains below. For some time Hannibal was victorious in every battle : at the Ticinus, at Trebia, at Thrasymene and Cannæ, he defeated the Roman armies ; but then instead of marching immediately to Rome, he rested with his troops the whole winter at Capua : and the luxury in which they indulged disabled them from any farther conquest. In the meantime, the Roman armies had passed them, and seized Spain from the brother of Hannibal, who had been left to guard it : they then proceeded to Africa, under the command of Scipio, and advanced towards Carthage, sweeping every thing before them. The Carthaginian senate, in alarm, recalled Hannibal to defend his home, just as he thought Rome was within his power ; and he left Italy with tears and groans, like a lion greedy of prey, disappointed of his expected prize. He was defeated by Scipio at his return ; and the humbled Carthaginians were willing to accept peace on any terms. Thus ended the second Punic war, B. C. 200. Scipio was surnamed Africanus in remembrance of his victories : but the honours that he won were as short as they were profitless ; and being unjustly accused by his countrymen, he went into voluntary banishment. The end of Hannibal was still more gloomy. Some years after, the Romans desired that he should be given up to them, as they suspected him of intending to renew the war : on this account he left his country, and took refuge with Antiochus Magnus, whom he stirred up against the Romans. When the king of Syria was defeated, he also was willing to give up Hannibal to his

enemies : but he escaped to Prusias, the king of Bithynia, and persuaded him to take up arms against the king of Pergamus, a friend of the Romans, on purpose to annoy them. By his help, Prusias was victorious in many engagements, by land and sea ; but at last being defeated, he was on the point of giving up his guest to please the Romans, when the unhappy general put an end to his mortal life by poison, in the seventieth year of his age : another miserable example of the consequence of seeking worldly greatness.

The superior power of the Romans had been made known in the battle of Zama, where Scipio defeated Hannibal : but Africa was not subjected to the Romans at once, for other struggles took place. Two powerful kings of Numidia, Massinissa who took the Roman side, and Syphax the friend of the Carthaginians, began to contend for the mastery ; and the former obtaining it, so grievously oppressed the Carthaginians, that they sent a complaint to Rome. Scipio the younger was sent into Africa, under pretence of settling the matter : but perceiving that Carthage was still a rich and prosperous city, he refused to befriend the inhabitants. He even watched from a neighbouring hill the furious battle with the Numidians which followed : he described with delight, the appearance of Massinissa riding on a horse without a saddle, according to the custom of his country ; and though eighty years of age, flying from rank to rank, in the hottest part of the fight, exciting his soldiers to combat. Famine and plague followed at Carthage ; and the people were brought so low, that they submitted to the king of Numidia : and according to the ancient custom, all passed under the yoke,* as a sign that they acknowledged his rule over them.

The third and last Punic war began B. C. 149, and was occasioned by a command from the Roman senate, that the Carthaginians should remove from their city, as they were determined to destroy it. It would have been better for them if they had not resisted the will of the Romans ; but in the fury of despair, they struggled during the four succeeding years with their fierce enemies.

*The yoke was made of two forked sticks fixed in the ground with a lance laid across them.

In times of the greatest danger, the Carthaginians were the most zealous in their horrible religion; and on this occasion, they sacrificed two hundred children to the devilish idols which they worshipped. They then set to work with the utmost speed to replace the armour and weapons, of which the Romans had deprived them beforehand, in the hope that they would more quietly submit to their power. Men and women laboured day and night; the temples and palaces were turned into arsenals; and the women even cut off their hair to supply materials for ropes.

At this time Massinissa, who was on his death-bed, sent to desire Scipio to visit him; and making the Roman general the guardian of his family, he in fact put his dominions under the power of Rome. The horrors of the siege of Carthage are beyond description: for even after the Romans entered, the citizens fought from street to street, and from house to house. For six days the most dreadful slaughter continued; but on the seventh, those who surrendered to the Romans were spared. Had there been legions of devils, instead of men, the combat could scarcely have been more furious; the tortures each party delighted to inflict on the other, made them far outdo the wild beasts in ferocity. The Romans could at first hardly believe that the city they had so long dreaded, or envied, was burnt to ashes; but when the news was confirmed, they gave themselves up to excessive joy (B. C. 145). From this time Roman pride and ambition were unbounded, and wickedness as rapidly increased.

CHAP. LIII.

THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES.

THE period of which we have been reading, was the darkest season that the Jews had ever known; for the king of Syria, who turned out Heliodorus, and reigned instead of his murdered brother, appears to be the most remarkable shadow of the last persecutor that has ever appeared on the earth. Some have found difficulty in deciding whether Daniel's prophecy refers to Antiochus, or whether it describes a cruel king who will tyrannize over the Jews in the last days. The

best rule seems to be, that whatever prophecy has not been accomplished by past events remains yet to be fulfilled; and prophecy may even have a double fulfilment.

This subject is of great importance at so late a period in the history of the world, and for a statement of that which is still to be expected I must simply refer to those portions of Scripture which contain unaccomplished prophecies.

When Antiochus first came to the throne, the Syrians flattered him with the surname of Epiphanes, or illustrious; but he was afterwards more properly called Epimanes, or the madman. The accounts of heathen historians fully prove that he answered exactly to the description given of the next king of the North (Dan. xi. 21); and we will pursue the comparison of history with Scripture, according to the commonly received interpretation.*

And in his [Philopator's] estate shall stand up A VILE PERSON, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries; and with the arms of a flood shall they [who opposed him] be overflown from before him, and shall be broken: yea, also the prince of the covenant [the high priest of the Jews] (xi. 21, 22).

Antiochus, upon his return from Rome, tarried awhile at Athens; but on hearing that his brother Philopator was dead, and Heliodorus in possession of the kingdom, he hastened to Syria: and instead of sending for the absent Demetrius, the right heir, he courted the king of Pergamus, and by his assistance was placed on the throne. Heliodorus and his party were defeated; and the Syrians being kindly treated by Antiochus, accepted him as their king. Heliodorus was slain.

Antiochus soon began to act as a *vile person*; for he laid aside his royal dignity, and went about the streets of Antioch like a fool or madman, often in a state of drunkenness, and with the lowest and wickedest of the people as his companions. Sometimes he would pelt the passengers with stones, at other times he would dress himself after the fashion of the Romans, whom he had seen pleading for any public office, and act their parts towards his own subjects in the most

* It is well to notice that some who have prayerfully studied this prophecy, think there is a depth in its meaning which leaves us much to expect.

foolish manner. He joined in the idlest amusements and grossest sins of the people; and though he did not believe in any God, he pretended to have a great zeal for Jupiter, the chief god of the Romans, and would force all his subjects to worship this imaginary being.

In the first year of his reign he set aside the worthy high-priest, Onias III., and put his younger brother, Jason, in the office, because he promised to make the Jews conform to the Grecian customs, and to raise a larger tribute. This change occasioned the most grievous apostasy, for Jason had power to give to all who forsook their religion the privileges of the citizens of Antioch; and he also built at Jerusalem, a gymnasium, or public place of exercise, for the youth to learn the heathen games, similar to those which were common in the Greek cities. Onias resisted all this; and he was soon banished to Antioch, that he might not encourage the Jews who still remained faithful to God.

You will remember that A. Magnus had made an alliance with the king of Egypt, by giving him his daughter Cleopatra in marriage. She survived her husband, P. Epiphanes; and as their son, P. Philometor, was too young to govern, she was made regent of Egypt. However she also died, b.c. 173; and the Egyptian government took the first opportunity of calling for the restoration of Palestine and Cælo-Syria, as provinces that belonged to the Ptolemies. Whilst ambassadors were sent to Rome, from the courts of Syria and Egypt, Antiochus set off to strengthen the southern frontier of Palestine, and visited Jerusalem on his way, where he found a welcome from Jason and the apostate Jews. But only the year after, Jason was displaced in his turn; his younger brother, Onias, having privately offered the king of Syria three hundred talents more for the priesthood. Onias took the Greek name of Menelaus, gave up the Jewish religion altogether, and promised to bring the whole nation into idolatry. Jason resisted him for a while; but was obliged to flee from the armed force sent by Antiochus to support Menelaus.

The exiled Onias having sent to reprove his wicked brother for selling some of the temple vessels to pay the money he had promised, Menelaus persuaded the governor of Antioch to put that holy man to death in his prison.

The Jews were so displeased at this act, that they assembled tumultuously, and slew one of the friends of Menelaus in the treasury of the temple. Deputies were then sent to accuse the apostate high-priest to the king, who was resting at Tyre, after having defeated the Egyptians. By his invasion of Egypt, Antiochus broke the league he had lately made with the young king; when he sent an officer as his representative to be present at his coronation and marriage. He had come from Syria with a small army; but he got help at Jerusalem, and in the rich province of Phœnicia, by bestowing rich presents and extraordinary favours on the people: and promising them a share in the treasures of Egypt. He defeated the Egyptian army at Pelusium, B. C. 170; and after leaving garrisons of his soldiers in the strong frontier towns, he returned to Tyre to prepare for a second attack. It was there that he gave his judgment in favour of the apostate Menelaus; and caused his accusers to be put to death, though his guilt was clearly proved.

But after the league made with him, he shall work deceitfully; for he shall come up, and become strong with a small people. He shall enter into the quiet and plentiful places of the province; [margin] and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his father's fathers: he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches; yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strongholds, even for a time (xi. 23, 24).

In the sixth year of his reign, Antiochus was still more successful in Egypt. The Egyptians, who had raised a large army with the intention, they said, of recovering the provinces that were the marriage portion of their late queen, were entirely defeated. The young king, P. Philometor, was betrayed by his tutor Eulæus, and Macron, his governor in Cyprus, and delivered up to Antiochus, by whom he was treated with much outward respect. The news of the disturbances in Palestine, occasioned by the re-appearance of Jason, and his continued contest with Menelaus, led Antiochus to leave Egypt and go to Jerusalem: and on understanding that there was a general rebellion of the Jews, he gave orders for a massacre, which lasted three days; forty thousand were killed, and as many made slaves. Menelaus suffered him to enter the Temple, and to carry away all the gold and silver that he could find. He caused swine to be

sacrificed on the altar; and the liquor in which parts of those animals had been boiled, was sprinkled over the whole Temple that it might be thoroughly defiled: for according to the law of Moses those animals were utterly unclean. A Phrygian, named Philip, was then made governor of the city; and Menelaus re-established as high-priest.

During the absence of the Syrians, who had Philometor in their power, the Egyptians proclaimed his brother, Euergetes, as king. On hearing this, Antiochus re-entered Egypt, pretending that he desired to re-establish Philometor; and the latter promised, that if he would do so, he would only hold the kingdom under him. But they were only deceiving each other; for Antiochus began to waste the country; and Philometor took the first opportunity of joining his brother: and in order to oppose their wicked uncle, they hired troops from Greece, and sent ambassadors to Rome for help.

And he shall stir up his power, and his courage, against the king of the South, with a great army; and the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain.

And both these king's hearts [Antiochus and Philometor] shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper; for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.

Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do [unmentioned things of which the foregoing history informs us] and return to his own land (xi. 25—28).

Antiochus invaded Egypt again, B.C. 167; but with very different success. The Greek troops were prepared to fight against him; and as he advanced towards Alexandria, the Roman ambassadors came out to meet him, and stopped his progress.

Recognizing Popilius, who was one of them, as an old friend whom he had known at Rome, he was about to salute him: but the Roman refused his embrace, and asked if he would obey the command of the senate, and leave Egypt in peace. Antiochus hesitated; upon which Popilius drew a circle on the ground about the king, and desired him to answer before he stepped out of it. Antiochus knew the power of the Romans too well to refuse obedience, and pro-

mised to withdraw his armies. But his proud and cruel spirit could not rest quietly under this disappointment; and the Jews were the first to feel the effects of his rage. Knowing there was a company of apostates willing to help him, he sent Apollonius, his collector of tribute, with orders to enter Jerusalem on the Sabbath, as he would then meet with no resistance. Many Jews were slain, and others sold as slaves; and a number of houses on Mount Zion being destroyed, a strong fortress was built there with the materials. Blood was shed within and about the Temple; and so many fled that the city was like a desert, being only peopled thinly by strangers or apostates. The daily sacrifices were discontinued, June, B.C. 168; and by a decree of Antiochus, the Temple was dedicated to Jupiter, an idol placed in it, and sacrifices offered on the altar, according to the heathen ceremonies. An old Athenian priest was sent for, to direct the apostates in the new forms of worship; and idols were set up in all the towns throughout Judea. The Temple was filled by the riotous heathen who were revelling in the grossest sins; and those among the Jews who forsook their profession were alone favoured.

Yet even at this time some were found to be faithful, by the grace of God; and of their confession and their deeds much remains to be related.

At the time appointed he shall return towards the South, but it shall not be as the former or as the latter [like neither of his previous successful invasions]. For the ships of Chittim [whether Greece or Rome] shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt with flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits (xi. 29—32).

CHAP. LIV.

THE MACCABEES.

THE written word of God, being the expression of his mind, "who is, and was, and is to come," is of such im-

mense depth and compass, that there seems hardly any prophecy* in it, that is as yet so fully accomplished, that we can say there is nothing more to be expected. For instance, the Jews, in, and after the time of Antiochus, spoke of "the abomination of desolation," as having been set up in the holy place, and so in fact it was; but the Lord spoke of "the abomination of desolation" spoken of by the prophet Daniel, as something yet to come (Matt. xxiv. 15). Again, some have applied the language of the seventy-fourth Psalm to the persecution of the people of God under Antiochus, and it seems very suitable; but a farther accomplishment may be at hand, in the future troubles of the Jews.

Antiochus had commanded that whosoever refused to conform to the manners of the Greeks, and continued the Jewish customs, should be put to death. Accordingly, two women having been found who had circumcised their children, they were led round the city with their babes in their arms, and then thrown headlong from the walls, as examples to others. After this, some faithful Jews, who had concealed themselves in caves, in order that they might quietly observe the forbidden Sabbath, were seized, and burned to death by the order of Philip, the governor.

But whilst the enemy was doing wickedness, and the foolish people were blaspheming the name of the Lord, some were earnestly crying to God for deliverance; and he raised up witnesses for his truth, whose exploits were scarcely less remarkable than those of the Judges.

These were the descendants of Asmoneus, a Levite, and hence called Asmoneans; but they are commonly known by the name of the Maccabees, a word supposed to be formed from the letters M C B I, which begin the four words in the Hebrew text (Exod. xv. 11), "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods." This was the sentence inscribed on the military standards of the Asmonean leaders.

In this evil day (B. C. 167) Mattathias, an aged priest

* For instance, the first prophecy in the Bible (Gen. iii. 15). We must however remember, that the prophecies relating to the humiliation of Christ and his first coming, are entirely fulfilled: and others might be enumerated.

descended from Aaron, was the head of the family. He lived at Modin, not very far from Jerusalem; and being much esteemed as a man of God, the Syrian officer sent by Antiochus to enforce idolatry, delivered the command to him first, believing that the rest of the towns-people would immediately follow his example.

Mattathias boldly exclaimed, that if all nations obeyed the king, he and his family would walk in the covenant of God, and not turn aside from their religion, to the right or to the left. But just after he had spoken, a Jew advanced to sacrifice on the altar that had been set up after the heathen manner. Mattathias, in righteous indignation, slew him on the spot, and afterwards killed the king's agent and broke down his altar. He then went through the streets of Modin, crying aloud, "Whoever is zealous for the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me." His five sons, Johanan, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan, with a few others, obeyed the call, and retired with him to the mountains. Other Jews fled, and concealed themselves with their families in some caverns in the wilderness; there the Syrian soldiers attacked them on the Sabbath-day, and destroyed a thousand who made no resistance. Mattathias and his party from that time forward, resolved to defend themselves on the Sabbath if assaulted, but otherwise not to break their rest.

Antiochus, on hearing of these events, went himself to Jerusalem, and enforced with more cruelty the worship of idols.

But those who had that faith in God which is "the evidence of things not seen," were strengthened to withstand in this evil day, and left "a good report" behind them (Heb. xi. 1, 2, 35, &c.) Many "were tortured, *not accepting deliverance*; that they might obtain a *better resurrection*; and others had trial of cruel mockings and *scourgings*, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword . . . they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Among the martyrs at this time, the most distinguished were seven brethren and their mother, who suffered ex-

treme torture in the presence of Antiochus, rather than break the law by eating swine's flesh, which was forbidden food (see Lev. xi. 7, 8). They were first cruelly scourged, and when the wicked king saw that they were unshaken, he caused them to be put to death one after another. The eldest brother, who had said they would all lay down their lives rather than break the laws of their fathers, had his tongue cut out, the skin torn from his head, and the tops of his hands and feet cut off; and in this state he was absolutely fried in a brazen pan made red hot. His brothers and mother, being like him supported by God, comforted each other in the words of Moses' song (Deut. xxxii. 36, 43), and exhorted one another to die for the truth's sake. The second was tortured in the same manner; but he spoke boldly of his hope of everlasting life in resurrection. The third put out his tongue willingly, and stretched forth his hands, saying, he had received his limbs from God, and was ready to give them up in defence of his law, in certain hope of receiving a more glorious body in the resurrection.* The fourth expressed the same hope; but told the king that *he* would never rise to life. The fifth boldly declared to Antiochus, that God had not forgotten their nation; and told him he should yet see the effects of His power, and that he and his race would be tormented. The sixth said to the king, just before he expired, "It is true our sins have drawn upon us these severe sufferings; but thou who hast made war against God himself shalt not escape." The youngest alone remained; and Antiochus made him large offers of riches and honours if he would but forsake the law of his God; and when he would not consent, the king advised his mother to go and persuade him: but she only entreated him to be faithful unto death, and encouraged him to follow the example of his brothers. He then gave himself up to the torture, praying God to have mercy upon the nation, and to force the king to own that he was the only true God. The mother suffered afterwards.

About the same time, Eleazar, a priest aged ninety, was scourged to death; but expressed great joy in his own soul,

* As Paul said (Acts xxiv. 15), the Jews commonly believed there would be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.

and would not accept the deliverance that was offered him, because he feared God rather than man. Numbers of faithful Jews escaped into the deserts, where they suffered greatly from want of food and clothing.

In the meantime Mattathias died in his mountain retreat; and was taken to Modin to be buried, amidst the general lamentations of the faithful Jews. He had exhorted his sons to fight for the law of God, and encouraged them in their night attacks upon the towns of Palestine; for they had been accustomed during this year to go out in bands with their followers, to throw down the altars, drive away the persecutors, and circumcise the children. Judas, surnamed Maccabeus, was now appointed general, and Simon was chosen as chief counsellor, on account of his wisdom. By the providence of God, Antiochus soon left Judea to seek amusement at Antioch in the celebration of public games: thus the Jews had some rest; and Judas employed himself in raising an army. He gained two victories over the generals sent against him; after which the enraged king sent an army of forty thousand men under the command of Lysias, ordering him not to leave one Hebrew in the country, as he desired to root them out altogether and to people the land with other inhabitants. He was so certain of being able to do this, that he caused a proclamation to be made in the neighbouring countries mentioning the price at which he would sell his prisoners; and he reckoned that by getting a certain sum for each, he should raise enough money to pay the tribute, which he could not otherwise send to Rome. On the eve of the battle, it is said that a thousand merchants arrived in the Syrian camp, prepared to take away the slaves whom they expected to purchase.*

Judas Maccabeus had only six thousand men; but his confidence was in the Lord of hosts, knowing that he could make one of his faithful people chase a thousand of his enemies. He acted therefore in exact obedience to the law (Deut. xx.), and before the battle, proclaimed that every

* The practice of slave dealing, for many centuries, was the only thing that lessened the loss of life in war; as the victors tried to save as many as possible, that they might gain money by selling their persons.

one who was newly married, or had built a new house, and every man that was faint-hearted, might return home, lest the others should be discouraged. His little band was thus reduced to three thousand; but they prepared themselves by fasting and prayer at Mizpeh, and went forward trusting in the Lord. The Syrians were entirely defeated, the slave-dealers taken prisoners and sold; and one of the generals, Nicanor, escaped in the disguise of a slave.

The next day was the Sabbath; and the Jews rested, and offered praise and thanksgiving to God for his deliverance.

With ten thousand men, Judas soon after defeated Lysias at the head of sixty thousand: he was also successful against the Samaritans, who had willingly suffered their temple to be dedicated to a false god. The land was now nearly cleared of idolaters; and the Maccabees took advantage of the first season of rest to cleanse the Temple and repair Jerusalem. The most blameless priests were chosen to put away all defilements: and they built a new altar of whole stones, according to the law, in the place of that which had been made unclean.

They found the gates of the Temple burned, many of the chambers pulled down, and the court like a mountain wilderness. But every thing was quickly restored to its original order; new vessels were made, the fire on the altar kindled, and the lamps of the seven-branched candlestick lighted by striking flints together. All the services and sacrifices were renewed in December, B.C. 165, just three years and a half from the time they had been discontinued. The week in which all was completed was afterwards annually commemorated with thanksgiving as "the feast of the dedication:" for at this time the Temple was afresh given up to the service of God.

But the fortress over against the Temple was still held by the Syrians and apostate Jews who had retreated thither, and they took every opportunity of annoying the people as they came up to worship: on this account Judas built high walls to secure them from injury, and placed a constant guard round the Temple to prevent the interruption of the daily services.

The time of the Maccabees can only be considered as "a

little reviving," and not the period of security and blessing promised to Jerusalem by the Lord through his prophets. For he had said by Jeremiah concerning this city, "*Take away* her battlements, for they are *not* the Lord's." And we shall see that every attempt made to defend Jerusalem by human means, in the end, utterly fails: for it is written, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein; for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her *a wall of fire* round about; and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. ii. 4—5).

Historians disagree concerning the end of Antiochus. Some say that he died of a wound received in robbing the same Persian temple before which his father was killed; others relate that he fell from his chariot when hastening to Jerusalem with the intention of destroying the whole Jewish nation. But from all accounts it is certain that he died in dreadful bodily torments, and with all the terrors of a guilty conscience, shrinking from the judgment of the living God whom he had so long blasphemed.*

After the death of Antiochus, the Romans still kept back Demetrius, to whom the throne rightly belonged, and permitted Antiochus Eupator, son of the late king, to reign in Syria; thinking as he was a child, they themselves should have the chief power in the kingdom. Many contests occurred between the governors of the young king; but in the midst of all, the Syrians found time to continue the war with the Maccabees, and their best generals were successively sent against them. Lysias, enraged by his former defeat, marched into Judea with eighty thousand foot, all the cavalry of Syria, and eighty elephants. But Judas and his people met them in the strength of God: thousands fell, and the rest fled in terror. The young king came next with an army double in number; Judas was still successful, but his brother Eleazar, who rushed madly into the battle to kill the

* Many attempts have been made to refer the closing part of Daniel's prophecy (xi. 36, &c.) to Antiochus, or to the Pope; but such an interpretation does not approve itself to many minds, as "the time of the end" is expressly named; and the king (xi. 36—39) is plainly neither the king of the North nor the king of the South; for they are both opposed to him (xi. 40).

elephant on which Eupator was mounted, was crushed to death by the fall of the animal. Judas and his followers hastily retired, and were besieged in Jerusalem: but by the providence of God the Syrians were obliged to retreat, on account of the approach of enemies from the East. Lysias, however, would not make peace with Judas till he had seen the walls of Jerusalem partly destroyed: and as he considered Menelaus, the wicked high-priest, the first cause of this costly and unsuccessful war, he seized him, and had him smothered by being thrown from a great height into an immense heap of ashes.

During the ten years in which he held the office of high-priest, he had only used it to make the people transgress the law of God; and his successor Alcimus* soon proved himself of the same character. The true worshippers, finding that he was also an encourager of the idolatries of the Greeks, rejected him as unfit for the holy office: but he and the apostate Jews excited the Syrians to renew the war in order to support his authority.

Demetrius had by this time left Rome, and was in Syria asserting his claim to the throne. He landed at Antioch with only eight friends, including Polybius the historian; but the people, believing him to be sent by the Romans, whose power they feared, received him at once: and A. Eupator, with Lysias, were put to death soon afterwards. Demetrius, on becoming king, took the surname of Soter, or Saviour; but he was filled with thoughts of destruction towards the Jews. He listened readily to the apostate Alcimus; and sent an army to defend him, with a command to the general to kill Judas Maccabeus and his followers. Nicanor, the old enemy of the Jews, led the choicest Syrian troops to Jerusalem; and with blasphemous language, threatened to destroy both the Temple and nation. Judas, who

* Onias, the son of the worthy Onias III., was the rightful successor; and being disappointed of the office, he retired to Egypt and persuaded the reigning king, P. Philometor, to allow him to build a temple there. He declared the prophet Isaiah had foretold this should be done (xix. 18—19). Some land was granted him at Heliopolis; and a temple was built there on the same plan as that at Jerusalem, only not so large. Onias became high-priest, and the services were regularly performed.

was mighty in prayer, entreated the Lord to remember what he had done for Israel of old ; and to preserve them now from the great host that was against them. He then went forth to battle with only three thousand men. Nicanor was one of the first that was slain ; and the Syrians seeing their general fall fled in all directions. Judas and his men pursued them, sounding an alarm with trumpets ; and as they passed on, a multitude came out from the towns and joined in the pursuit. It is said that thirty-five thousand Syrians were killed ; and there remained not a single person to carry the news to Antioch. Nicanor's head and right hand were cut off, and fixed against the walls which he had threatened to destroy.

Judas had now become very powerful and wealthy, and was like a prince among the people. He had defeated the Idumeans, or Edomites, and the Ammonites, as also the apostate Jews, depriving them of all their strongholds, except that near the Temple : he had moreover secured the land of the Philistines on the sea-coast.

But at length his faith seemed to fail ; and during the short season of peace that followed the defeat of Nicanor and his army, the chief of the Maccabees sent to Rome, and sought an alliance with those who were ignorant of the Living God whom he himself served.

The senate were well pleased, and passed a decree, declaring the Jews to be the friends and allies of the Romans ; and even sent a letter to the king of Syria threatening to invade his dominions if he again disturbed Judea. But, before the messengers of Judas returned, he was slain. Demetrius had sent a larger army to revenge the loss of the last ; and the followers of Judas were seized with such unusual terror that they deserted him ; and he fell, with the few hundreds who remained, overpowered by numbers.

It is clear that the failure in the faith of this man of God, as in the case of Jehoshaphat and others, caused such a termination of his course ; and we shall find this last attempt, to link the peculiar people of God with a heathen nation, hastened their ruin. Judas Maccabeus was slain b. c. 161. He was bitterly lamented throughout Judea, as the greatest deliverer that had appeared since the days of David.

CHAP. LV.

HISTORY OF THE MACCABEES
CONTINUED.

Two of the sons of Mattathias, Eleazar and Judas, were now dead ; three remained, namely, Jonathan, Simon, and John, who were in turn the chiefs of the people, and are commonly called the Asmonean princes. For a little while after the death of Judas, the apostates seemed to triumph ; but the power of God was soon put forth against them. Alcimus, the high-priest, was struck with palsy, whilst giving directions for the removal of the wall which separated the court of the Gentiles from that part which the Jews alone had a right to enter ; he died shortly after in great torments, B. C. 160. Jonathan Maccabeus then became stronger and stronger ; and being acknowledged as ruler of Judea, governed very wisely. He rooted out the apostates, repaired the city, and made peace with the Syrians ; and as he was one of the descendants of Aaron, he was also permitted, in the absence of Onias who had a nearer claim, to take the office of High Priest, B. C. 153. Alexander Balas, a pretender, who was contending for the throne of Syria with Demetrius, tried to win over Jonathan to his side, by sending him a purple robe and a crown ; and by giving him the title of Ethnarch, or prince of Judea. The Asmonean chief favoured his cause ; and Demetrius was slain in battle, B. C. 150. Alexander Balas then married the daughter of P. Philometor, king of Egypt ; and Jonathan was present at the wedding feast. But the son of Demetrius raised a large army to obtain the kingdom, which was his by right, and A. Balas in his turn was killed in battle : his father-in-law, Philometor, died just before.

Demetrius II. became king of Syria, and took the surname of Nicator, the same year in which the Romans destroyed Carthage. The Jews appeared to prosper greatly at this time in Egypt ; though the king who succeeded Philometor was the worst of all the Ptolemies. He took the title of Euergetes, or well-doer ; but his subjects more properly named him, Kakergetes, or evil-doer. Antiochus, the son

of Balas, was the next pretender to the kingdom of Syria: and he was crowned with the surname of Theos, B. C. 144. The Jews now intermeddled with the affairs of other nations without hesitation. They supported the new king of Syria, and were in return favoured by him;—they secured the friendship of the Romans, and had intimate intercourse with Sparta and the rest of Greece. In short, they were fast sinking into their lowest and worst condition; though they were still preserved for the accomplishment of God's purposes (B. C. 143).

Jonathan was seized and put to death, with a thousand of his followers, by Tryphon, another pretender to the crown of Syria, who arose soon after and destroyed A. Theos: thus the Lord did not bless his interference in the quarrels of these heathen kings. Demetrius Nicator still tried to regain his kingdom; and in order to strengthen himself, recognized the independence of the Jewish nation. Simon Maccabeus was owned as a prince and high-priest; and the Jews began to reckon from this date, as the year in which the yoke of the heathen was taken away from them. The Syrian garrison in Jerusalem was given up; and the people, in this season of peace, were full of rejoicing and gratitude to the Maccabean family. A public writing stated, that the Jews and their priests were well-pleased to have Simon for their governor and high-priest; until there should arise *a faithful prophet*.

Simon lived in all the pomp of a monarch, and became exceedingly wealthy; but as he owed so much power to man, he was made to feel the changing favour of man to his destruction. He had been even permitted to coin money by Antiochus Sidetes, another pretender, who was contending with Demetrius for the crown of Syria; but not long after, this very man became jealous of the kingly authority of Simon, and caused him and his sons to be murdered, B. C. 134.

John, surnamed Hyrcanus, the only remaining brother of Judas Maccabeus, succeeded to all the honours and riches of Simon; and became more powerful than any of his brothers had been. His reign was like the last bright flickering of a light that is just going out; but his conduct altogether, makes one feel uncertain whether he did that

which was right in the sight of the Lord. He was ready to compass sea and land to make proselytes to the Jewish religion; but it is to be feared that those who were brought to make a profession by the force of his arms, were not brought any nearer to God. He conquered the Samaritans, destroyed their temple, and laid under water the spot on which their city had stood; but the people still continued their form of worship on Mount Gerizim. He also subdued the Idumeans; and obliged them either to conform to the law of Moses, or to leave their country. Those converts to Judaism who attended to all its ordinances were called proselytes of righteousness, and became in time entirely mixed with the Jews: but the heathens, who simply gave up idolatry and observed certain rules, called the precepts of Noah, were only styled proselytes of the gate, and never became part of the Jewish nation. The dominions of Hyrcanus nearly equalled in extent those of David and Solomon. By his direction, a fortress was built at the north-west corner of the Temple, which became the royal residence of the Asmonean princes. It was called the castle Baris, and was a square building raised on a rock three hundred feet high: it had four turrets; and one loftier than the rest, overlooked all the courts of the Temple, and had stairs down into that of the Gentiles, as well as an underground communication with the Temple, through large vaults and winding passages. Hyrcanus was at first a Pharisee by profession; but when that body offended him by their pride and envy, he favoured the party of the Sadducees, a sect which, at this time, only differed from the Pharisees in rejecting the traditions, which they considered of equal value with Scripture. Hyrcanus restored all the legal ceremonies and the services of the Temple to their regular order, and the Jews began to appear more outwardly religious than they had ever been; but the scenes which followed, only showed how deep was the general apostasy from God, how little there was of heart-service, or any thing like holiness.

Hyrcanus had carefully cultivated the friendship of the Romans; and at his death, B. C. 107, the Jewish nation was not troubled by foreign enemies. He was succeeded by his son Aristobulus; but the history of that prince and his suc-

cessors must be deferred till we have traced the increasing power of Rome up to this period.

CHAP. LVI.

THE FOURTH GREAT EMPIRE.

THE Romans had been gradually increasing in power ever since the partition of Alexander's empire, and fully answered the prophetic description of the *fourth kingdom*. The empire of the Romans extended more rapidly after the fall of Carthage, and though there was no one as yet to take the headship, it was, without dispute, the greatest in the earth. We shall now have to notice how it bruised and broke in pieces Macedonia and Greece. Perses, the last king of Macedon, made himself so strong by an alliance with the Greeks, whose liberties he professed to defend, that he resisted the Roman arms from the time they began to make war with him, B. C. 171, till he was defeated by the consul, Paulus Emilius, four years afterwards, B. C. 167. Being taken captive, he was led in triumph through the streets of Rome; and then thrown into a dungeon where he starved himself to death. His son was apprenticed to a carpenter, that he might never seek to gain his royal inheritance; and afterwards became a clerk of the senate. A pretender to the throne of Macedon however arose, B. C. 152, and was warmly supported by the people, as they longed for deliverance from the Roman yoke; but he was defeated by the consul Metellus, B. C. 148, and Macedonia thenceforward was no more than a province of the Roman empire.

The Greeks had engaged to assist each other, and to this end were united by a bond called the Achæan league. Philopœmon was the last defender of their liberties; but he was taken prisoner in a war with the Messenians, a people opposed to the league, and obliged to drink poison, B. C. 183. He has been called, the *last* of the Greeks; and certainly he was the last who imitated the bold conduct, and shared the spirit of the warriors through whom Greece had become so powerful: and since that period, Greece has never been of importance among the nations.

The Romans gladly watched the quarrels which arose among the States ; and seeing they were weakened by division, boldly attacked the Achæans who defended Corinth, then the strongest city in Greece. Mummius, the Roman general, gained a complete victory. The slaughter under the walls of Corinth was dreadful : and when the conquerors entered the city they plundered it of every thing of value and burnt it to ashes, B. C. 145. This was in the same year that Carthage was taken ; and from that time Greece also became a Roman province, and the inhabitants paid a yearly tribute. The cities were permitted to keep their own laws ; but a prætor, or governor, from Rome was their ruler.

Spain was entirely subdued and became a province of Rome, B. C. 132 ; and soon afterwards Attalus, king of Pergamus died, and left his dominions to the Romans, so that their empire was extending on all sides. But this increase of power did not make them a happier people, even as to this world ; for their ancient simplicity of manners and affection for their country were lost, and there was oppression at home as well as abroad.

Two brothers, Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, commonly called the Gracchi, were the first who made a stand against the excess of their countrymen, and the luxury indulged by the proud nobility. These young men were the sons of Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus ; she was much esteemed for her domestic character, and she trained up her children rightly according to the light she had. It is related, that when some rich Roman lady had displayed all her treasures to Cornelia, and said she would call to see her's in return, Cornelia promised to show them : but the next day, when her visitor arrived impatient for the sight, she kept her waiting till Tiberius and Caius returned from school, and, as they entered, quietly said, " There are my jewels."

When Tiberius arrived at manhood, he tried to revive an ancient law, whereby no citizen was permitted to hold more than a certain quantity of land ; and soon afterwards he proposed, that the money left by the late king of Pergamus should be divided among the poor. Whilst he was pleading in the senate, a great tumult was made by the patrician party. Tiberius put his hand to his head, signifying that his life

was in danger ; but one of his opponents said, he meant to express his wish for a crown. A dreadful uproar followed ; Tiberius was killed by a piece of a bench thrown at him, and three hundred of his partisans fell. Such was the ungoverned state of the Roman senate, at the time they desired to govern the world ; and so jealous were they of anything like rule at home, whilst preparing to extend their dominion to the ends of the earth. Caius was not discouraged by his brother's end ; but did all that was possible to restore justice and simplicity. Being chosen tribune of the people, he exposed the corruptions of the senate ; and proved that almost the whole body had been guilty of taking bribes, selling offices, and raising money, by force, under false pretences. Well might it be said in the language of Solomon, " I saw under the sun, the place of judgment, that wickedness was there : and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there." Caius Gracchus was sent to rebuild Carthage, and to people it with Romans ; but it was probably the contrivance of the senate to escape his watchful eye, for on his return he found all his countrymen prejudiced against him, charging him with crimes of which he was innocent, and bent on his destruction. The unhappy man fled to a grove beyond the Tiber, which was dedicated to the Furies,* and there persuaded one of his slaves to kill him.

The Romans had learnt all the false philosophy of the Greeks ; and whilst many became Epicureans, a smaller number embraced the doctrine of the Stoics. Like the Platonists and the Pharisees, they held that the absolute command of the passions was the chief good ; but their distinguishing point was the encouragement of self-murder, which they thought was not only allowable, but the height of virtue, in certain circumstances.

Thus would he who had the power of death, make that which is the wages of sin and so terrible to nature, a desirable thing and a proof of goodness, when self-inflicted in order to escape an evil supposed to be greater.

The efforts of the Gracchi proved that the real power lay

* The three Furies were supposed to be the ministers of the vengeance of the gods ; either by wars, plagues, dissensions, or the stings of conscience in this world, and by eternal torments in the infernal regions.

in the hands of the senators; and as they could put down any who opposed them, the freedom of the people was but an empty name. The empire, however, was still extending: the islands of the Mediterranean, the countries now called France and Savoy, and then the kingdom of Numidia, fell under Roman power. Jugurtha, grandson of Massinissa, was the last king of Numidia. He had murdered the sons of Massinissa in order to get possession of the throne, and then bribed the Roman senate to take no notice of his crime, but in vain. The first army that was sent against him he defeated, and compelled the soldiers to pass under the yoke. This was more than the haughty Romans could bear from one who had not long before stood before them as judges: for Jugurtha had come to Rome in person, hoping to excuse his conduct. A larger army was therefore sent into Numidia under the command of Caius Marius. This general was a poor man; but of such extraordinary strength and bravery, and so remarkable in stature, that he was a common object of dread. He brought Jugurtha in chains to Rome; and boldly entered the senate-house to reprove the corrupt administration of justice which was so clear with regard to his prisoner (B. C. 106).

A few years after, Marius was called to lead an army against the barbarians who had entered Italy, three hundred thousand in number, seeking habitations in its fruitful vallies. He defeated them in two dreadful battles; and it is said that in only one day one hundred and forty thousand were killed and sixty thousand taken captives. Thus have the fairest parts of the earth been deluged with blood! we see every country stained with the life-blood of thousands; and those who destroy their fellow-creatures, waste God's gifts by their excesses: whereas had all been moderate and peaceful, all might have had enough. How evident then is it that unregenerated man is unfit to use any of God's gifts aright; and that nothing can produce such misery as the unrestrained indulgence of the human will.

The victories of Marius over the barbarians took place the year after the death of Hyrcanus; and to the history of the Asmonean princes we will now return.

CHAP. LVII.

JUDEA UNDER ITS LAST NATIVE PRINCES.

ARISTOBULUS, the son of John Hyrcanus, was the first of the Asmonean princes who wore a royal diadem. All the sons of Mattathias had been contented with the mitre; but this high-priest did not like even to wear the sign of that which he hated on account of his own unholiness. He even caused his own mother and brother to be murdered in order to shut them out from any share in the government. Such acts were common among the kings of Syria and Egypt his neighbours: but the conscience of a Jew was not in the darkened state of a Gentile's, and when he felt bodily disease coming upon him, he owned it was from the hand of God. It is said, having heard that some of his blood, which was taken to his physician for examination, was accidentally spilled from the bason on the very spot where his brother had been killed, Aristobulus exclaimed, "Praise be to the just Judge, who has shed the blood of the oppressor over that of the oppressed!" and shortly afterwards expired.

Alexander Jannæus, the eldest of his surviving brothers, became prince and high-priest in his place. He was an ambitious man, and tried to gain dominion over some cities which had formerly belonged to Syria and Egypt, but were become independent. At this time A. Euergetes was dead, and his widow Cleopatra, in order to confirm herself as queen, expelled his son Ptolemy Lathyrus from Egypt. This prince got possession of Cyprus: and being ready for any act of violence, was glad to help these independent cities by laying waste part of Judea. In order to terrify the Jews with the idea that he and his followers were cannibals, or eaters of human flesh, he caused some women and children who had been killed in the villages which he passed through, to be cut in pieces and boiled; and when he retired, left the flesh in the cauldrons. Cleopatra sent an army against her son under the command of Jewish generals, and in the end he was overcome. Alexander Jannæus then took some of the frontier cities of Syria and Egypt, and destroyed Gaza, B.C. 96. But though successful abroad he was not beloved in Jeru-

salem; for the Pharisees, the most powerful sect, were opposed to him as being a Sadducee: and when he was performing the service at the feast of tabernacles two years afterwards, the people insulted him and pelted him with citrons. Alexander ordered his guards to attack them, and some thousands were killed: he then hired a number of foreign soldiers, and fenced in the outer court so that the people could not approach the Temple. When the Pharisees appeared humbled, and the city was again in quietness, Alexander went out to war against the Moabites and Arabians. He was mostly successful; but at the end of six years having lost an army, the Pharisees openly rebelled, and for many years he tried in vain to subdue them. Once he offered them peace; but they replied, they could only accept it on condition that he would cut his own throat! Such was the conduct of those who professed strict obedience to the law of God! and he who held the office of high-priest only exceeded them in wickedness and cruelty. It is said that fifty thousand Pharisees were slain by him and his partisans during six years. The following dreadful story proves that he went beyond the blood-thirsty heathen conquerors in cruelty. On one occasion having taken a strong fortress in which many of the Pharisees had sheltered themselves, he led his prisoners into Jerusalem; and there, whilst he held a public banquet with the women and attendants of his court, he beheld the crucifixion of eight hundred men, and obliged their wives and children to be present during their tortures. From this act Jannæus was surnamed Thracides, or the Thracian; but in his enormous wickedness he outdid the fiercest barbarians, and we must remember that he had the word of God as a light, and despised its guidance, whilst they were in utter darkness. As he was still successful in war, he kept his power over his subjects until his death, B. C. 77. He was engaged in besieging a city that had revolted, when an illness came on which was produced by drunkenness: and feeling he was dying, no terror came upon him, for his conscience was seared by continuance in crime. He only thought about securing to his family the power that he had held; and to this end advised his queen Alexandra to embalm his body, and conceal his death until the city was taken,

and then to lead back his triumphant army to Jerusalem, and seek to obtain the favour of the Pharisees. She did so; and her conduct was so pleasing to that party, that they permitted her to bury her husband in the usual manner; and contented themselves with governing in her name. Her son, Hyrcanus, was made high-priest; and being a weak man became a tool of the Pharisees, who used him as they pleased. At Alexander's death, however, her youngest son Aristobulus declared himself king; and being supported by the Sadducees, defeated his brother's party. Hyrcanus willingly gave up the crown to him (B. C. 69), and would have remained in retirement, had not the crafty Antipater, son of the governor of Idumea, in pretended friendship led him to suspect his brother of a design to kill him, and thus induced him to seek the protection of Aretas, an Arabian prince. He then collected an armed force consisting of Arabians and Idumeans, and brought Hyrcanus again to Jerusalem, where the Pharisees soon joined him, and Aristobulus was obliged to take refuge within the walls of the Temple and the adjoining fortress. There he was besieged for three months; and the party of Hyrcanus committed so many deeds of violence, that some of the chief Jews fled from the seat of domestic war. Aristobulus, and the priests within, continued the sacrifices as long as they could, lowering money in baskets by which those outside sent up lambs in return; but at last the besiegers, becoming impatient, filled the baskets with pigs only, so that the besieged were obliged to suspend the daily sacrifices. The Pharisees outside then entreated a certain holy man named Onias, whose prayers were considered all-prevailing, to come into their camp on purpose to curse Aristobulus and his party. Onias being forced to speak, prayed very solemnly that God would not hear the prayers of either party against the other, as those within were his priests, and those without were his people. The enraged and disappointed Pharisees took up stones to cast at Onias, and he was killed on the spot. These sad quarrels in Judea, and the general corruption and apostasy at Jerusalem, with such scenes in the Temple, forbid us to wonder that the Romans were now suffered to interfere in the affairs of the Jews; and that they should fall again under heathen rule.

Their history, henceforth, is closely connected with that of the Roman empire.

CHAP. LVIII.

STRUGGLES FOR POWER AT ROME.

THE love of power seems to be one of the strongest passions of the human heart: and the most active and capacious minds, when not rightly directed, are the most tormented by it. It is one of those desires of man, originally good, because it was given by God, when he created him in his image, and said, "Let them have dominion." It was then, however, only a dominion over the lower creatures, and not man ruling over man; for if there were a sinless world in common subjection to God, the latter would be unnecessary. But as it is, some are graciously fitted by God to preserve some kind of order; and their rule is a blessing, whether in the church or in the world: whilst some, on the contrary, are led by the devil, and are only a curse, being the rulers of the *darkness* of this world. Of this sort, alas! are those of whom I am about to speak, as struggling for the supreme power in Rome.

Originally, Roman pride seemed to consist in sacrificing self for the prosperity of the country, or the common good, as it was called; but since the Romans had become such a powerful people, their pride took other forms; and the contests at home were not less fierce than their foreign wars.

There were usually two grand divisions at Rome: the popular party, desiring the increase of the power and wealth of the plebeians; and the aristocratical party, or the partisans of the senate and other patricians, as earnestly contending for their peculiar privileges. The leaders of these opposite parties had commonly some private end in view, and took up with one or the other to serve their own ambitious purposes.

At the period to which I have led you, Marius was at the head of the popular party; his victories in Africa, and his exposure of the senate at his return, having gained him the favour of the people. But he was soon opposed by Sylla,

the favourite of the senate, who gained a higher place by his success in the Social war, B. C. 90.

This war arose through the ambition of the allied states in Italy; who desired to be considered as Roman citizens, and to have a voice in the government. Marius caused a law to be passed, by which they obtained all the privileges that they desired; and these were, in time, extended to every part of the empire; so that Paul, though he belonged to a distant province, could say he was "a Roman, and free-born."

The only power that now dared to withstand the authority of Rome, was that of Mithridates VII., king of Pontus; the first who had attempted to extend that kingdom beyond the small but fertile region, in Asia Minor, which it occupied. This extraordinary man seemed prepared for the work of destruction from his earliest days. He began to reign when only eleven years of age; and even then committed the most inhuman acts of cruelty. For some years he was principally occupied in strengthening his body by hunting; during this time he lived much in the open fields, and sometimes even slept on the frozen snow. He studied physic for the sake of his own health; and was so well skilled in botany, that he wrote a learned work on that science in the Greek tongue. He discovered antidotes to the most powerful poisons; and so prepared his constitution by the use of them, that, it is said, there was nourishment to him in that which would have been destructive to any other. As he grew up to manhood, he indulged the hope of becoming master of all Asia; and to that end he travelled through it, to observe the state of the different countries, and the manners of their inhabitants; he also obtained the knowledge of twenty-four languages. Having completed his travels, he began his intended conquests, by seizing on Paphlagonia and Galatia; and as the latter was under the protection of the Romans, the senate made it an excuse for sending Sylla with an army against Mithridates. Many of the neighbouring nations now declared against Rome; and the king of Pontus over-ran the whole of Asia Minor, and caused all the Romans that he could find, whether men, women, or children, to be murdered in the most diabolical

manner. One of his generals was, at the same time, successful in Greece; and another conquered Macedon.

But, notwithstanding all this, the power of Mithridates, like every other, was to be broken to pieces by the iron teeth of the Roman monster. Sylla began to bruise him; and would have completed his destruction sooner, had not the jealous Marius procured an order for his recall to Rome, at the same time obtaining permission to take his place, as general in the East. Such an order made Sylla furious; and calling on his soldiers to revenge the insult of his proposed removal, he led them back to Rome, instead of continuing the war with Mithridates. They entered the city sword in hand; and Marius, with his partisans, escaped in the greatest haste. Sylla then caused all the laws made by Marius to be altered; and passed an act whereby it was lawful for any one to kill him, as the enemy of his country. Having accomplished this, and feeling satisfied that all was as he wished at Rome, he again departed to take up the Mithridatic war.

Marius, who had been six times consul, and victorious in every battle that he had fought,* was now, at the age of seventy, obliged to wander as an outcast. He hid himself one whole night in a bog; and at day-break hastened to the sea-side, hoping to find a ship in which he might escape from Italy: but he was seized, and conducted to the next town with a rope round his neck, and still covered with mud. The governor, according to the order of the senate, cast him into a dungeon, and sent a slave to kill him; but the poor man was so frightened by the terrible appearance of the condemned, and the sternness of voice with which he said, "Dost thou dare to kill Caius Marius," that, throwing down his sword, he ran away, and told the governor he could not obey his command. The governor was so struck by this occurrence, that he set Marius free; and gave him a vessel to take him whither he would. He was thus saved to be the future scourge of Rome. On landing in Africa, the scene of his former victories, he was commanded to retire

* Marius was the first who used the silver eagle, which was borne before the army; and from his time it was always the Roman standard in battle.

by the prætor who governed there. He desired the governor's messenger to tell his master that he had found Caius Marius sitting amidst the ruins of Carthage, meaning, that his fall was as remarkable as the desolation around him ; but, notwithstanding this proud reply, he was driven away. He met with many strange and perilous adventures afterwards ; but on hearing that the popular party was again becoming powerful at Rome, and that Cinna, one of his friends, was at the head of it, he hastened home. Cinna, knowing that such an experienced general was an army in himself, gladly went out to meet him, and offered him the command of half the forces he had collected. Marius, by every action, showed that the fiercest passions of hatred and revenge were at work in his heart ; and his appearance was never more frightful, the natural roughness of his aspect being increased by the length of his beard, and the neglect of his person. He first prepared to besiege his native city, whilst Cinna raised a larger army. The senate sent out ambassadors, entreating him to come in peaceably ; but Marius only entered Rome to murder all whom he hated. He beheaded most of the senators ; and having thrown their bodies to the dogs, fixed up their heads in the senate-house. He traced a multitude of the patrician party to their own homes, and had them stabbed in the midst of their families ; and his murderous spirit gained such strength by indulgence, that many who had never offended him were put to death, and even his own officers dreaded to approach him (B.C. 85).

Sylla, in the meantime, had conquered Mithridates, as well as his generals in Greece, and made him promise to pay a yearly tribute to Rome ; and, at the end of a month after Marius had entered the city, the triumphant Sylla returned with his army, to restore, as he said, quietness at home. But the contest only became more fierce after his appearance ; for though Cinna had been killed just before he landed, and Marius was slain in battle shortly after, their party had other leaders who contended for the mastery, with the same furious madness. Moreover, Sylla, as he increased in power, outdid even Marius in cruelty, and was, perhaps, the greatest monster of barbarity that had ever yet appeared.

He made himself Dictator, B.C. 80 ; and ruled with absolute power for two years : but at the end of that time, to the surprise of every one, he laid down that office ; and even offered to take his trial before the people. He was either making use of one of the wiles of the devil, to hide the crimes of his former course ; or like a wild beast, completely glutted with prey, he retired to his den lest he should be devoured by another. He died soon after of a loathsome disease ; and by his desire these words were written on his tomb, "No man ever exceeded Sylla in doing good to his friends, or injury to his enemies" (B.C. 76).

Thus, in the history of man, we turn over one bloody and defiled page after another ; and the sickened heart, longing for some resting-place, can find none upon earth. Was it better in Syria and Egypt ? It is scarcely possible to write the histories of their later kings. The murder of the nearest relatives, and crimes equally horrid and unnatural, characterized these portions of the earth peculiarly, as the abode of persons "without natural affection."

Upon the death of Sylla, others were tempted to struggle for that sovereign power which he had proved it was *possible* to obtain ; and none appeared more likely to succeed than Pompey, a leader of the same party, and a celebrated general ; and Crassus, not only admired as a warrior, but esteemed the richest man in Rome. Julius Cæsar, a young patrician, excelled them in talent, and equalled them in ambition ; but his extravagance had been so great, that he would have been thrown into prison for debt, had not Crassus lent him a large sum to pay his creditors, hoping thereby to attach him to his party. He was then enabled to take the government of Spain ; and during his absence, Pompey and Crassus did all they could to win the favour of the people whom they wanted to govern. The former made himself popular by altering the laws made by Sylla, and restoring the privileges of the tribunes of the people : and Crassus had a thousand tables spread for the entertainment of the populace, and fed the greatest part of the citizens for nearly three months.

Such means can the men of this world use to obtain their ends : present loss, long patience, continued self-denial, are

all counted as nothing, with the prospect of gratifying a favourite passion at some later period. Shall then the children of light think it hard to take up the daily cross on their way to everlasting glory!

Pompey was, B.C. 70, appointed governor of Asia, and general of the Roman armies sent against Mithridates; for that king had again become very powerful. When Pompey arrived in Pontus, he found the king had fled to the court of Tigranes, and was raising an army in Armenia; he had, therefore, little difficulty in making the people yield, and then passed into Syria. In the meantime, Mithridates reappeared in his own kingdom with his new forces, regained his power—and was actually on his way to invade Italy, with every prospect of success, as the best Roman warriors were abroad, when a rebellion in his own army, excited by his son Pharnaces, obliged him to turn back. The wretched king, in the deepest misery, shut himself up in a chamber of his palace, with his wives and daughters, obliged them to take poison, and swallowed the deadliest he could find for his own destruction; but finding it had no effect upon him, he obliged one of his soldiers to kill him. This was the end of his conquests, and his learning! His traitorous son gave up the dead body to Pompey; and in reward for his unnatural conduct, received the crown from him, with the name of an ally of Rome.

Pompey marched forward; and the rich luxurious countries of the East fell into his hands without much difficulty. Tigranes, king of Armenia, and Darius, king of Media, yielded to the Roman power; and Phraates, king of Parthia, retiring from the conflict, made peace with Pompey. Antiochus Asiaticus, and his brother Seleucus, the last of the Seleucidæ, had made a journey to Rome, in order to secure Syria for themselves, and would have bought the favour of the Romans by their great riches: but their offers were not accepted, and Pompey made Syria also a province of the Roman empire. His eye then naturally turned to Judea; for the supporters of Hyrcanus, as well as those of Aristobulus, had sent messengers to implore his aid, whilst he was at Damascus (B.C. 64); and another party of Jews had entreated him to destroy the kingly government, as they preferred the rule of the high-priest alone.

The Roman general permitted them to continue their struggles till he had conquered Aretas, and made Arabia also a part of the same vast empire; upon his return, the party of Hyrcanus gained him admission into Jerusalem; and thus *the fourth of the Gentile beasts* began to tread down the holy city.

Aristobulus was seized and put in chains by Pompey's command; but his partizans still continued to defend themselves in the Temple. There they were besieged by the Romans; and, as in the midst of their gross iniquity they did not forget the outward observance of the Sabbath, but rested from offensive war, Pompey made use of those opportunities for preparing his engines, and at last took the Temple by storm. All within the walls were slaughtered; and the Pharisees were most active in the work of destruction. It is said, that the priests engaged in the daily services, did not even move from their places; but were killed where they stood. Pompey and his chief officers visited every part of the Temple, and even entered the Holiest: this act the Jews could not forgive; for though the visible glory had so long departed, and probably it had never been seen since the captivity (Ezek. x.), they regarded the place with the same veneration; and in tracing Pompey's course afterwards, they remarked that it ceased to be successful from this time. Tacitus, the Roman historian, speaks of the astonishment of Pompey in not finding any image, or statue, or representation of the Deity, in the Jewish Temple, such as he had been accustomed to see in other countries. He showed his respect for the place by not touching the large sums of money in the treasury, nor any of the precious vessels, or furniture; and he gave orders that the Temple should be immediately cleansed, that the services might be renewed. Aristobulus and his family were carried to Rome; and Hyrcanus was confirmed as high-priest and prince of the Jews, but forbidden to wear a crown. Antipater remained at Jerusalem as his counsellor, and, in fact, exercised the chief authority. He was one of the Idumean proselytes, of whom I have spoken hitherto as conforming to the whole law of Moses as to outward profession.

We have now seen the Jews connected in turn with each

of the Four Great Empires. 1. With Nebuchadnezzar, the head of the Assyrian Empire, as the rod in the hand of God to punish their disobedience. 2. With Cyrus, the head of the Medo-Persian Empire, as a friend and protector raised up by the Lord, to restore a remnant to the land, and to prevent the extinction of his worship. 3. With Alexander, the head of the Macedo-Grecian Empire, as a visitor and outer-court worshipper, whilst some truth and godliness remained among them. 4. Finally with Pompey, and with others who sought the headship of the Roman Empire, to fulfil God's purpose concerning them. Thus was the eye of God ever upon this land, and upon this people, even in their lowest state; and so it is still: and the Lord will not rest till he has performed his whole word concerning Jerusalem and the Jews (Jer. xxxiii. 6—26).

CHAP. LIX.

ROME, THE CENTRE OF HISTORY.

At this remarkable period, the Roman empire was greatly increased by the custom (till now unknown) of dying kings leaving their dominions to the Roman people as to their heirs. We have heard of some instances already; Bithynia, Cyrenaica, and Lybia, may now be added; Egypt was in like manner bequeathed to the Romans (B.C. 65), under the following circumstances. Alexander, the brother of Lathyrus, had poisoned his mother, by obliging her to drink a draught which she had prepared for him on his return from hunting; as he rightly suspected, it was intended for his destruction. He then struggled with Lathyrus for the kingdom; and in this contest the great city of Thebes was besieged for three years, and at last taken and destroyed by Lathyrus. But he died soon after; and Cleopatra Berenice, his daughter, was placed on the throne. By the interference of the Romans, she was obliged to marry her uncle, Alexander; and it was agreed that they should reign jointly. But only nineteen days after their union he destroyed her; and the enraged people obliged him to leave Egypt. He fled to Tyre, and before he died declared the people of Rome

to be his heirs. The Romans seemed to be too busy to take possession of the country at once; and the Egyptians were suffered to appoint as their king, a relation of Lathyrus, Ptolemy, surnamed Auletes or the flute-player, on account of his musical skill.

As Rome is now become the centre of history, we must take our standing there; and from thence consider the events of this period.

I have before noticed the heathen custom of celebrating victories, by causing a procession to be made in honour of the successful general. These triumphs, as they were called, were most common at Rome; and as that allowed to Pompey, on his return from the East, was the most magnificent that had ever been seen, it may suffice for a general description.

Three hundred and twenty-four captives of the highest rank were made to walk before the glittering chariot of the victor; among these were Aristobulus, the late king of Judea, and his sons—the king of Colchis—the son of Tigranes, king of Armenia—and the nearest relations of Mithridates: and as that king had escaped from the dishonour that he dreaded more than death, his throne, sceptre, and immense treasures were borne along in the procession instead of his person. It is calculated that the riches brought to Rome by Pompey equalled in amount five millions of our money: and the spoils taken from Mithridates alone were so great, that thirty days were employed in making out the list of them.

The triumphal march of Pompey lasted two days: and during that time were exposed to view, the names of fifteen conquered kingdoms; eight hundred cities taken; twenty-nine re-peopled; and a thousand castles brought to acknowledge the empire of Rome. Such was the bruising and breaking to pieces effected even by one single general!

But while Pompey had been making these conquests abroad, Rome itself had narrowly escaped destruction. One Catiline, who had been disappointed of the consulship, found many ready to unite in a plot of his own contrivance; it was agreed to set fire to the city, on a certain day, in several places, and to raise a general rebellion throughout Italy.

Catiline intended to enter Rome in the common confusion, and to murder all the senators.

But Cicero, who was consul at the time, discovered the whole plot through a woman, to whom it had been revealed by one of the conspirators. Catiline, who dreaded his power above everything, purposed to send two men to murder him in his bed. Cicero, however, heard of it in time to defend himself from them, and then exposed the whole affair to the senate. He was as celebrated an orator at Rome, as Demosthenes had been at Athens; and his writings are still considered the best specimens of pure Latin. He had studied the Greek authors attentively, and translated many of their works; and he had also travelled much in Greece, which was still the school of the Romans, and the place to which the youthful nobles were commonly sent to finish their education. Through the eloquence of Cicero, all the partizans of Catiline in Rome were condemned to death; and an army was sent against those whom he had collected in Gaul. There, a most desperate battle was fought; and Catiline, with 20,000 of his followers, perished. Every man fell where he stood; for they would not leave their ranks, such was the obstinacy of the combat. Public thanks were given to Cicero; and he was styled, the Father of his country, B. C. 63. About this time Julius Cæsar returned from Spain, where he had been very successful in strengthening and extending the empire. He applied for a triumph, and for the consulship, and easily obtained both: he became also, soon after, the Pontifex Maximus, or high-priest of Rome.

Perceiving the ambitious spirit of Pompey and Crassus, Cæsar proposed to them to divide the empire into three parts, and to share the government. They willingly consented, and the united power of these three generals was submitted to, under the title of the Triumvirate (*trium*, three—*viri*, men); it was a new interest, standing between the senate and the people, and though apparently dependent on them, in fact destroyed their power. Pompey chose Spain as the seat of his government; Crassus, Syria; and Cæsar went into Gaul: but before he departed, he determined to remove Cicero from Rome, as he was the chief

guardian of the liberty of the people. To this end, he caused him to be accused for his severity in condemning the actors in Catiline's conspiracy; and the very people who had so lately honoured him as their father, were persuaded to banish him four hundred miles from Italy: his houses were pulled down, and all his goods sold for the use of the republic. But one still remained who was an active leader of the party opposed to the power of the Triumvirate. This was Cato. From his childhood he had been such a lover of freedom, that, when a boy at school, he asked his master for a sword that he might kill Sylla. He was now the chief philosopher of the school of the Stoics; and carried out all the principles of his sect. He dressed meanly, often appeared barefoot, and only travelled on foot. His name was proverbial for truth; and his uprightness was shown in every office that he held. After Cæsar went into Gaul, Cato boldly told the senators that he would prove a tyrant to them; and they experienced the truth of his word, as we shall notice hereafter.

The history of the first Triumvirate teaches many useful lessons; and furnishes additional proofs of the danger of seeking greatness in this present evil world. In each triumvir's course the same truths are brought before us, "he that exalteth *himself* shall be abased;" and "they that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

CHAP. LX.

CÆSAR'S CONQUESTS IN THE WEST.

As Cæsar's history of the wars in which he was engaged still remains, we have an exact account of the countries which he conquered, and the state of their inhabitants. During ten years he was engaged in subduing the Western nations; for they were in a very different state from the people of the East, not having been weakened by luxurious habits, nor tamed by submission to any absolute authority among themselves. This part of Europe, too, was so thickly covered with forests, that the natives, when defeated, hid themselves till they had recovered their strength; and then

burst forth on the astonished Romans in larger numbers. But Cæsar was not to be driven back; and in the end he obtained complete mastery, by his superiority in the art of war. The animation with which this ambitious man describes the details of his Gallic wars, shows how strong was the passion that he gratified at the expense of so many thousands: and we cannot doubt that the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, was working mightily in these destructive wars. Yet we ought never to forget God's purposes must be accomplished; and His work is ever to bring good out of evil.

The Roman arms carried with them a common language and common civilization; and nations, hitherto barbarous, were about to take an important place in the world, and to receive the rays of that light which was to lighten the Gentiles.

I shall give but a short account of Cæsar's course. The Helvetians, or ancient inhabitants of Switzerland, were first subdued; and then followed a bloody struggle with the Germans. Eighty thousand were cut off; and their king, Ariovistus, escaped in a little boat across the Rhine, and retired to the mountains. The Belgæ were defeated with such dreadful slaughter, that marshes and deep rivers were made passable by heaps of dead bodies. Cæsar then subdued the Celtic Gauls, who were powerful at sea; and afterwards the Suevi and more northern nations. At length he reckoned all the countries between the Mediterranean and the German ocean, as within the limits of the Roman empire; and only looked with the unsatisfied eye of a ravenous eagle, towards the white cliffs of the island called Albion (*albus*, in Latin, signifying white). This was our own England, which he beheld from the coast of France.

Great Britain, now the most important among the kingdoms of the earth, lay unnoticed for nearly four thousand years; unaffected by the great changes of which we have read, and out of the reach of any of the Gentile empires, till that arose which was "diverse from all the others, and exceeding dreadful."

Julius Cæsar sailed from Calais, B. C. 55, with several ships full of soldiers, and landed near the spot where the

town of Deal now stands. The number of Britons who appeared on the cliffs, and the fierceness of their appearance, even frightened the Romans: yet, there can be no doubt, our barbarous ancestors were much more alarmed by the coming of such invaders, and the more so as they were armed with weapons far superior to their own, and covered with armour.

The Tyrians, who traded to this country for tin, had probably taught the natives to make their swords, spear-blades, and arrow-heads of brass, or a composition formed of copper and tin, and by these they sought to resist their enemies. But the naked barbarians could not long withstand; and Cæsar took possession of all the southern parts of the island. He found the inhabitants of Cantium, or Kent, who had been accustomed to trade with the Gauls, the most civilized among the tribes that peopled the country; they had learned the arts of spinning, weaving, and dyeing wool, and had iron money in use. But the rest of the Britons wore no clothes, except in cold weather, when the skins of wild animals served them for covering: they usually painted their bodies in strange patterns with a blue dye obtained from woad, and hence the Romans called them *Picti*, or painted men. Agriculture was unknown among them, and they lived upon acorns and other wild fruits, with the flesh of the animals they killed in hunting. Their huts were made chiefly of clay and the branches of trees; but some lived in holes dug in the ground. Wicker-work was their chief manufacture, and with it they formed canoes, or small boats: and in these they even dared to cross the Irish channel. The shields, which were their only defensive armour, were made of the same materials; as also the immense baskets in which human sacrifices were burned in honour of their false gods; for such was the horrible religion of the Druids common among the Celtes. Prisoners taken in war were commonly the victims. It is supposed that the huge stones placed in a circle on Salisbury plain, commonly called Stonehenge, are the remains of a Druidical temple; for they were erected before the commencement of any history of England. The term Druid, applied to the priests of the Celtic nations, seems to be derived from $\delta\rho\upsilon\varsigma$ (*drus*) a word in Greek signifying *oak*;

as that tree was one great object of veneration; and the mistletoe, which is sometimes found on its branches, was esteemed peculiarly sacred. The year after his first invasion, Cæsar returned to Britain with the hope of completing the conquest of the country: but he found the natives better prepared to resist him, being gathered in large numbers. The Britons were commonly divided into separate tribes, each having a chief of its own: but in this time of danger they chose one commander; and Cassibelaunus, the boldest of their warriors, was fixed upon. But in several successive battles Cæsar was victorious, and at last attacked the British chief in his city Verulam (now St. Albans), then the strongest place in the island. Upon a clear space, in the middle of a large wood, stood the wicker-work thatched huts of the inhabitants, having only a hole in the roof which served for window and chimney. These dwellings were guarded by a high embankment of earth: and a deep ditch was on the outside of the circle it occupied. This ancient city was taken and burnt by the Romans; and Cassibelaunus was slain. The retreat of the Britons into their wild forests prevented their destruction; and those who did not escape promised obedience and tribute to Cæsar. He was afraid to pursue those who fled; and did not extend his conquests to Caledonia (Scotland) or Hibernia (Ireland); for many of his vessels had been destroyed by a tempest, and his soldiers were occupied in building fresh ships to return into Gaul.

No farther attempt was made upon Britain until a hundred years after; and during this interval the natives put in practice many things which they had learned in their intercourse with the Romans, and exercised their warlike disposition in frequent battles among themselves; each of the different tribes contending for superiority. The Druids, too, obtained still greater power; and were in fact the chief rulers of the people, being their priests, physicians, and law-givers. They learned the art of writing, and used the Greek characters: some of them became bards or poets, and chaunted to the sound of a rude kind of harp the praises of their gods or heroes; these songs were taught in the schools to excite the spirit of the British youth. To distinguish themselves from the people, the Druids wore white garments,

which they procured from the continent, and a kind of crown encircled with oak leaves, its fit ornament being a *serpent's* egg fixed at the top: for surely that old serpent, the Devil, could alone have invented the horrible religion which they taught.

Such was the state of this now highly privileged country eighteen hundred years since! Is it not then cause for thanksgiving that we live in such days as these, when the light of the Gospel shines forth so clearly? Yet let it never be forgotten, that to whomsoever much is given, of the same will much be required.

CHAP. LXI.

THE END OF THE FIRST TRIUMVIRATE.

POMPEY had married Julia, the daughter of Cæsar; and the two generals were on friendly terms during the first few years that Cæsar was in Gaul. Pompey being tired of war, remained at Rome, and Spain was governed by his officers. Crassus, in the meanwhile, was occupied in Asia, where he had gone in the hope of obtaining greater riches. The affairs of Judea were at this time often brought before the Roman senate; for great troubles had been caused by Aristobulus and his sons, who, after escaping from Rome, made many vain attempts to regain the kingdom. Antipater still contrived to support Hyrcanus, though a third party among the Jews objected to kingly government altogether, and courted the interference of the Romans.

Crassus came to Jerusalem, B.C. 51, and plundered the Temple of the wealth left untouched by Pompey; amounting, it is said, to two millions of our money. This sum had been amassed since the days of Antiochus; for the Jews scattered over the earth always sent their yearly offerings to Jerusalem, and even Gentile rulers had added to the riches of the Temple. Crassus also plundered the heathen temples during his progress through his new dominions, and extended his boundaries by the conquest of Mesopotamia: but only two years after his robberies at Jerusalem he was taken prisoner in a war with the Parthians. They cut off

the Triumvir's head, and brought it to their king, Orodes, who poured melted gold down the throat, in mockery of that thirst for wealth which had led to his destruction. The death of Crassus only hastened the contest then beginning between Cæsar and Pompey. The death of Julia had lessened their friendship; and Pompey, hearing of the increasing power of his only remaining rival in the empire, used every means to deprive him of the government of Gaul. This irritated Cæsar exceedingly; and knowing that his soldiers were warmly attached to his person, and that a strong party at Rome favoured him, he determined to invade Italy. His movements were at first unnoticed, as Cis-alpine Gaul, which bordered on his native land, was a part of his government, and the removal of his troops thither caused no alarm. But after having secretly sent them forward, he followed with a few friends by night, and reached the little river Rubicon, the extreme boundary of his command, at break of day. This stream had long been considered by the Romans as the sacred limit of their home possessions; and there Cæsar reined in his horse, as if he dreaded to take a step which must bring so much misery upon his country. But revenge and ambition overcame every other feeling; and expressing to his friends that his determination was made, he boldly dashed through the stream, and stood within Italy as an enemy. He took upon himself, however, the character of a defender of the liberties of the people, and said that he came to Rome to protect the magistrates; for the tribunes who were his partizans had been obliged to flee out of the city. At the news of his unexpected arrival, Pompey escaped, and with him the consuls and chief senators: little then remained to oppose Cæsar's desires, and the mercy which he showed brought all Italy into his power more easily than the terror of his arms. The public treasures had been carelessly left at his disposal, and he soon became undisputed master of Rome. Within forty days after, he also conquered Pompey's lieutenants in Spain; and at his return the people received him joyfully, and chose him for their dictator. In the meantime, Pompey was making great preparations in the eastern part of the empire. He had a large fleet and army from Italy; all Greece was

at his command, and the tributary provinces supplied him abundantly with provisions.

On the plains of Pharsalia, in Thessaly, Cæsar met him with his legions; and there was fought the battle which was to decide whether the general of the East, or of the West, should become the master of the Roman empire.

Pompey had two hundred senators in his camp, besides Cicero and Cato, whose countenance he considered of the greatest value; moreover, crowds of the chief citizens and nobles of Rome joined him daily, and his army was twice as large as that of Cæsar. But the warriors of the latter having defeated the fiercest barbarians, feared nothing; and Cæsar himself surpassed every soldier of his time in coolness of mind and personal courage. He knew that Pompey depended chiefly on his cavalry, which were seven thousand in number, whilst he had but one thousand; and he thought of a plan to secure their defeat. Knowing that these horsemen were chiefly the young Roman nobility, who were proud of their beauty, he directed his soldiers to aim only at their faces; this new mode of attack so alarmed and surprised them, that they turned back to save themselves from being disfigured. The greatest confusion took place in Pompey's army, while Cæsar's men were everywhere triumphant. Their general, seeing the victory was certain, cried out, "Spare the Romans!" upon which, most of the opposite party laid down their arms, and were received into the favour of the conqueror, B. C. 48.

Having secured Greece and the Eastern provinces for himself, by lowering the tribute that had been hitherto paid to Rome, Cæsar determined to pursue Pompey and the remnant of his party, who had escaped to Africa.

The end of the second triumvir is as melancholy as that of the first; and another lesson of the wretched consequences of seeking a high place in this evil world. Pompey, with his wife Cornelia, and a few attendants, sailed towards Egypt in a small vessel. Ptolemy Auletes, then lately dead, had been protected by Pompey in former years; and he expected now a similar kindness from his eldest son and daughter, Ptolemy and Cleopatra, who reigned in his stead. But the government were too much afraid of Cæsar's power,

to receive his enemy ; and determined to destroy the unfortunate Pompey, before he could reach the royal presence. To this end they sent a little boat to invite him on shore ; and a Roman messenger was commissioned to assure him of safety. Cornelia, however, suspected some mischief, and uttered the loudest lamentations as he left the ship, with one faithful attendant, a freedman, who loved his person. Being only a mile distant from the shore, she saw her husband land, and as a crowd of people seemed eager to salute him, her hope revived : but no sooner had he stepped out of the boat, than the treacherous Roman stabbed him, and he fell to the ground, covering his face with his robe. The single arm of his freedman was insufficient to defend him ; and his only consolation was in receiving the body after the head was severed from it. He burned it, according to the Roman custom, on the lonely sea-shore, and carefully preserved the ashes of his beloved master. Cornelia's shrieks even reached the shore ; but the captain of the vessel, knowing they were in danger, immediately set sail for Italy.

When Cæsar reached the coast of Egypt, he was greatly shocked by receiving the head of Pompey, which had been embalmed, as the Egyptian government concluded it would be an acceptable present to him : but he turned away, expressing his horror at their treacherous conduct, forgetting, as it were, that he was the great agent in Pompey's destruction. He raised a magnificent monument to his memory ; and sent the faithful servant to Cornelia, in Italy, with the ashes he had preserved.

Cæsar tarried awhile at Alexandria, to settle a dispute that had arisen between Cleopatra* and her brother, for they were not contented to share the throne. The Roman dictator took the part of the former, because he admired her beauty ; and this brought on a contest between the Roman and Egyptian forces. Cæsar was in great danger of being defeated ; and would have been drowned in a sinking ship, had he not saved himself by swimming. On this occasion,

* Cleopatra was the common name of the queens, as Ptolemy was of the kings of Egypt of Grecian origin : most of them were very wicked, but this last seems to have been the vilest of all.

he held the papers containing his commentaries in one hand above the water, and thus preserved the work which has been handed down to us. At length a fresh army arrived from Rome; and Antipater, at the head of some Jewish troops, with the king of Pergamus and his forces, helped to rescue Cæsar, and enabled him to defeat the Egyptians under Ptolemy; the latter was drowned in escaping down the Nile. The conqueror succeeded in establishing the youthful queen, and was in turn conquered by her: instead of quitting Egypt, he spent whole nights in feasting and excess of riot; for Cleopatra was as sensual and wicked as she was learned and beautiful. He was even on the point of accompanying her up the Nile on a pleasure excursion, when his favourite officers boldly reprov'd his conduct, and refused to follow him. Fearful, therefore, of losing the warlike character of which he was so proud, he gave up Cleopatra, and proceeded to finish the conquest of the East. Pharnaces, the king of Pontus, who had given up his father for the sake of the crown, was the next whom he crushed by the power of his arms; and so easily was the victory obtained, that in writing to the senate he used but three words to describe it, "*Veni, vidi, vici*," that is, "I came, I saw, I conquered." After this he returned to Rome, which had been filled with riot under the government of Mark Antony. Cæsar's presence restored some kind of order; and his moderation and humanity so won upon the affections of the people that they made him Perpetual Dictator.

But he did not remain long at Rome, as he could not rest till the whole of Pompey's party were destroyed. After the battle of Pharsalia, Cato had led a determined band, who would not submit to the conqueror; and they escaped, through burning deserts and countries infested by venomous serpents, to Utica, in Africa; for that city was the chief Roman settlement after the destruction of Carthage. Upon finding defence was hopeless, he advised his followers either to escape by sea, or to trust to Cæsar's mercy; though, according to his stoical principles, he believed it better to die than to lose his liberty. Some of his friends suspecting that he was bent on self-destruction, removed from his chamber the sword which he commonly kept by his bedside.

Cato supped with them as usual, and conversed cheerfully ; and when he retired for the night, spent some time in reading Plato's dialogue on the immortality of the soul. At length, missing his sword, he called to his son to bring it ; he wept, and besought his father in vain. Cato insisted upon having it ; and exclaiming, " Now I am again master of myself," he desired to be left alone. When all was quiet, he threw himself on his bed, and stabbed his own body : but in his fall, he overturned a table on which he had been drawing some geometrical figures ; and the noise brought in his son and other friends who were at hand, with a surgeon. The latter perceived it was still possible to save his life, and proceeded to bind up the wound before he could recover from his fainting fit. But as Cato roused himself, he fiercely tore off the bandages, forced away his friends, and in this dreadful state expired.

Such was the death of him who has been called the *last* of the Romans. But surely, since the freedom which the early Romans boasted was but the indulgence of proud self-will, leading to their own destruction, it was a more dreadful slavery than subjection to the worst tyranny of another. Cato's thought, of being the master of himself, is one of the favourite doctrines of the devil ; the supposition, that man has a right to do what he will with the life God has given him, is the most dangerous error : and even the smallest degree of self-will is to be feared, for it is enmity against God.

After the death of Cato, the republican party were easily scattered ; and Cæsar returned to Rome to receive his triumphal honours. The public procession lasted four days ; on the first, was the triumph for Gaul—on the second, for Egypt—on the third, for Asia—and on the fourth, for his last victories in Africa. Cæsar's veterans followed their general crowned with laurels ; large sums of money were given them, and thenceforth they retired from service, their bodies bearing the scars of their many wounds. Cæsar entertained the people at twenty-two thousand tables ; and gave each of the citizens a quantity of corn and oil. He also hired men, called gladiators, to fight with each other for the public amusement ; and such barbarous shows lasted

many days. The gladiator who killed his opponent was largely rewarded, and received with shouts of applause by the assembled multitude.

Such was the character of Roman glory; and, alas! how often do men glory in their shame.

Cæsar used his title of Imperator, or Commander (hence our word emperor); and was permitted by the senate to wear a crown of laurel around his bald head. His only remaining battles were with the sons of Pompey in Spain; and there he nearly lost his life: but they were at last conquered. His wars being ended, his active mind was employed in planning some useful works: he intended to drain the marshes around Rome, and to cut through the isthmus of Peloponnesus; but the accomplishments of such projects would have been beyond the limits of the longest life. However, he adorned Rome with the most magnificent buildings; and sought to raise Carthage, so as to make it the second city of the empire. He had also in view an expedition against the Parthians, as he desired to revenge the defeat of the Roman troops under Crassus; and to extend the empire farther eastward. But in the fifty-sixth year of his age, whilst full of designs for the future, the first emperor of Rome was suddenly cut off by a party of conspirators. There were many men, who might have made themselves of some importance in a republic, who looked with jealousy upon the superiority of one who prevented them from rising; and it was extraordinary Cæsar should expect, that where so many minds had been acting and ruling, he should be suffered to hold the supreme power in quietness, even though he exercised it with uncommon gentleness.

Brutus, a descendant of that Brutus who had in former ages abolished royalty, and a sharer of the same spirit, was the leader of the conspiracy against Cæsar; though the latter had spared his life after the battle of Pharsalia, and hoped that he had secured his attachment by many kindnesses. Brutus, indeed, seems to have loved Cæsar personally; but he could not bear to see him reign: and this foolish pride led to the worst consequences.

On a certain public festival, whilst Cæsar was seated on a

chair of state, Antony, one of his friends, in pursuance of a plan they had secretly formed, offered him a royal crown. He pretended to refuse it, thinking to win the favour of the people by his modesty : Antony presented it again, and Cæsar put it back with his hand, amidst the loud applauses of the citizens ; and thus he was disappointed in his expectation, that they would force it upon his acceptance. It is probable he might have expressed his feelings in private ; and thenceforward Brutus sought to alarm the people, by a report that Cæsar desired the *title* of king, for they did not seem to consider that he had long possessed the real authority. Many of the emperor's friends began to warn him of his danger, but he regarded it not ; and the augurs, who well knew the plot that was laid, pretended to foretell his approaching destruction by their own vain signs, but he paid them no attention.

Cæsar's last work was the reformation of the calendar ; and even this, useful as it was, caused offence to some who considered it as an added mark of his absolute power. On the fifteenth of March, B. C. 44, the day for the assembling of the senators, the emperor was repeatedly warned not to go to the senate-house ; his wife besought him not to leave his house, and on his way through the streets, two persons presented him with papers containing an account of the conspiracy, but he passed them to his secretary unread.

Having taken his usual station in the senate-house, at the foot of a large statue of Pompey, he began business without any suspicion of danger. Cimber, one of the conspirators, approached him with a petition for the recall of his brother who had been banished ; and, as if in the earnestness of his supplication, seized his robe. This was the appointed signal, and the rest immediately attacked him, as they were all near at hand. At first, Cæsar resisted them ; but when he perceived Brutus among the number, he ceased to defend himself, and exclaiming, "*Tu quoque, Brute*—thou also, Brutus !" he covered his face with his robe, and fell at the foot of Pompey's statue, pierced with twenty-three wounds. The conspirators, having finished their bloody work, took refuge in the Capitol ; every entrance to which was guarded by a body of gladiators in the pay of Brutus. But finding

the people were greatly enraged against them, they took the first opportunity of quitting Rome to raise commotions elsewhere. It is said that not one of these murderers died a natural death.

CHAP. LXII.

THE SECOND TRIUMVIRATE.

THE end of the first triumvirate did not prevent three other Romans from seeking the same dignity, and following the same course. These were Antony, who sought power chiefly that he might more freely indulge in sinful pleasures; Octavius, the nephew and adopted son of Cæsar; and Lepidus, an ambitious patrician, who had great influence over the army. Antony, under pretence of friendship for the late dictator, but in reality to gain his own ends, boldly desired the senate to determine, whether Cæsar had been a lawful magistrate, or a tyrannical usurper. Not knowing how to give a plain answer, without condemning so many of whom they were afraid, they said, they approved all Cæsar's acts, but at the same time they pardoned all the conspirators. Antony, dissatisfied with their reply, proceeded to excite the feelings of the people, by calling a public assembly wherein he read Cæsar's will, unfolded his bloody robe, and exhibited a waxen image, representing his body covered with wounds. He had beforehand privately altered the will; and made it appear that the late emperor had divided a great part of his fortune among the citizens of Rome. He then presented to them the young Octavius as Cæsar's heir, and the one who bore his name; and asked for permission to revenge the murdered emperor. These arts succeeded, and Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus, as the friends of Cæsar, obtained the power they wanted, to form a second triumvirate.

But these three usurpers were all afraid of each other, and only united together for their own selfish interests. Their first meeting for taking counsel as to their future proceedings lasted three days; and during this time each made out a list of the persons that he wished to have destroyed, or banished. On comparing their notes, they found that

the friends of one party proved in many cases to be the enemies of the other; but everything was sacrificed to strengthen their wicked alliance. Lepidus gave up his own brother; Antony, his uncle; and Octavius Cæsar consented that his friend Cicero should be murdered at Antony's desire.

It is impossible to describe the horrors that followed; the streets were covered with dead bodies, the heads of the senators cut off, and their bodies devoured by dogs and birds of prey. Having thus removed all whom they dreaded, the triumvirate divided the empire between them. Octavius, the most cunning of the three, kept Italy and the western provinces for himself; Antony had the East; and Lepidus received Africa for his portion. But knowing that they could not rule in safety whilst the murderers of Cæsar were living, they joined together to oppose them. Brutus had been raising an army in Macedon: and Cassius, the chief of his associates, had seized Syria, and raised money by a heavy tribute upon Judea; for that land was now involved in all the contentions of the Romans.

At Philippi, in Macedonia, the triumviri defeated Brutus and Cassius; and to escape falling into their enemies' hands, they destroyed themselves, B. C. 42. The head of Brutus was sent to Rome, to be thrown at the foot of a statue which had been raised in memory of Cæsar; for these dark heathens imagined that vengeance was as agreeable to the dead as to the living.

Before Antony went to his government in the East, he married Octavia, the sister of Octavius; a woman, whose moral character seems to have been beautiful, and who did everything to keep peace between her husband and brother. After their marriage they went into Greece, on their way to Asia; and at Athens, Mark Antony received the flattery of the most polite and highly educated people of the times, and conversed much with their wisest philosophers: but how little he learned of true wisdom will appear in his onward course. In his progress through his new dominions, all the monarchs of the East hastened to court his favour, and to assure him of their obedience to the Roman power.

The Jews also sought his interference in their affairs, which were again in a troubled state. Some of the latest

acts of Cæsar had been in their favour; for he had confirmed Hyrcanus as ruler and high-priest, and permitted him to repair the walls of Jerusalem. He had also excused the tribute in the sabbatical year; and granted privileges to all the Jews scattered throughout the Roman empire. But Antipater was still the actual ruler; and having received from Cæsar the title of procurator of Judea, he took the first opportunity of making his eldest son, Phasaël, governor of Jerusalem, and Herod, his second son, governor of Galilee.

A strong party of Jews, however, were jealous of the power of the Idumean family; and Malichus, who headed them, caused Antipater to be poisoned, whilst he was at a feast in Hyrcanus's palace. To revenge his father's death, Herod procured some Roman soldiers from Cassius, and Malichus was slain; but his party remained, and a hundred of them went to Antony, at Tyre, to complain of the sons of Antipater.

Hyrcanus and the Pharisees had also been opposed to them; but when Herod and Phasaël gained the advantage over them, they reproached Hyrcanus for ingratitude to their father, who had always befriended him: and the high-priest was glad to make peace, by giving his beautiful granddaughter, Mariamne, to Herod as his wife.

When Antony, therefore, asked Hyrcanus, who were the fittest persons to govern, he replied, Phasaël and Herod, and this answer decided the triumvir, as he was before inclined to favour them: his determination was not shaken, though a thousand Jews came to Tyre to petition against the Idumean family; he ordered his soldiers to disperse them as a tumultuous assembly, and many were killed.

Antony at this time proposed to subdue the Parthians, and made great preparations for the expedition; but whilst he lingered by the way, indulging in every sensual gratification, his generals accomplished the subjection of that fierce and warlike nation. The triumvir was at Tarsus, in Cilicia, living in the greatest luxury, when he received a visit from Cleopatra, who had come from Egypt purposely to obtain his favour. She had reason to dread the anger of the Romans, as she had caused her younger brother to be murdered, after Cæsar had desired that he should share the

kingdom with her. She came, using all the wiles of the devil to win the admiration of Antony, hoping he would be attracted by her beauty, as Cæsar formerly had been. To this end she had a ship fitted up in the most luxurious manner; the prow of the vessel and the oars were of silver, the sails of purple silk, and under a canopy upon the deck, she reclined on a couch spangled with gold, dressed as Venus, the imaginary goddess of beauty, was commonly represented in Grecian painting. As she sailed down the Cydnus, to Tarsus, the softest music began to play, and the perfumes that burned around her scented the banks of the river, where multitudes assembled to gaze on such a novel sight. With her fair speeches she soon won upon Antony, so that he neglected his own wife; and then he put her away for the sake of Cleopatra, whom he determined to follow into Egypt. He went after her, as Solomon says, "as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or a bird hastes to the snare, not knowing it is for his life." Her house was to him indeed as "the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

Octavia returned to Rome, and did all she could to excuse her husband's wicked conduct; but Octavius Cæsar, who had been increasing his power, was glad of an excuse for making war upon Antony, hoping thereby to obtain the whole empire for himself. He had already obliged Lepidus to retire into private life; for his conduct having deprived him of the affections of his army, it was not difficult to take away his portion of the empire.

Before I describe the final struggles between Octavius and Antony, I shall give you a more particular account of the state of the Jews at this period.

CHAP. LXIII.

THE REIGN OF HEROD.

THE Jewish Pharisees who still opposed the Idumean governors, found a leader in Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus: he had escaped from Rome, and with a large army, raised in Parthia, invaded Judea. Phasaël and Hyrcanus were seized and put in chains; but Herod fought his way through

the enemy's lines, and having secured his family in a strong fortress at Massada, in Idumea, hastened to Rome through Arabia and Egypt. Before he reached that city, news reached him that his brother had destroyed himself, knowing his death was determined upon; and though Hyrcanus still lived, his ears were cut off that he might not again serve as high-priest (see Lev. xxi. 16—24).

Herod, therefore, determined to ask for the whole kingdom for himself; and upon his arrival at Rome pleaded his own cause so powerfully that the Roman senate named him king of Judea.* Upon this he returned immediately to take possession of his dominions, and having raised an army relieved his family who were besieged in Massada; and after a fierce war totally defeated Antigonus in his last retreat at Jerusalem. Herod took the city by storm; and it was so thoroughly plundered by his Roman soldiers, and so many of the inhabitants destroyed, that he was heard to say, they were going to leave him king of a desert. Being desirous of winning the favour of the Jews, whom he wished to govern, he carefully protected the Temple, and paid the Romans a large sum of money to prevent them from entering it, B. C. 37.

Yet with many deeds of violence did this stranger obtain the rule over the Jewish nation; and his reign was one continued course of cruel tyranny and cunning arts. He sent Antigonus to Egypt in chains, where he was crucified by Antony's command. Until the death of this last Asmonean prince, Herod could not be undisputed king of the Jews: for no Jew would acknowledge him whilst one of their native rulers remained. Herod's next work was to put to death the chief partisans of the Asmonean family, and all the members of the Sanhedrin, except Hillel and Shammai, who had proposed to deliver up Jerusalem to him without opposition.

It is said that Hillel was president of the council until his death, and that Simeon, who took the infant Saviour in his arms, was his successor in that office. Shammai was the father of Gamaliel, the instructor of Paul, and the first of a

* It was now that *the sceptre departed from Judah* (Gen. xlix. 15); another sign that Christ was at hand.

long race of Jewish rabbins who bitterly opposed Christianity. Hillel seems to have been less harsh in spirit than Shammai; but both of them zealously supported the vain traditions* wherewith the Pharisees darkened Scripture while professing to explain it. These two doctors or teachers are held in the greatest veneration by the Jews.

In order to please his wife Mariamne, Herod appointed her brother Aristobulus high-priest, in the seventeenth year of his age. The aged Hyrcanus retired to Seleucia; and the Jews, who had a prosperous settlement there, treated him with much respect: but some years after, the jealous Herod induced him to return to Jerusalem, and caused him to be put to death. Alexandra, the mother of Mariamne and Aristobulus, not satisfied with the priesthood, wanted also to obtain the crown for her son: and to this end entered into a correspondence with the queen of Egypt. Herod heard of this, and perceiving also the increasing popularity of Aristobulus, he could not rest without destroying him. Having laid his treacherous plans, he invited the young high-priest to a banquet, and made him take sufficient wine to heat him; his attendants then proposed bathing in a piece of water which was near the banquet-room, and Aristobulus was invited to enjoy the refreshment he needed. Herod said he was fatigued, and withdrew from the apartment, leaving the youthful high-priest to the servants whom he had previously directed to drown him: they at first, under pretence of sport, put his head under the water, and then by force kept him down until he was suffocated. The cunning Herod pretended to mourn at the news of his death; but the unhappy mother saw through the disguise, and entreated Cleopatra to influence Mark Antony to punish him: he only escaped by sending them large presents when called to take his trial before them. On his departure for Egypt, he desired his uncle Joseph to put Mariamne to death if he should be condemned to die; as he could not bear that she should ever be the wife of another. During Herod's absence Joseph told Mariamne of the instructions that he had re-

* Much light is thrown upon the subject of the Jewish traditions by a converted Jew, whose publication is entitled, "Both one in Christ." Published by Seeley, Fleet Street.

ceived; and on her husband's safe return she reproached him for his selfish cruelty. The tyrant then put his uncle to death upon mere suspicion excited by his sister Salome, a woman resembling himself in disposition: she also accused Mariamne, but as one of Herod's strongest passions was his admiration of her person, he forbore to injure her at that time.

The contest between Octavius and Antony was now decided by a sea-fight near Actium, in Epirus. Cleopatra, who had been publicly proclaimed by Antony as his wife, and the queen of all the countries which he possessed, promised to assist him in his struggle with Octavius: but in the midst of the battle, she was so terrified that she sailed away with her whole fleet, and Antony quickly followed her. However his troops, not knowing he was gone, continued the fight, and might have gained the victory had they not discovered that their leader had deserted them: upon which they went over to Octavius. The king of Judea endeavoured to rouse Antony to put Cleopatra to death, and to make one grand effort for the empire; but finding the Egyptian queen alone occupied his mind, the cunning Herod determined to seek peace from the conqueror, who was on his way to Egypt. He therefore met Octavius at Rhodes; and on his coming into his presence, with his usual subtlety, he laid aside his crown, and told him that he was as willing to submit to him as he had been formerly to obey Mark Antony. Augustus desired him to take up the crown, and confirmed him as king of Judea.

This time, also, before Herod left Mariamne, being uncertain what reception he might meet, he gave the same orders as on a former occasion; but she again discovered his purpose, and instead of welcoming him upon his return, charged him with the many murders he had committed in her family, and his wicked intentions towards herself. Whilst Herod was in the deepest distress at her coldness and dislike, his sister Salome came to him with a fresh accusation against Mariamne, saying, she had tried to persuade his chief butler to poison him. After many struggles between his love for the person of his wife and his desire for revenge, he caused her to be publicly accused of crimes

of which she was wholly innocent, and sentenced her to be beheaded. On her way to the place of execution he obliged her attendants, and even her own mother, to insult her in the most cruel manner: but Mariamne, who seems to have lived in the fear of God, and to have had a conscience void of offence, meekly bore this treatment; and laid down her head without a struggle, as if rejoicing that her life of suffering was ended. Scarcely, however, was she dead, when Herod bitterly repented his cruelty; and in the agony of remorse he was constantly calling for his murdered Mariamne, even in his sleep. The trouble of his mind brought on a severe illness; and that, in turn, increased the natural suspicion and cruelty of his disposition. Alexandra, the mother of Mariamne, was put to death shortly afterwards, and great numbers of the most faithful in the land were also destroyed.

A great pestilence followed the death of Mariamne; and the people considered it as a national judgment on account of the murder of the last of the Asmoneans, B. C. 29.

If such were the *shame* and dishonour in Israel, and such the *darkness* of the Gentiles, what was the abounding grace of God in sending forth his son who was to be **A LIGHT TO LIGHTEN THE GENTILES AND THE GLORY OF HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL.**

CHAP. LXIV.

THE AUGUSTAN AGE.

WE have now to trace the melancholy end of Antony, by which Octavius Cæsar became undisputed master of the Roman empire. The scene in Egypt was little less painful than that in Judea; for the works of the devil are as plainly to be seen there. The treacherous Cleopatra loved Antony's power rather than himself; and now courted his enemy in the hope of saving her life and her kingdom. But Octavius was not to be won by her, as Cæsar and Antony had been: he resisted all her offers, and determined to add Egypt to his dominions, and to make her his prisoner. Antony, however, became suspicious of her communications with Octavius, and reproached her bitterly; upon which she shut herself

up in a strong building that was intended for a sepulchral monument, taking with her a few attendants and all her treasures. After a few days she caused a report to be spread that she was dead. Antony, in the deepest grief, ceased to defend the city; and saying that there was nothing more worth living for, desired his freedman to kill him. The poor man, who loved his wretched master, drew out his sword as if he were going to obey him, and then plunged it into his own bosom. Antony hung awhile over the dead body, astonished at the devotedness of his servant; and then, seizing the sword, he gave himself a mortal wound. As he was dying, a messenger arrived, telling him the queen was still alive and desired to see him: but as she would not have the gates of her fortress opened, he was drawn up, through a window, by cords let down from within. Never was there a more miserable display of the evil effects of the indulgence of the passions than in this strange interview. Cleopatra tore her clothes with every expression of violent sorrow; and whilst endeavouring to console her, and speaking of his past greatness, Antony expired, B. C. 30.

When Octavius got Cleopatra into his power, he treated her with courtesy, because he wished to save her to grace his triumph: and he even permitted her to bury Antony with the greatest pomp. But, finding she could not win the conqueror's affections, and that within three days he purposed to send her to Rome with her children, she determined to destroy herself. As her movements were carefully watched, and every instrument of destruction kept out of her way, Cleopatra thought of a plan whereby to deceive her guards. She ordered a sumptuous banquet, and put on her most splendid robes: and after feasting with her attendants, desired to be left to repose on her couch with only two of her women in whom she had confided. She then wrote to Octavius, telling him she was going to put an end to her own life, that she might escape the disgrace of being exhibited as his captive at Rome. After sending off her letter, she took out an asp, or venomous serpent, that had been concealed in a basket of fruit and flowers, brought in by a peasant who passed unsuspected by the guards, and having suffered it to bite her, she lay back on her couch, and

gave it to her two attendants, who were resolved to die with her. Octavius on receiving the letter, sent messengers to prevent Cleopatra from executing her purpose; but they arrived too late. The queen was lying dead, arrayed in her royal robes; one of her women stretched at her feet, and the other, but just alive, was endeavouring to fix the diadem on the head of her mistress. It is said that she exclaimed, "It is well done: such a death becomes a glorious queen, descended from a race of glorious ancestors!" Such rather, we should say, was the work of the Old Serpent; making a mock of death, and covering the horrors of futurity with such vain shows and such wrong judgments as these.

From this time, Egypt also became a province of the Roman Empire. Octavius Cæsar returned to Rome, determined to secure by gentleness and mercy, the empire which he gained by violence. The senate gave him the surname of Augustus (a word expressing something divine); and then his person was declared sacred, and his authority even above the laws. The senators, during his reign, were one thousand in number, but they were wholly subject to his will. The army was as entirely at his command; it consisted, even in time of peace, of twenty-three, or twenty-five legions; and each legion was composed of about six thousand three hundred foot, and seven hundred horse, or seven thousand fighting men. The legions were distributed through the different provinces of his vast empire; the strongest bodies being placed among the barbarous people of the West. The chief commander of each legion was called *Legatus*, or Lieutenant. Augustus, for by that name Octavius Cæsar is generally distinguished, was the great patron of literature and learned men; and the writers of the Augustan age are considered the most elegant of the Roman authors. It seems that his chief minister, Mecænas, who was a great lover of learning and an amiable character, had the greatest influence in softening the disposition of Augustus; and it was he who introduced Virgil and Horace at his court. The emperor often dined with one at his right hand, and the other at his left; for these poets were fond of luxurious indulgence. Virgil undertook his poem, the *Æneid*, at the request of Augustus; and flattered him by describing him under the character of *Æneas*, making

his hero as perfect as he could, to please the emperor. Horace and Ovid used similar arts : and probably it is the picture of Augustus, as painted by them, which has been so much admired. In these heathen writings there is much to be abhorred by the disciple of Christ : and the sentiments contained in them are so much the more dangerous, as they are concealed in such harmonious poetry, and amidst such beautiful descriptions of the most pleasing natural objects. The thoughts are often grossly impure ; and sins that should not be so much as named are adorned, or veiled, so as to conceal their enormity.

The Augustan age has been proverbial for peace, prosperity, and literature : but it was peace purchased by the most cruel and destructive wars ; prosperity without righteousness ; and learning without any true wisdom or holiness. Such it is probable, will at first be the character of the days of Antichrist ; but such will not be the character of that blessed Millennial age which will succeed them.

It seems, that the universal peace which now prevailed throughout the Roman empire, led to a general expectation that a period of happiness was beginning ; and it is likely also that the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the glorious reign of Christ, were not unknown to the learned. Virgil wrote a flattering poem on the birth of the son of Pollio, consul of Rome b. c. 40 ; and from the translation subjoined, you will observe that the thoughts, and much of the language, appear to be borrowed from the Scriptures.*

But, as if to prove how foolishly such words were applied to the child thus complimented by Virgil, he died shortly after.

“ The great order of the ages begins anew . . . now a new race is sent down from high heaven . . . in this infant the golden age shall rise over the whole world. In

* Some tradition of the appearance of an extraordinary person to be born into the world for universal blessing, was doubtless preserved among the heathens. Certain verses, called the Sibylline prophecies, had been carefully treasured at Rome ever since the days of Tarquin ; and, in these, mention was made of such a person as Virgil describes. But much of this truth was doubtless learned from the Jews, who were scattered everywhere.

thy consulship, O Pollio, shall the glory of the age begin. . . . He shall enjoy the life of gods, and shall see heroes mixed with gods, and he shall be seen of them, and shall rule the reconciled world with his father's virtues. But to thee, O child, shall the earth pour forth her first gifts without culture . . . the herds shall not stand in fear of the great lions. Thy very cradle shall pour forth pleasing flowers, and the serpent shall perish, and the deceitful herb of poison shall perish, and Assyrian amomum [a very rare plant with a rich perfume] shall grow common." He then describes the gradual coming in of fuller blessing which will distinguish his youth, "when clustering grapes shall hang on the thorn, and honey drop from the oak-tree." But some traces of sin will still remain, and wars shall not immediately cease. But when arrived at his full age, there will be no need for navigation, for every land shall bear what the inhabitants need. The ground will not need harrowing, nor the vines require pruning. He ends his description thus: "Behold the world tottering with its own weight, the earth and the expanse of seas, and the high heaven. Behold, how all things rejoice at the approaching age."

We have seen how all the nations have groaned under oppressive rulers: we have seen the universal suffering, but, notwithstanding all this, we must own that the earth was not prepared for a heavenly king. By the prophet Haggai the Lord said, "Yet once it is *a little while*, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and *the desire of all nations* shall come" &c. (ii. 6, 7). And "this word," spoken of by the apostle Paul as something yet promised by the Lord (Heb. xii. 26, 27), will doubtless be fulfilled at the coming of the Lord from heaven.

Augustus sought to restrain by laws, the gross outward sins in which the Romans had long indulged; and the barbarous shows of gladiators were only suffered twice in the year: but on these occasions, it is said, a hundred and twenty men often fought together.

Like Alexander, the emperor of Rome desired to be considered the son of a god, and his mother publicly reported

that Apollo was his father : he then foolishly thought there was something divine in the brightness of his eyes, and was pleased when any one looked away from his gaze, as if they could not bear it. But notwithstanding this ridiculous vanity, his conduct, on the whole, won the affections of the people : and his minister Mecænas diligently cherished his humanity towards them. On one occasion, when he was seated on the judgment-seat, and Mecænas perceived from his countenance that he was inclined to be severe, he threw a paper into his lap, to this effect, " Arise, executioner." Augustus understood the reproof, and rising up immediately pardoned those he was about to condemn. At another time, being displeased at the timid manner in which one of his subjects presented a petition, he exclaimed, " Friend, be bolder, you seem as if you were offering something to an elephant, instead of to a man." His domestic misery was great, partly through his own sins, and partly through the evil conduct of his children. His adopted son, Tiberius (the child of his wife Livia, who had been given up by her former husband at his request), being of the most obstinate temper, was banished for some years ; but was afterwards recalled by his mother's influence, and united with Augustus in the government two years before his death. His daughter Julia, whom he had married to his general, Agrippa, was so openly wicked, that she also was banished from Rome.

It is said, the city of Rome was fifty miles in circumference, and contained four millions of inhabitants, in the reign of Augustus. Having established peace throughout his dominions, he caused the temple of Janus to be shut (the third time only that it had been closed since the building of Rome) in the very year in which the Saviour, the Prince of Peace, was born into the world.

Augustus died fourteen years after, aged seventy-five. The latter period of his reign belongs to the subsequent part of our history. We have now to consider the close of Herod's life.

CHAP. LXV.

THE CLOSE OF HEROD'S REIGN.

THE hatred of the Jews towards Herod was still increased, by his building a theatre in the city, and an amphitheatre outside the walls, for the barbarous shows of gladiators and wild beasts, which even disgraced heathen Rome. Ten Jews went one night to the theatre, with short swords concealed under their garments, intending to kill the king; but he had obtained information of the plot and had not left the palace. He caused them to be seized, and put to death with the greatest tortures; upon which, the maddened people rushed upon the informer, and tore him to pieces. This only increased Herod's rage, and led him to torture all whom he suspected of any knowledge of, or concern in, the conspiracy. It is likely that his cruelty would have produced a general rebellion, had not a dreadful famine, in which he exerted himself to supply his subjects with food, reconciled them in some measure to his rule. He melted down all his plate, and bought corn from foreign countries at an immense expense; and he also imported wool, as the failure of the flocks had occasioned a great scarcity of that necessary article. To increase his favour with the people, he then proposed to rebuild the Temple; as it had been injured much, through the rage of the different parties who had used it as a place of defence. At first, they suspected that he intended to destroy it; and only believed him when they saw he had collected sufficient materials to build the new Temple, before he began to pull down the old one. Then all hastened to assist; ten thousand labourers were employed for two years, with a thousand waggons, and a thousand priests to give the necessary directions. The most holy place was finished in a year and a half, so that there was little interruption in the services; the rest of the building was finished eight years after; but, including the courts, added by Herod's successors, and many improvements, the Temple, as it stood during the Lord's ministry, had been forty-six years in building (John ii. 20). At the end of eight years it was dedicated to God, with numerous sacrifices and uni-

versal rejoicing. It was still called the Second Temple ; though none of the structure, raised four hundred years before, remained ; and it covered a larger space of ground, and was built in a more magnificent manner than that of Solomon.

Whilst the Temple was building, Herod visited Rome, where Alexander and Aristobulus, the sons of Mariamne, were receiving their education. He was so much pleased with them that he brought them back to their native land ; and the Jews gladly welcomed them as the last representatives of the beloved Asmonean family. This was sufficient to rouse Herod's jealousy ; and the young men having imprudently provoked Salome, by charging her with having caused their mother's murder, she took the first opportunity of persuading Herod they had a design upon his life, and recommended him to take Antipater, his son by a former marriage, into his favour instead of them. Antipater was as full of subtlety and malice as his supporter Salome, and succeeded so well in flattering Herod, that he was soon declared heir to the crown ; and the king accused his sons, by Mariamne, before Augustus.

The emperor laboured to reconcile the father to his innocent children : but only a few months after, the wicked Salome alarmed him afresh, and made him ask permission to bring his sons to a public trial. Augustus consented most unwillingly ; and they were brought before an assembly of Roman prefects in western Asia. It was a strange sight to see a father pleading against his own sons in person ! By his authority sentence of death was passed upon them ; and in spite of every entreaty, they were strangled according to his orders.

After this, remorse again seized him ; and he began to pay great attention to the children that his eldest son had left : then Antipater was filled with alarm, and he would have destroyed Herod had not his plot been made known to him. I have dwelt so particularly on the many jealousies of this cruel tyrant, to show you that he was a likely person to be filled with anxiety when there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem at this very period, saying, " Where is he that is *born king of the Jews* ; for we have seen his star in the

East, and are *come to worship him.*" His peculiar subtlety also was apparent in his direction to the wise men to bring him word when they had found the child, that *he* might go and worship him also. But you know they were directed to return into their own country another way ; and the child Jesus was taken by night into Egypt. The jealous king, however, could only quiet his fears by causing all the children in Bethlehem, under two years of age, to be murdered. Scarcely had this been accomplished, when he brought Antipater to trial, and sentence of death was pronounced upon him. Herod was immediately after seized with an incurable though lingering disease. The agonies of his body only increased his cruelty, and hearing that Antipater was rejoicing at the prospect of his death, he caused him to be immediately executed. Some of the zealots (as those were called who had a zeal for their religion which led to acts of violence) possibly believing that Herod was dead, hastened to pull down a golden eagle that he had set up on the gate of the Temple. This caused a riot, in which many were slain ; and the wretched Herod getting information of the cause, ordered the zealots to be burned alive. He then sent for all the chief of the Jewish nobility, and had them shut up in prison ; giving orders that they should be slain as he breathed his last, in order that the Jews might have some cause for lamentation ; but this barbarous order was never obeyed. He died in such dreadful torments, that one of his last efforts was to stab himself ; but he was prevented by one of his attendants. He had reigned thirty-seven years, and was seventy years of age. By his last will he divided his dominions between his three remaining sons, Archelaus, Antipas, and Phillip.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE now led you to contemplate the great facts in the history of the world during the first four thousand years of its existence ; and in looking back through this book you will see there are distinct periods within which less important events are included. You know the use of milestones

in measuring distances along the road; and you will find these *historical milestones* helpful in travelling through these forty centuries. I repeat them to make my meaning more clear.

ADAM	. . . . .	The Head of the human family .	B.C.4004
NOAH	. . . . .	The Head of the family after the flood	B.C.2348
ABRAHAM .	. . . . .	The Head of the family of Israel	B.C.1996
SOLOMON .	. . . . .	The Head of the kingdom of Israel	B.C.1000
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.		The Head of the Assyrian empire	B.C. 600
CYRUS		The Head of the Medo-Persian em- pire	B.C. 555
ALEXANDER .		The Head of the Macedo-Grecian empire	B.C. 333
AUGUSTUS CÆSAR		The Head of the Roman empire	B.C. 30

We have seen, as we passed, the failure of all these different heads; and we shall now come to **THE ONLY UNFAILING ONE, CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.**

There was an *uncertain* expectation of *light* among the Gentiles, and there were a faithful few in Judæa "waiting for the consolation of Israel," with a *sure* hope of the promised *glory*. But the Jews and Gentiles, generally, were equally unprepared to receive the Son of God in his deep humiliation. We have traced all man's thoughts about greatness and happiness; but have we found the great happy? May we not say that the highest places in this world have appeared the most wretched, and the most abounding in sin? So when God was manifest in the flesh what do we see? Not the strength, and the power, and the glory that man could value; not that which can be understood now by any natural mind, but that which "the faith of the operation of God" leads a poor sinner to admire and adore—the *glory of his grace*. A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes—the very picture of weakness; lying in a manger—the proof of the deepest poverty and disregard of man—and he was called the *carpenter's* son—enough, as we have seen in a former history, to unfit him from ever being a king, even upon earth, according to the thoughts of man.

His history could only be worthily written by those to whom the Holy Ghost brought the remembrance of His

works, and ways, and words. But it will now be interesting to notice the events occurring in the world during the Lord's stay upon earth ; and to trace the history of man under the new dispensation, wherein the Gospel of the grace of God may be freely preached to every creature.

PART II.

FROM THE FIRST APPEARING OF CHRIST TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY AT THE CLOSE OF THE REIGN OF CONSTANTINE.

CHAPTER I.

STATE OF THE WORLD AT THE TIME OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.—THREE CLASSES OF INHABITANTS.—PHILOSOPHICAL SECTS AMONG THE GREEKS AND ROMANS.—RELIGIOUS STATE OF THE JEWS.

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”—Gal. iv. 4.

WE see the whole Roman world brought into a state of outward tranquillity under the powerful rule of Augustus Cæsar. The stirring nations seem to be hushed, and no remarkable event attracts our attention to other parts of the earth, whilst Judea becomes the scene of greatest interest to the thoughtful mind.

In the beginning of our history we were observing the *creating* power of the Word of God; we have now to contemplate that greater mystery of love,—“The Word was *made flesh* and dwelt among us” (John i. 14)—in other words, “God was manifest *in the flesh*” (1 Tim. iii. 16).

In the ages we have passed through, we have seen, in many painful forms, the power of sin and of Satan manifested in the flesh; and though among Jewish believers the power of the Spirit of God was sometimes very evident, it never could be said that “God was manifest in the flesh,” till Christ Jesus came into the world. Words seem to fail in making known this miracle of love; and it is only the Holy

Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and shews them to his people, that can enable any of us to understand it aright.

It will be instructive to mark the state of the world at large, as well as the circumstances of the Jewish people, at this period; as the greatness and universality of the existing evils must tend to magnify the riches of God's grace, and the depths of His wisdom, in sending forth His Son at this very time.

We may consider the inhabitants of the world under three great classes, Romans, Greeks, and Barbarians. By *Romans* we do not understand merely the inhabitants of Rome or of Italy, but all throughout the empire who had obtained the same privileges as the Roman citizens, and were always classed among them. Rome, like an immense beehive, sent out its swarms from time to time into the countries which had been subdued by its legions; and these, mingling with the original inhabitants, introduced their own language, manners, arts, and sciences. And not only in this way were Roman citizens found in every part of the empire; but the most obedient or honourable provincials, being favoured with an admission to the same rank and obtaining the same rights, were added to the number.

The Roman colonists, or conquering armies, introduced their own language among the Western nations; and it was almost universally adopted in Africa Proper, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Pannonia: and even where the original language was not lost, it was mixed up with the Latin tongue.

By *Greeks*, we do not mean only the inhabitants of Greece; for they, like the Romans in their prosperous days, had extended themselves by conquest or commerce far beyond the limits of their own country, and carried their own language, customs, &c., wherever they formed establishments. In Syria and Egypt the Greeks exceeded the Romans in number, and there were Greek cities in Italy, Egypt, Asia Minor, and elsewhere; we are even told that the luxurious Syrians and obstinate Egyptians cared little for the title or privileges of Roman citizens, and despised the language or manners of their conquerors. The Greeks everywhere naturally preferred their own language; and as Greece was the school-place of the noblest Romans, the

beauty of that expressive tongue was acknowledged by the educated; and it gradually became the language of science, so that almost all scientific terms in use at this day are of Greek origin.

By *Barbarians*, we here mean all to whom the Romans and Greeks applied this term—that is, those whom they considered less civilized than themselves; though in all cases our ideas on this subject would not agree with theirs. For instance, the Persians, who appear to have been highly civilized, were classed among the barbarians; and a Greek philosopher, quoting from St. John's gospel, speaks of the writer as a *barbarian*. In fact, all the Jews, except such as were born, as Paul was, in a city that had the freedom of Rome, were reckoned as barbarians.

The Romans and Greeks had embraced the same extravagant system of polytheism; but the gods of the former probably far out-numbered those of the latter, as it was a part of their policy to adopt those of the people whom they conquered, in order to reconcile them to the yoke. Through the long-continued intercourse between the Greeks and Romans, the same sects also prevailed among both; and it will be necessary to give a general sketch of them at this period, that Christianity, or “the sect of the Nazarenes,” as it was contemptuously called, may appear in all the beauty of contrast with the false systems of men.

All the philosophical sects prided themselves on their superiority over the unreflecting multitude who believed in a plurality of gods; but they attended the temples and sacrifices with the mass of the people, pretending that it was right to support the national religion, as a means of preserving order in the world. In bowing down to images, they accommodated themselves to popular ideas and customs: but in their schools, and in conversation with each other, they ridiculed the common practice, or professed to worship one God under a variety of representations.

The *Epicureans*, who abounded at Rome in the Augustan age, first sprang up in that city (B.C. 50) through the instrumentality of Lucretius, a writer who introduced the doctrines of the sect in a poem said to be composed during a violent delirium. They held that there was no Supreme

Being, that the world was created by chance, that the soul died with the body ; and that therefore it was true wisdom to enjoy the present time.

The *Academics* much resembled modern infidels in questioning all that was commonly believed, without having any thing better to offer in its place.

The *Aristotelians* represented the Supreme Being as indifferent to human affairs, and happy in the contemplation of his own excellence. But as a proof how impossible it is that any who believe in the existence of God, can suppose him to be unconcerned about the works of his own hands, it is related that the founder of this school, when he was dying, expressed much anxiety, and exclaimed, "Cause of causes have mercy upon me !"

The *Stoics* held that there was one God, a spirit, and that the whole universe was his body. They peopled the world with invisible beings, and supposed that every man had a guiding demon ; and that his happiness consisted in following its leadings in obedience to the Supreme Mind. They taught the duty of entire submission under all circumstances, and that perfection might be attained by controlling the passions : they believed that the soul was mortal, and had no motive in living virtuously but to secure present happiness.

The *Platonists* believed in one God, perfect, self-existent, self-sufficient, and infinitely good ; that he was desirous to make his creatures happy, and that all morality consisted in conformity to his will. They taught that the soul was immortal, and that there was a future state of rewards and punishments.* All this appeared very fair ; but they added, that the Deity was confined to a certain space, and that there was an unconquerable evil in matter which he could not overcome.

The system of Plato was nearly allied with the Oriental philosophy, to which it is also necessary to refer, as it prevailed in Persia and other Eastern countries at this period.

The *Gnostics* (as they were called, from a Greek word

* It can hardly be doubted that the heathen philosophers gained from the Jews every idea that was according to truth. "What is Plato but Moses in a Grecian dress?" is the question of a heathen writer.

signifying *science*) professed to believe that there was one Eternal Mind; but that matter, which they held to be the source of all evil, was formed into this habitable world by some inferior being, whom they called the Demiurgus, and represented with many fine qualities, but haughty and ambitious. They said that the Eternal inhabited a certain space called the Pleroma; and that, after ages of happy solitude, he had peopled it with ever-during minds of both sexes, who perfectly resembled himself. They believed that man was composed of a perfect soul and a corrupt body, which oppresses it. The Supreme Being, they said, employs various means to deliver man from it, but is always opposed by the Demiurgus. Those who overcome the sinful matter rise and dwell in the Pleroma after the death of the body; but those who do not must pass from one body to another till they are purified. They had a hope that the Eternal would at length overcome evil, by destroying matter, and that the souls confined in mortal prisons would, after the destruction of the world, dwell with him and the happy spirits in the Pleroma. Well might the Apostle say, "*the world by wisdom knew not God.*" And if the philosophers of the age were supporting such strange and fanciful religious systems as these, and thus proving that they were *afar off* from God, how gross was the darkness of the idolatrous world, who worshipped devils, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk. All the nations beyond the Roman empire had their own peculiar superstitions and observances; and human sacrifices were still offered by the Druids and other barbarian priests.

Having thus briefly noticed the different religious systems established by ignorant men, we must consider the grievous corruption of the only religion ever established on the earth by God. Religious corruption must always be regarded in two points of view; first, as it respects doctrine; and, secondly, as it affects the practice. It is quite possible to have a sound creed, that is, to receive all revealed truth with the understanding; and yet, as the Apostle says, to "hold the truth in unrighteousness;" and it is therefore written, "*with the heart* man believeth unto righteousness:"

and those who are saved, receive "the love of the truth." Remember, therefore, it is only the loving hearty reception of the truth of God that leads to righteousness, or ends in salvation.

On the other hand, the practice, or outward conduct of a man, may be beautiful in the eyes of his fellow-men, and yet sound faith, with its inseparable companion—love, be so far wanting within, that, as the Lord said, he resembles a whited sepulchre, or a platter that is only cleansed on the outside; for God sees in him nothing but death and uncleanness. It is to be observed, that the last days under the Jewish dispensation appear to answer to the prophetic description of the last days under the Christian dispensation, in this grand particular—the form of godliness combined with the denial of the power of it. Compare Matt. xxiii. 28; 2 Tim. iii. 5.

At the time of the Lord's first appearing, the Jews were divided into three great sects: the *Pharisees* and *Sadducees* already mentioned, who were best known in Jerusalem, and the *Essenes*, who chose to live in solitude, or in companies at a distance from the city. They held the Gnostic opinion, that the body was a mass of evil matter, the prison of the immortal spirit, and believed that a life of solitude and hardship, without the indulgence of any natural affection, would raise the soul to God, and ensure future happiness. They were, among the Jews, in some respects similar to monks among Christians. They differed from the Pharisees, who looked for the resurrection of the body to share either the reward or punishment of the soul; and they differed from the Sadducees, who denied both the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. The Essenes refused to marry, lived upon the produce of the earth cultivated by their own hands, wore a particular dress, observed almost continual silence, and had many singular customs which they followed with great exactness.

The Jews then, we perceive, had gone far away from the simplicity of the written word, and were almost as ignorant of God and his truth as the heathen world. All, excepting a small remnant, kept faithful by the sovereign grace of Jehovah, had sinned by either adding to his commandments

or diminishing from them. See Deut. xii. 32. That blessed remnant were, without doubt, saying in their hearts, "*It is time for thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.*" Thus it is clear that, as it regards the *religious* state of the Jews and Gentiles, the fulness of the time was come for the appearing of the Son of God; for it seemed as if the only true God were well nigh forgotten on the earth, and the things that please Him unknown among men.

And now, having considered the religious condition of man, or his notions of God, and state towards Him, we will dwell a little on the political and moral condition of the Romans and of the Jews, during the first years of the Lord's stay upon earth, as we shall thus discover the state of men towards each other.

CHAP. II.

GOVERNMENT OF AUGUSTUS.—BURIAL OF HEROD.—TUMULTS IN JUDEA.—DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE.—THE SONS OF HEROD.—JUDEA, A ROMAN PROVINCE.—GALILEAN PRINCIPLES.—THE EARLY LIFE OF CHRIST.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Who-soever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation [judgment]."—Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

THE head of the Roman empire has been already described; but it will be proper to enlarge a little on his character and mode of government. The title *Imperator* did not convey to the Romans the same idea that the word *Emperor* gives to us; but at first signified only the chief commander of the armies. Augustus Cæsar was so called; but his favourite title was *Prince of the Senate*, as it was in the name of that body he professed to govern. The remembrance of his uncle's murder made him artfully avoid the appearance of holding absolute power; and in order to escape the suspicions of the people, he carefully preserved the forms of a republic, whilst he firmly established a monarchy. He contrived to disguise his sovereignty, by occasionally proposing

to give up the authority which he professed to hold for the public good, and by deceiving the people with the shadow, whilst he robbed them of the substance of power. The dress, the palace, and the table of Augustus equalled those of the wealthiest senators only, and his household was wholly made up of slaves and freedmen, for he would not employ the poorest Roman in any menial office. He went with apparent humility to ask the votes of the people for the office of consul or tribune; and he would himself give his vote as a private senator, whilst his word, in the end, was the law. At the same time he gathered round his person the finest-looking and bravest of the youths of Italy, and these were gradually formed into a powerful body of guards, at first called Augustus' band, and afterwards the prætorian bands, as they were the assistants of the prætor, or first magistrate of Rome, in keeping order throughout the city. They were distinguished from the other troops by more costly dress, double pay, and particular privileges. Under their protection, Augustus felt himself secure; and during the latter part of his reign was less careful to conceal the reality of his power.

It was before a Roman court, appointed by this emperor, that the three sons of Herod appeared, each desiring to obtain the whole, instead of part of their father's late dominions. Herod had married ten wives, and his children were numerous; but Archelaus and Herod Antipas, the sons of his sixth wife, and Philip, the son of the seventh, were alone named in his will as his successors. Archelaus took the charge of his father's funeral, and tried to gain the favour of the Jews by giving them a public banquet on the occasion, and by making great promises. The splendid burial of the wretched tyrant who had been so long king of the Jews, forms a striking contrast with the carrying away of the Holy Child, "born King of the Jews," and his hiding in Egypt, that same year.

Herod's corpse was wrapped in purple, and adorned with the diadem and sceptre; the bier was ornamented with precious stones, and the whole army followed it in battle array, with five hundred court officers bearing sweet spices to embalm the body. For seven days a pretended mourning

was observed ; but at the close of that period, when Archelaus addressed the multitude gathered in the Temple, the zealots, whose leader and three companions had been burned alive by Herod's order, demanded the immediate punishment of all who had been concerned in the execution of that cruel order, and the election of a new high priest. The young prince strove to quiet them without granting their desires ; but their party daily gained strength by fresh arrivals from the country, as the Jews were then coming from all parts to celebrate the passover. At the time of the morning sacrifice, Archelaus sent some soldiers to seize the most forward of the zealots, but they defended themselves and drove away their assailants. This contempt for his authority enraged the son of Herod, and led him to attack the party assembled in the Temple, and to prevent the entrance of the strangers outside the walls. The unarmed multitude could make no resistance ; three thousand were killed and the rest dispersed, so that in the first year of the appearing of the promised Lamb of God, the great national feast which was intended as the perpetual type of Him was not kept. The whole nation was terrified and distressed by this extraordinary occurrence, for there were few who knew that the substance was among them while they were deprived of the shadow.

It is not surprising that, during the absence of the sons of Herod, and in the unsettled state of the country arising from uncertainty as to the emperor's decision in their favour, many adventurers tried to obtain the kingdom. The common expectation that some mighty one was about to appear, led astray such as did not know, or would not believe, that Christ the Lord was already come. Simon, a very strong and fine-looking man, one of Herod's slaves, pretended to the throne, and put on a diadem. Athrorges, a common shepherd, did the same, being aided by his four brothers, all of them men of extraordinary strength and courage ; and these two leaders gathered round them powerful bands of robbers. Whilst the whole country was disturbed by these and other pretenders, all Jerusalem was also in an uproar. Sabinus, the procurator of Syria, had taken this opportunity of bringing his troops into the city, and, under pretence of keeping order, sought to gratify his own pride and avarice.

The Jews, being strengthened by the numbers of their countrymen who were come up to the feast of Pentecost, resolved to punish the insolent Roman who acted as their master. The Temple treasury was the object which Sabinus set before his soldiers, and this was most strongly defended by the Jews.

In order to understand the many contests that took place in and around the Temple, it may be well to describe this extraordinary building in its complete state, according to the report of Josephus. The Temple stood upon Mount Zion, on the north side of the city, the front entrance facing the east. Some of the stones used in the foundation were seventy feet square; and, being built on a rock, it had all the strength of a fortress. The open courts around the Temple were paved with a variety of inlaid marbles. The first, called the Court of the Gentiles because it was the only part to which they were admitted, was separated by elegant stone railings, five feet high, from the second court, called the Court of Israel: and pillars were placed at regular distances, bearing inscriptions in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, warning all strangers or unclean Jews not to proceed beyond the outer court. Between the Court of Israel and the Temple itself was a beautiful range of porticoes, called the cloisters. The roof of carved cedar, covered with costly gilding, was supported by a hundred and sixty-two columns of solid white marble, each more than forty feet high. There were ten gates to the Temple, but that called the Beautiful Gate was of the finest workmanship; it was of the purest brass, sheeted with gold, and eighty-seven and a half feet in height. It is added, that a golden vine hung over the golden gate, which, like a natural vine, was continually increasing, as some offered a leaf, others a grape, and so on. The roof of the Temple was set all over with golden spikes, to prevent the birds from settling on it, and defiling it. The whole building was of the whitest marble, and, when the sun shone upon it, must have been a gorgeous sight to the natural eye; and at the time the disciples called their Master's attention to "these great buildings," they covered a space of ground measuring a furlong square. The Temple itself was built according to the original plan, only on a

larger and more expensive scale, hence it always retained the name of Solomon's Temple.

The first struggle between Sabinus and the Jews took place in the outer courts. The Jews warmly defended the cloisters, till they were set on fire by a Roman soldier. The roof, which was cemented with pitch and wax, was soon in a blaze, the gilding melted, and several of the columns fell, so that many of the Jews were crushed to death. The treasury was forced open ; but the maddened Jews were at length victorious, and obliged Sabinus to retire into the strong palace of the Antonia. Varus, the prefect of Syria, soon came to his relief, and after restoring quietness at Jerusalem, spread his troops through the country, in order to re-establish order there, also. Simon and Athronges were slain with many of their followers. Two thousand other rebels were crucified in different places, and their leaders sent to Rome for trial.

In the meantime the contentions of the sons of Herod had ended ; for when they found that a deputation from Jerusalem, aided by the eight thousand Jews resident at Rome, besought the emperor to restore the priestly government, they thought it better to strengthen each other's interest, and were willing rather to share their father's dominions than to lose them altogether. In vain did the Jews relate to Augustus their terrible experience of royalty in the person of Herod ; they were to learn that the power of government and of the laws was no longer in their hands : the sceptre was bestowed by a stranger, and their lawgiver came with Roman authority. By the decree of Augustus, Archelaus received the sovereignty of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea, with the title of Ethnarch (head of the nation), being promised that of king, if his conduct should deserve it. Jerusalem, Sebaste (formerly Samaria), Cæsarea and Joppa were his chief cities, and his yearly revenue amounted to six hundred talents. Galilee and Perea were given to Herod Antipas with the title of Tetrarch ; and Philip received Trachonitis and the remaining portion of his father's late dominions with the same title. Archelaus was scarcely settled on the throne when his rest was disturbed by a fresh pretender, whose claims were more generally acknowledged

than any who had preceded him. An artful and ambitious youth so cleverly personated Alexander, the murdered son of Mariamne, that many believed the young prince had escaped from the executioner as he related. The whole nation was ready to welcome a ruler of the Asmonæan race, and anxiously awaited the result of the emperor's examination into the case. Augustus desired to see the pretender in private; and, suspecting that he was not Alexander, promised him pardon on condition that he would speak the truth. The presence-chamber of so clear-sighted and powerful a monarch, under such circumstances, was no place for deception; and the false Alexander confessed his crime. The emperor, without doubt pleased at his own discernment, forgave the pretended Asmonæan as he had promised; and seeing that he was a strong man, appointed him as rower in one of his galleys. None of the other pretenders were executed excepting those of the Herodian family; as Augustus said that they at least should have submitted to the late king's will, instead of setting themselves up against the heads of their own house.

Archelaus took possession of his dominions just before the return of Joseph from Egypt with the Holy Child and his mother: and it was on "hearing that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; and being warned of God in a dream he turned aside into the parts of Galilee," which were under the milder rule of Herod Antipas.

Archelaus was a vicious character; and during a reign of nine years nothing is related to his credit. He oppressed the Jews, and acted with so much injustice and cruelty, that an appeal was at length made to Augustus. His brothers confirmed the report of his subjects; and the guilty Ethnarch received a summons to Rome as he was sitting at a banquet. His artful defence was of no avail; and the emperor, being convinced of the truth of the charges brought against him, banished him to Vienne, and gladly took this occasion to include Judea among the provinces of the Roman Empire, A. D. 10.

The first procurator, or governor of Judea, was Coponius, chosen from among the Roman knights, a class standing

between the senators and the commons ; they were originally allowed a horse and a gold ring at the public expence, and hence they were called in the Latin tongue, *Equites*, or horsemen. At the same time that Coponius was sent into Judea, Quirinius (Cyrenius), lately consul of Rome, was appointed prefect of Syria, and charged to collect the taxes from the Jewish people who had been registered for this purpose some years before (Luke ii. 2).

It was not surprising that Augustus, who had made the haughty Romans submit to his new system of taxation, should expect the same obedience from his Jewish subjects : but it is to be remembered, the former yielded to that which seemed necessary for the support of their own greatness, whilst the latter naturally shrunk from such a displeasing token that they were under Gentile power, and thus reaping the fruits of disobedience ; for they were in fact "*come down very low*, and the stranger within their gates had got up above them very high" (see Deut. xxviii. 43). The publicans, or tax-gatherers, appointed by the Roman governor, became the objects of universal hatred ; and this was probably increased by their injustice in requiring more than they could lawfully ask, in order to enrich themselves.

The high-priest, Joazar, tried to check the expression of the public discontent, and many were silenced ; but some of the fiercer spirits found a leader according to their mind in Judas, called "the Galilean." He was a native of the worst part of Galilee, and an eloquent speaker, and his followers were ready enough to hear him use the doctrine of the alone sovereignty of Jehovah over his chosen people as an argument for their refusing the obedience and tribute required by Cæsar, whilst they practically denied the true power of it by their positive transgressions against the law of God. In the most ungodly spirit, they adopted, as the distinguishing watchword of their party, "We have no Lord or Master but God : " but it was very plain that the Lord was not on their side. Judas seized upon the arms and treasure stored up in the strong city of Sepphoris ; and with his band of zealots became the terror of Galilee : but, as it is written (Acts v. 37), "he also perished ; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed." Some of the zealots who

were taken prisoners, endured the most dreadful tortures with such firmness that their principles were deeply impressed on the hearts of others ; and though, for a while, little was heard of them, we shall find them revived with greater force and leading to the worst consequences afterwards.

The exact contrast to all this violence and self-will might have been seen, by any who had eyes to see, at this very time in the town of Nazareth, where the holy child Jesus was growing up, waxing strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and having the grace of God upon him. But his abode in Galilee and at Nazareth were occasions of contempt ; and even the Israelite in whom the Lord himself saw no guile, exclaimed in honest surprise, " Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ? "

" Separate from sinners, " was ever descriptive of the Lord ; yet He chose to dwell among them : yes, amongst the vilest, because He came into the world to save sinners.

According to the law, " thrice in the year shall all your men-children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel ; " we may believe that Jesus went to Jerusalem every year at the passover, as well as at the other feasts, but we have no account of any visit to the Temple, till he was twelve years old.

At one of the intervening passovers, during the government of Coponius, some Samaritans, whose ill-will towards the Jews was proverbial, stole into the Temple by night, and scattered dead men's bones over the pavement, in order to make the place unclean. This caused great disturbance ; for the Jews never had more zeal for the letter of the law than at this period, when they had so far wandered from the spirit of it.

It was doubtless at the fittest moment that the blessed Jesus sat down amongst the teachers of the law, " both hearing them, and asking them questions. " Having already considered the doctrines of the different sects, and the corrupt state of the people at large, we can form some idea of the grief such an examination must have caused that Holy One, whose delight was to do His Father's will, and who could say, " I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation : I understand more

than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." He was the Light shining in darkness, which the darkness comprehended not: there was *astonishment* at his understanding and his answers; but it is probable that very few, like Mary, kept his sayings in their hearts. Nothing can afford sweeter instruction to the young disciples of Christ, than the short but all-sufficient record of His early life. He had a work to do *as the Son of God*, in personally inquiring into the state of those who professed to be teachers of his Father's laws, and keepers of his Father's house; and this being finished, he went down to Nazareth to do his work *as the Son of Man*, and was subject to those who were called his parents on earth, as well as to his Father in heaven. And here, my dear young Christian friends, is the rule: your subjection to your parents ought to be constant, unhesitating, and complete, so long as their commands, be they painful or pleasant, do not interfere with your entire subjection to God. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." And, again, it is written, that "*to show piety at home is good and acceptable with God.*"

CHAP. III.

CLOSE OF THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS.—REIGN OF TIBERIUS.
 —STORY OF GERMANICUS.—SEJANUS.—GOVERNMENT OF
 JUDEA.—PONTIUS PILATE.—THE SANHEDRIN.—HEROD
 ANTIPAS.—PHILIP THE TETRARCH.

UNDER a rapid succession of governors the Jews were apparently more and more bowed down, but their irritation of spirit was increased. Ambivius and Rufus quickly followed Coponius; and Gratus, the fourth procurator of Judea, was appointed by Augustus shortly before his death, A. D. 14.

This emperor recommended his adopted son, Tiberius, as his successor, and divided his fortune between him, the army, and the people. The name of Augustus was from this time given to all the emperors of Rome, and that of Cæsar was borne by their intended successors. By a decree of the senate, the late sovereign was numbered among the immortal gods; and it was farther enacted, that

every emperor, who neither lived nor died like a tyrant, should be honoured in the same manner; and the ceremony called the *apotheosis*, or placing among the gods, was performed at the funeral. Such a custom is the less surprising, when we consider the nature of polytheism, as before described; and it is to be confessed, the history of the best of the Roman emperors proves that they far surpassed the characters commonly given to the heathen deities.

Towards the end of the reign of Augustus, Varus, the prefect of Syria, who had enriched himself by the spoils of the province under his government, had been appointed commander of the armies in Germany. There, being surprised by some of the most warlike tribes, headed by a bold chief called Herrman or Arminius,* his army was destroyed, and the Roman standards seized. Varus killed himself in despair, and Augustus was astonished and distressed on receiving from the barbarians the head of his fallen general, instead of the submission which he expected from them, A.D. 10. Disturbed beyond measure† at this first interruption in the success of the Roman arms, the emperor sent a fresh army into Germany, under the command of his younger son Drusus. For six years the war was continued, and the son of Drusus carried it on after his father's death, and was still abroad when Augustus died. His admiring soldiers, not contented with the rank of Cæsar allowed by Tiberius to their favourite general, at once saluted him emperor; but the young prince generously refused to interfere with his uncle's claim; and instead of leading his army to Rome, as they desired, he pursued the war till he was completely victorious, and succeeded in recovering the Roman standards.

It was the popularity of Drusus, surnamed Germanicus, that first drew forth the fierce and jealous passions of Tiberius, as many pleasing anecdotes are related concerning him during the early part of his reign. He began with a profession of obedience to the senate, and of fatherly love towards his people; and even when it was proposed to him

* A colossal monument to the memory of Herrman is about to be erected in the Black Forest.

† It is said, that even in his sleep, Augustus was heard to exclaim, "Varus, give me back my standards."

to increase the taxes, he refused to do so, saying, "A good shepherd shears, but does not flay his sheep." His reply was not less to the point, when the senate desired to name the month in which he was born in honour of him, as those of July and August had been so called out of compliment to Julius and Augustus Cæsar. "What, then," said Tiberius, "will you do if there should be thirteen emperors?" as much as to say *he* did not deserve such a distinction. Again, when he was asked to appoint a new governor of Judea, he replied that he did not intend to change the provincial governors so often as his father had done, and explained his motive thus; "A Roman province may be compared to the wounded man in the fable, who lay by the road-side covered with flies. A traveller passing by, kindly offers to drive away his tormentors; but the sufferer refuses, saying he would rather be left to those that were already glutted, as they would only be replaced by a more hungry swarm. Now if the governor expect but a short harvest, he will be likely to make the most of his time; but if he hold his office longer, he may rob the people more gradually; and it is even possible that his avarice may be satisfied." Tiberius was at first distinguished for his temperance and justice; but having once given way to excess of wine, every other vice followed. It was said of him that he was only intoxicated once in his life; because he appeared never to be entirely sober, after he gave way to the first temptation. This may, in some measure, account for the dark character of his remaining history. Under pretence of honouring the Cæsar Germanicus with a triumph, Tiberius recalled him from Germany. The reception which the delighted citizens gave to the young general only increased the emperor's jealousy; but he endeavoured to conceal his feelings, as Germanicus passed through the city in his triumphal car, with his wife Agrippina and his five children; and, at the close of the triumph, pretending to unite in the general rejoicings, he entreated the Cæsar at once to accept the government of the Eastern provinces, which had been recently disturbed by the Armenians. The unsuspecting Germanicus left Rome, and Tiberius at the same time appointed one Piso to the prefecture of Syria, with directions to oppose

him at every step, and to destroy him as soon as possible. He proved to be a fit instrument for such a wicked purpose, and found an opportunity of poisoning his victim at Antioch, A. D. 19. Great excitement was caused by the death of the heir of the empire, from whom the people had expected so much; and the public feeling was increased by the appearance of the widowed Agrippina, who brought her husband's ashes to Rome, and, according to his request, endeavoured to revenge his death. Tiberius pretended to share in the general sorrow, and laid all the blame upon Piso, though every one knew that he was but the agent in this crime: and the emperor's real guilt was shown by his continued jealousy towards the family of the murdered Cæsar. Agrippina was banished to an island, where it is supposed she died for want of food, and the elder sons were put to death. One of the younger sons, Caius Caligula, was afterwards adopted by Tiberius as his successor; not in grateful remembrance of the father to whose moderation he owed the preservation of his empire, but more probably because he thought that this young man's vices would screen his own memory from reproach. After the death of Germanicus, the fears of Tiberius were not at an end; and to secure his person, he increased the number of the Prætorian guards, and established them in a strongly fortified camp near the city. Augustus had kept only a few thousands at Rome, and placed the rest in the neighbouring towns; but in the reign of Tiberius they were assembled to the number of 16,000, and they were never again decreased. Sejanus, the Prætorian prefect, or chief of the guards, became the favourite of Tiberius; and, for his own advantage, excited the emperor's suspicions against the most distinguished citizens of Rome, and gladly executed his orders in putting them to death. When the subtle minister believed that all were removed who would interfere with his own ambitious desires, he persuaded Tiberius to give up the burdensome cares of the empire, and to retire to Caprea, a beautiful island, where he might indulge in all the luxury and sensual pleasures to which he was inclined. He then placed guards around the emperor's person to shut out all intelligence from without, and boldly affirmed that he was the real head

of the empire, and Tiberius only the dependant prince of Caprea. Sejanus, in his anxiety to get rid of all who were attached to the emperor, persecuted the Jews at Rome who were grateful for his favours. There seemed to be a just cause of complaint against some covetous Rabbi, who had made a proselyte of an honourable Roman matron, and obtained money for his own use, under pretence that he would send it as her offering to the Temple. Upon this slight ground a law was passed which expelled all Jews from Rome, and probably from Italy; and four thousand were drafted into the army and sent to serve in Sardinia, where most of them perished. The pride of Sejanus went beyond all bounds: his statues outnumbered those of Tiberius, and the people were required to bow before them daily. At length a report of his proceedings reached the emperor in his luxurious retreat; and he was informed that his haughty minister had even brought forwards his character in ridicule at the theatre. Upon this he wrote to the senate, desiring that the Prætorian prefect should be imprisoned: but they went beyond their orders; and Sejanus was strangled in his prison the same day. The populace loaded his name with curses, and insulted the remains of him whom a few hours before they had professed to adore. A. D. 31.

After considering the character of Roman government in general, it will be well to look at that of Judea in particular. Little is recorded during the eleven years that Gratus was procurator, except the frequent change of the high-priests. Nothing could prove more completely the departure of power from the Jews, than the fact that their high-priests were appointed or removed according to the pleasure of a stranger.

Ananus, or Annas, who was accounted the happiest of men, because he himself, five of his sons, and his son-in-law, were all at different periods appointed to this high office, was probably high-priest at the time that the Lord sat among the doctors in the Temple. He was, however, displaced by Gratus, for the sake of Ismael; but, after a short season, Eleazar, the son of Annas, was placed in his room: and he was succeeded by Simon, who in turn gave place to Joseph Caiaphas, son-in-law to Annas. In A. D. 27 it pleased Tiberius to appoint Pontius Pilate as the successor

of Gratus. He proved far more troublesome to the Jews than either of the former governors, for they resided at Cæsarea to avoid any quarrel with the violent zealots of the capital, but Pilate chose at once to send his troops to winter at Jerusalem. They entered the city in the night; and the people, who clung so fondly to the letter of the law, were filled with horror, when they saw the image of Cæsar and the silver eagles which formed the standards, glittering in the light of the morning sun. A deputation of Jews was immediately sent to Pilate, who had not yet left Cæsarea, entreating him to remove these abominations. For many days they waited upon him in vain; and at length he brought out his remaining troops and tried to disperse them by force, saying, they had insulted the emperor in asking for the removal of his image. But the representatives of the citizens of Jerusalem declared that they would rather die by the sword than suffer their law to be broken: and, to avoid bloodshed, Pilate at length consented to withdraw the offensive standards. The next quarrel did not end so peacefully, as the governor was resolved not to give way to the people a second time. On coming to Jerusalem he determined to construct an immense aqueduct, similar to those at Rome; and, as it was intended to supply the whole city with water, he thought proper to pay the workmen out of the treasures of the Temple. His works were quickly interrupted by the people, who pleaded against such an employment of sacred wealth. Pilate, who had expected such a check, had placed some of his soldiers in disguise among the workmen, and, at a given signal from him, they drew out their hidden weapons, slew a great number of the unarmed multitude, and put the rest to flight. It was by Pilate's command also that a company of Galileans, possibly some of the followers of Judas of Galilee, were slain whilst they were offering sacrifice (see Luke xiii. 1).

The remains of power left to the Jewish nation, after their land was included in the Roman empire, was lodged in the hands of the general council, or Sanhedrin, before mentioned; and this seems to be referred to in the Gospel when "the chief priests, scribes and elders of the people" are spoken of: for it was composed of seventy-one persons, partly

priests, partly Levites, and partly elders. The high-priest presided in the Sanhedrin, with the empty title of prince; at his right hand sat the vice-president, who bore the title of *Ab-beth-din*, or father of the house of judgment; and at his left hand was the most learned doctor of the law, denominated the Wise Man. The rest of the members sat round the president in a semi-circle, having a scribe or secretary at each end, one to write the votes of condemnation, the other those of acquittal.

In the other towns of Judea there were councils consisting of twenty-three members; but all appealed to the great Sanhedrin, which was in fact the voice of the nation, professing to express the mind of the people to their foreign rulers. The members of this important council were, therefore, most carefully chosen as the fitting representatives of the nation. They were to be without deformity or personal blemish: their age was to be mature, but not too advanced, lest they should be enfeebled or morose. They were to be fathers of children, to ensure their tender-heartedness and compassionate feeling. They were, moreover, to be skilled in all that related to magic, sorcery, or idolatry, in order to discern what was evil; and they were required to have an extensive knowledge of arts and languages, and to understand physic, arithmetic, astronomy and astrology. It was by such a body of men, really ignorant of the thoughts and ways of God, yet professing to have all knowledge of things human and divine, that the actings of the Son of God were so falsely judged, and his person so lightly esteemed.

After glancing at the character of the government which succeeded that of the banished Archelaus, we must inquire into that of the other sons of Herod. Herod Antipas had been reigning peaceably as Tetrarch of Galilee, and chiefly resided at Sepphoris, his capital; but in honour of the emperor, he founded the city of Tiberias on the lake of Gennesareth, whence that lake, in the Gospels, is frequently called the sea of Tiberias. He had first married the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, but divorced her about this period, because he preferred Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.*

* This was not Philip the Tetrarch, but the son of Herod and the second Mariamne.

It was for this crime he was rebuked by John the Baptist, whose mission from God we are about to consider.

Philip the Tetrarch had also courted the favour of Tiberius by re-modelling two towns in his dominions, one of which he called Cæsarea, and the other Julias, in honour of the emperor and his wife. He was a just and humane prince, and so anxious not to delay the administration of justice, that he had no fixed tribunal; but the judgment-seat was carried after him wherever he went, and he at once formed a court in order to decide the cases brought under his notice. He died in the same year that the Lord was crucified; and, as he left no heir, his territory was for the time added to the prefecture of Syria.

During the period we have been considering, the only memorial of the life of Christ is given us in these comprehensive words, "He increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man." His perfect human nature is here brought before us. As the Son of God he was "wisdom from everlasting (see Prov. viii.), from the beginning, or ever the earth was." But as the Son of Man, in his humiliation passing through all the successive stages of human nature, from birth even to death, his mind and his body were capable of growth; and he was, at every step, righteously winning that favour which none besides deserved.

CHAP. IV.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.—THE HUMILIATION AND THE REJECTION OF CHRIST.—THE TWO-FOLD EFFECT OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

SURELY, if our hearts are rightly affected, no period of history can excite such intense and absorbing interest as that in which it pleased the Lord from heaven to teach, to work, and to suffer, as man, upon the earth which He created. It was, indeed, in the wisdom of God, that a messenger was sent to prepare the way, and to make ready a people for this Wonderful One. That messenger, as you know from Scripture, was John the Baptist. The manner of his birth,

his secret training in the deserts, his outward appearance when he came forth, and the character of his preaching, all proved him to be a very extraordinary person; and it was not surprising that a general inquiry should be made, "Is not this the Christ?" The multitudes, who had bitterly felt their state of degradation, were quickly attracted by the proclamation, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand;" and, like sinners in every succeeding age, who would exchange present misery for happiness in a heaven of which they know little but the name, they did not consider whether they were fit subjects of this kingdom and prepared to submit to the Messiah as their king.

Man had been thoroughly tried under the law and proved guilty; it was most clear that there was no power in man to get life by the works of the law. John, therefore, was not sent with such words as "Do this, and thou shalt live;" but he came with a message from God, altogether new, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He came to the Jewish people, taking it, as it were, for granted that they had broken the law—that they were all sinners, and inquiring whether those who had failed to obey had hearts to repent. By John, the last trial was made, whether there was any power left in man; and that trial being ended, the power of God was to be revealed, and the whole field left open for the exercise of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was as impossible for man to repent as to obey without the grace of God; and thus it was declared by Peter after the resurrection of Jesus, "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts. v. 31). Nevertheless, all who submitted to the baptism of John owned the *need* of repentance; and those who received him in the spirit of Elijah, were ready to follow Jesus, to whom he pointed as the Lamb of God.

But the chief priests and elders would not listen to his counsel; the Pharisees and lawyers, who pretended to be wiser than all besides, refused to be baptized; they were satisfied with their own righteousness, and sought to prevent others from entering into the kingdom of heaven. They were too proud to acknowledge that all their goodliness was

as the flower of grass, and therefore refused the Eternal Word of God. The nation did not mourn when John lamented; and therefore they could not rejoice when the Gospel, the good tidings of great joy, was proclaimed by the Lord Jesus.

The witness of John concerning Christ was so clear that all who refused it were without excuse. When the people were willing to rejoice in him as a burning and shining light, he tried to withdraw their attention from himself to the true light. He told the messengers from Jerusalem he was only the voice crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord." That very Lord stood among them unknown to them; for though after the flesh He came after John, He is preferred before him, for He was before him because He was God. He told the Pharisees and Sadducees that this mightier one than he would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He described him as the Lord of the harvest, having his fan in his hand, and prophesied that he would thoroughly purge his floor and gather his wheat into the garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. "Many other things he preached to the people;" but let us now seriously examine his testimony, as it is preserved by the Apostle John. We here find the messenger pointing to Jesus as the sacrifice that had been prefigured by all the offerings since the fall of man; the One on whom the faith of Abel and of all the Old Testament believers rested; the One of whom Abraham prophesied, when he said, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering;" in short, the substance of all the foregoing shadows of good things. "Behold," said John, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And in this blessed testimony the declaration of mercy is no longer limited to Israel; but the uncircumcised, the aliens from their commonwealth, the strangers from their covenants, those having no hope—without Christ, without God in the world—are brought, as it were, within the circle of mercy through this precious sacrifice. John's testimony to the work of Christ was accompanied by a testimony to the glory of His person, and it is this which gives it such exceeding value. Upon Him the Spirit descended from heaven and remained; to Him

there came a voice from the Father in heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" and John bare record, "This is the Son of God." From that moment the messenger was prepared to retire: but he again pointed out Jesus to his disciples as the Lamb of God; and when the gathering of the multitude to Him seemed to excite their surprise, John reminded them that he was only the earthly messenger of this heavenly One, and told them his joy was fulfilled in hearing the Bridegroom's voice. Again he repeated his testimony that this was the Christ, having the Spirit without measure, and beloved of the Father, who had given all things into his hand. John's faithful ministry closes with a record of the deepest importance (may it powerfully affect your hearts!):—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John iii. 36).

The grace and loveliness of the walk and ways of Jesus can only be fitly described by the Holy Ghost, and understood by his power. But the mere story contained in the Gospels is enough to convince even a child that never such a one has been seen on earth before or since, and that never man spake like this man. May you be earnest in searching the Scriptures, and may you be so led by the Spirit as to receive Jesus for your Lord and Saviour, that you may join the happy throng redeemed with his blood, who cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" Let us pause to consider Christ in his humiliation, in contrast with his glorious person, and his place with the Father before the world was. How infinite was the distance between the bosom of the Father and the bosom of Mary, yet he could fill both at the same time! He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain condescended to be wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger of the inn at Bethlehem! The only begotten Son of God bore the name of "the carpenter's son," and even of "the carpenter"! The Father of the everlasting ages humbled himself to be born as a child, and to be hid in Egypt by Joseph, his supposed father! He who could say, "The world is mine, and the fulness thereof," chose to be indebted

to the ministry of women for his daily provision as a man! The Creator of all things asked a poor sinner for a draught of water! He who came from God, and was on the point of going back to God, "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands," washed the feet of the poor fishermen who were his disciples! The King of kings stood before Herod the Tetrarch; the Judge of the world before Pilate; the Great High Priest before Caiaphas! The Author of life became obedient unto death; and, most marvellous of all, the Holy One, who knew no sin, was made sin, and his soul an offering for sin! But the time would fail me in reminding you of the perfect union of God and man in the person of Christ. "O the depth of the riches!" is all that the best instructed can exclaim.

Something had been known of God through the previous revelations which he had made of himself by the law and the prophets; but the light of the knowledge of the glory of God was only given in the face of Jesus Christ. It was he alone who, from first to last, visibly declared this precious truth, "God is love." But what did the busy world at large know or think about Jesus? Nothing. It may be said that only a few had an opportunity of seeing him: yet how few believed the report of him when it reached their ears! Besides, the Jews, among whom he walked, were the most intelligent and moral men in the world, and far more capable of valuing the Son of God than the heathen philosophers and idolaters; and they were also in possession of the Scriptures which testified of him, and taught them to expect his coming. And at what conclusion did they arrive after Jesus had been among them for more than three years, going about doing good, speaking with authority, and working the most astonishing miracles of grace? Would they receive him as the Anointed King, the long-promised Messiah? Hear the reply: "We have no king but Cæsar." Would they have him continue his work of love? "Let him be crucified." "Would they not spare the innocent blood?" "His blood be upon us and our children." Would they even allow Pilate to release him as a criminal, because it was usual to set one free at the time of the great national feast? "Not this man, but Barabbas." Barabbas.

the murderer and the robber, was preferred to Jesus, upon earth. If the law stops every mouth, and brings in every man guilty before God, how much more does the history of man in the Gospels, ending with the crucifixion of Jesus, prove that in the flesh there dwells no good thing? If, however, the cross of Christ only proclaimed this sad truth, we must perish in hopeless despair. But all who feel the burden of sin, all who know their hearts to be not one whit better than those of the unbelieving Jews who refused Jesus, or of the ignorant Gentiles who scourged him and nailed him to the cross, all such may rejoice in the knowledge that the same blood which was shed *by the sin of man*, was provided by God as *a remedy for sin*. These, receiving the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the value of this precious blood, believe in Jesus to the saving of their souls; but those who do not receive it, or put any thing in its place as an atonement for sin, will be accountable to God as not believing, but treading under foot his well-beloved Son.

The death of Christ cannot for ever be a matter of indifference to any human being. Eternal life or eternal death must be the consequence of it to every soul of man. If the law set before man life or death, much more does the Gospel; with this happy difference, that whereas all must perish who expect to be justified by the works of the law, none can perish who heartily accept the Gospel of the Grace of God, and expect to be justified by the work of Christ.

CHAP. V.

UTTER FAILURE OF MAN.—POWER OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.—FORMATION OF THE CHURCH.—LIGHT TO THE GENTILES.—GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST.—CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH, THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

As the Gospels contain the history of Christ and his personal ministry, so the rest of the books of the New Testament contain the history of the Church of Christ, and the ministry of the Holy Ghost sent by Christ from the Father.

It is in the book called the Acts of the Apostles that we may learn the passing away of the Jewish dispensation, and the establishment of that which still exists, the dispensation of the Grace of God, or the Christian dispensation. It is also exceedingly interesting, as giving us the fresh and lovely picture of the spring-time of the Church of God—its season of early beauty and promise. In our former history we have seen that sin made the whole earth one vast spiritual wilderness: but the Lord, whose tender mercies are over all His works, still scattered the bounties of His providence through the world; whilst His vineyard, the house of Israel, was the standing proof that He had done all that was possible to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, if man, as merely born of a woman, *could* be righteous. But the disability of man, as in the flesh, was now proved beyond a doubt. The Lord's messengers, who came to require the fruit of righteousness, were ill-treated or slain, and the Son of God, who came in the fulness of grace, was not revered, but killed and cast out of the vineyard. In the crucifixion of Christ, it might have been naturally supposed that the last hope for man was cut off. The Jews had lost the king whose long-promised reign was to bring blessing not only to them, but to the ends of the earth: sinners had rejected the Saviour; the dark world had desired to shut out the light, and Satan appeared to triumph in the ruin of mankind. But the resurrection of Christ, at the very opening of the third day, was the answer to all this: the powers of earth are vain, for Jehovah's anointed King must reign over heaven and earth by virtue of his resurrection: the powers of hell are also vain, for the name of Jesus the Saviour is above every other name; and for the suffering of death He is crowned with glory and honour. Light is again seen in the world from the spiritual union between the risen Jesus and his people; and the Old Serpent is disappointed in his last device for the total ruin of the world. Notwithstanding the obstinate rebellion and perverseness of man, God's counsel must stand, and he will do all his pleasure. It was His eternal purpose to choose out a people from among those who were so resolutely bent on their own destruction:

and by the death of His Son in their stead, He could justly deliver them from the grasp of Satan, though they appeared naturally to belong to the kingdom of darkness, and were found among His enemies. This people is called in New Testament Scripture "the Church" (in the Greek, literally, *the assembly*, and so translated, Acts xix. 32), and again, "the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28; see also Eph. v. 25—27). This assembly, chosen by God, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, is composed of the sinners whom God brings to himself in every age of the world, including of course all the believers from the Creation to the end of the Jewish dispensation: and a small portion of it, gathered as a family upon earth, was first shown in the world after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the Head of the Church. Happily for those who are yet without, all the children of God are not yet gathered out of the world—the delay is not in slackness, but in long-suffering (2 Peter iii. 9); and when the last has obeyed the calling of the grace of God, the Lord Jesus Christ will come again to receive to himself this assembly of redeemed sinners, for whom He gave himself, and to execute vengeance on all that know not God and obey not the Gospel. By nature, the individuals who compose the church of God differ in nothing from the rest of the world. By grace, they differ in every thing: they are born of God, educated by God, and destined for God.

Before the appearing of Christ, the people of God had been chosen from among the Jews; or if any strangers were saved, it was as circumcised persons; all besides, as the Apostle says, *being without hope* (Eph. ii. 12). But since that period we cannot say of any creature who is brought within the sound of the Gospel, there is *no hope*; for "out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," that "great multitude which no man can number" is to be gathered before the throne of God and the Lamb; and some of Christ's last words to his disciples were, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The eternal purpose of God, to take out a people from among the Gentiles, and to make them fellow-heirs and partakers with his chosen ones of the seed of

Abraham, long remained a mystery or secret, and was very gradually unfolded after Christ's rejection by the nation of Israel, and his ascension to the right hand of God. According to the prophecy (Is. xlix. 1—6), though Israel was not gathered, He was glorious in the eyes of the Lord; for He was not only worthy to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel, but He was to be a Light to the Gentiles, and God's salvation to the ends of the earth. It is in the happy remembrance of this truth that we shall now pursue the study of Universal History, expecting to find some light from God where hitherto there has been nothing but darkness.

As long as Christ was in the world, he was the light of the world: and in addressing his disciples he said, "Ye are the light of the world." But after the Lord was gone away from them, how could the light be preserved, since man fails in every position, and the weakness of the infant Church was proved at every step? Sorrow might well fill their hearts till they received from his gracious lips the promise of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and the Spirit of truth, whom he would send to them from the Father, to dwell in them and to abide with them for ever: and they were not only to receive him for their own personal comfort, but to receive such power and wonderful gifts from him, as to make them able witnesses of Christ "both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Till Israel failed, it had pleased the Lord to manifest his presence among them in such a manner as he had never done to any other people: first, in the pillar of cloud by day, and fire by night; then, filling the tabernacle with His glory: and, afterwards, in the same manner, filling the Temple of Solomon—His chosen earthly dwelling-place. But Ezekiel saw the glory departing from the Temple on account of the abominations committed there: and we do not know that it was ever seen there, after the carrying away into Babylon. Yet the faithful remnant that returned to Jerusalem with Ezra were comforted and strengthened by the assurance, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth

among you: fear ye not" (Haggai ii. 5). So there were individuals filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke i. 41, 67), and instructed by the Holy Ghost (Luke ii. 25, &c.), even up to the time of Christ's appearing. In him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; for the Spirit was his, without measure, and he could say, "I and the Father are one." In this sense it appears that he spoke of himself as the Temple; whereby the Jews well understood God's dwelling-place on earth (John ii. 19); and when he who was God was rejected by his own people, and went out of the temple made with hands, for the last time, he addressed Jerusalem in the most affecting language, and ended by saying, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." His disciples, who did not understand him, immediately called his attention to the buildings of the Temple: but this only brought forth the prophecy of its utter destruction (Matt. xxiv. 1—2). How could the Temple be otherwise than desolate, when the brightness of the Father's glory had departed from it! Thenceforward God had another temple in view; and it was this that even his own children among the Jewish people were slow in understanding; for they had been so long accustomed to look at those great buildings as the chosen dwelling-place of Jehovah.

The Church alone was thenceforth to be looked upon as the Temple of the Lord; and of this, Solomon's temple, in all its glory, was but a shadow. Believing Jews and Gentiles, as living stones, are built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, *groweth* unto a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. ii. 20—21).

We must never henceforth lose sight of the importance of the Church, in the sight of God; and whilst we pursue the history of the world, we must remember that God's delight is in His Christ, and in the Church, as the body of which He is the glorious head. By the Church, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. iii. 10); it is a theatre to angels, on which they see the most marvellous actings of

the God they adore; and the things ministered to the church by the Holy Ghost they desire to look into (1 Pet. i. 12). Finally, glory is brought to God in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end (Eph. iii. 21). Having now considered the constitution and intention of the Church of God, we will briefly look through the history of it in the Acts of the Apostles, in order to find the records of its earliest manifestation upon earth.

CHAP. VI.

TESTIMONY TO CHRIST IN JERUSALEM.—THE JERUSALEM CHURCH.—THE WITNESS OF STEPHEN.—SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.—CALLING OF PAUL.

WHAT could exceed the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ when, on the point of leaving the city where he was crucified, he opened the understanding of the disciples that they might understand the Scriptures; and referring to the testimony of the law, the prophets, and the psalms, he said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem!*" These gracious words fell from the same lips which had uttered that effectual prayer on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Accordingly, we find that Jerusalem is still the place for the exhibition of grace; and it is there that the Holy Ghost descends on the gathered disciples. Peter, to whom the Lord had promised to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is the first to open the door of faith to the Jews, by preaching the gospel of the circumcision; and it soon appears, that amidst the guilty nation who abhorred Christ, there was still a remnant according to the election of grace, who gladly received the testimony of the Holy Ghost. We say a remnant, because, though there were many thousands who believed in Jerusalem, the city contained hundreds of

thousands who believed not. The Church, however, was such a shining light in this ungodly city that, at first, like Christ in his early life, it had "favour with all the people." The Gospel, preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, was confirmed by miracles greater than those that had been wrought by Christ himself when he was upon earth; for, though at the right hand of the Father, he was still working with them. But all was again resisted; those in authority hated the servants as they had hated the master, and the doctrine of the resurrection was particularly grievous to the powerful party of the Sadducees.

Imprisonment, threatening, and scourging could not move the apostles to obey man instead of God; and at length the Sanhedrin were persuaded to let them alone by the counsel of Gamaliel, the Pharisee, who warned them of the danger they might possibly incur of even being found to fight against God. Such was the situation of the Jerusalem Church as to those without: and as to the arrangements within, Jewish practices were permitted, whilst the long-suffering of God was exercised towards the Jewish nation; and circumcision with other legal observances were not abandoned till after the destruction of Jerusalem. Five thousand believers having been gathered together by the power of the Holy Ghost's witness to Christ, through the apostles, it is written, "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 in common." It is also added, that "great grace was upon them all, neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made to every man according as he had need." Those who know any thing of the selfishness of the human heart must confess that only the power of a new life, which these happy ones possessed by virtue of their union with the risen Lord, and the great grace of God which was upon them, could produce such a state of things. And the first shade of darkness which falls over this bright picture, proves how the enemy was on the watch, trying to

dim the light of the world, and how soon man's sin and folly appear, even in the most favourable circumstances and under the greatest possible advantages. Among the rich who were constrained by the love of Christ to put all their possessions into the common stock for the comfort of their needy brethren, one *Jose*s was distinguished by the apostles with the surname of *Barnabas*, that is, "the son of consolation;" for they were doubtless comforted by the grace of God in him; and we find him spoken of afterwards as a useful servant of the Lord. After he had laid his money at the apostles' feet, *Ananias*, with his wife *Sapphira*, possibly moved by such a shining example, and seeking the praise of man rather than that of God, came forward with a similar profession of parting with *all* for Christ's sake.

But the miraculous power of discerning spirits, which was one of the Pentecostal gifts, enabled Peter at once to discover the deception, and to trace it to Satan, who is a liar and the father of lies. Their lie to God the Holy Ghost was immediately followed by death; and whilst this solemn event kept any man from daring to join himself by mere profession to an assembly where there was such manifest power to discover the thoughts and intents of the heart, no true-hearted person was kept back from the confession of faith in Christ; for it is written, "Believers were *the more* added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." The next shade of darkness that came across the shining light of the Church seems to have been caused by human selfishness appearing in another form. At first we read that none of the believers wanted any thing, for all received according to their need; but shortly there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. The twelve apostles at once explained to the brethren the unreasonableness of expecting them to serve the tables, and proposed to them to choose seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, qualifications necessary for such an office, whom they might appoint to attend to this business. The seven that were chosen on this occasion are commonly called deacons (Greek, *servant*), but that name is not applied to them in Scripture. The apostles,

we know, were all Hebrews, but it is supposed from the names of the seven that they were Greeks : and this selection from that part of the Church which complained of neglect was probably intentional. After their appointment we hear of no other ground of complaint : "the word of God increased ; the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly, and a great company of the priests was obedient to the faith. And Stephen, one of the seven, being full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people."

The Holy Ghost was manifested in fresh power and grace among the seven ; but His operations seemed only to bring out the enmity of the carnal minds who rejected the truth. Certain of the foreign Jews began to dispute with Stephen, and, like those who questioned with the Lord, they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. This excited them still more ; the servant's words were not listened to more than the Master's, and he was called to have fellowship with his Lord's suffering, in being seized and brought before the council, under the charge of blasphemy against Moses and against God, and in having false witnesses set up against him. The whole Sanhedrin saw his face shining with heavenly glory, and listened to his reply to the high-priest's question, "Are these things so?" The charge of blasphemy was entirely refuted ; for the God of glory was fully honoured by Stephen, and the words of Moses most largely and reverently quoted : but when he ended by applying to their consciences the truth of the history that he had gone through, and told them plainly they resisted the Holy Ghost, were the betrayers and murderers of the Just One, and had not kept the law in which they boasted—they were cut to the heart and gnashed on him with their teeth. Then Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Thus he was constrained to give the plainest testimony to the resurrection, saying before them all, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." But even whilst he spoke, they ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him.

According to the law, the witnesses were to cast the first stones, and on this occasion they laid down the clothes which they took off, to enable them to use their arms more freely, at the feet of a young man who was named Saul, one of the strictest of the Pharisees, and more exceedingly zealous of the traditions than most of his nation. The last prayer of Stephen, addressed to the Lord Jesus, as that of Jesus to the Father, it is most important to notice, as it was answered, not only by the conversion of Saul, the chief agent in this work of ignorant unbelief, but by an extension of the forbearance of God towards the city and nation, and a fresh testimony to His grace in the ministry of a new apostle.

But before we consider the apostleship of Paul, we must look at the immediate consequences of the persecution that followed the witness* of Stephen. The character of this first persecution may be gathered from the confessions of Paul after his conversion. Those who believed in Jesus were imprisoned and beaten in every synagogue; some were put to death, others compelled to blaspheme; and this zealous Pharisee, being exceedingly mad against them, persecuted them even to foreign cities. At length, having obtained letters of authority from the high-priest to the synagogues in Damascus, he took his journey towards that city purposely to bring all the believers in Jesus whom he could find, whether men or women, bound to Jerusalem.

In the meantime God was exercising his own prerogative of bringing good out of evil. The multitude of believers who had been gathered at Jerusalem were all scattered abroad except the apostles (who doubtless were permitted to remain there to call out many others), and went everywhere preaching the word. Churches, or assemblies of believers, were gathered throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and some travelled as far as Phœnicia and Cyprus, and Antioch; at first preaching the word to none but the Jews only. Philip, called the evangelist (one who declares the Gospel), one of the seven, was the first who preached

* *Martyr* is simply the Greek word for *witness*, in an English form. We attach the idea of suffering to this word because so many of the witnesses or martyrs of Christ sealed their testimony with their blood.

Christ in Samaria, and there he began to reap the harvest which the Lord had prepared his disciples to expect (John iv. 35). Whilst the Jews, as a nation, were under trial as to whether they would submit to Christ, and thus obtain the promised blessings of the new covenant, the Lord commanded his disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles, nor to enter into any city of the Samaritans; but when it had been shown that it was impossible for a people in the flesh to take hold of the covenant, and that the blessing was not at this time national, but elective, neither Gentiles nor Samaritans were excluded. The chief city of Samaria had been, till this period, peculiarly a province of the kingdom of darkness: for Simon the sorcerer did wonderful things by the power of the devil, and the people were deceived, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." But the signs and great miracles of grace, that accompanied the preaching of Philip, opened their eyes, and there was great joy in that city. Men and women who believed were baptized, and Simon also; for it does not appear that Philip had the apostolical power of discovering secret evil. But on the arrival of Peter, it was made plain that this professed believer was still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity: the apostle perceived that his heart was not right in the sight of God, and assured him he had neither part nor lot in this matter.

Yet even Simon was exhorted to repent and pray for forgiveness: he had long gained regard by using the power given by the devil, and his sin now was in the thought of doing the same by using the power given of God.* Though Simon is not heard of afterwards in Scripture, he is mentioned by the early historians of the Church, as we shall hereafter relate.

On their way back to Jerusalem, Peter and John preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans, in one of which, a little time before, Christ himself not having been received, James and John asked him if they might not command fire to come down from heaven to consume the

* Simony (from Simon) is a word used to express the sin of making church honours and emoluments matters of bargain and sale.

inhabitants. Philip, in the meanwhile, was sent into the desert to meet the Ethiopian who was returning from Jerusalem, and to teach him those things which he might have learned in that city had it not lost its blessed position, and failed for a season to be "the joy of the whole earth." On this occasion the words of Philip are to be remarked; for it is probable that Simon's bare lip-profession of belief was fresh in his thoughts, when, in reply to the converted Ethiopian's question, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" he said, "If thou believest *with all thine heart* thou mayest."

The calling of Paul by the Lord out of heaven to be his apostle is much to be observed; for, as he expresses it, he seemed as one born out of due time, having never seen Jesus till he saw him in heavenly glory, and learning every thing that he preached by direct revelation from him, instead of receiving it from man, or through intercourse with the twelve who were apostles before him.

The very first truth which he received seemed, as it were, to influence his whole ministry, and to give a peculiar heavenliness to his course. Those affecting words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" and again, "I am Jesus, *whom* thou persecutest," taught him the real union of the risen Lord with his people; and he soon learned it for himself as one of that chosen people, as he says (Gal. i.), "When it pleased God to reveal his Son *in me*." During the first few years of his ministry Paul preached among the heathen in Arabia, Syria, Cilicia, &c., and was personally unknown to the churches of Judea, only making a private visit of fifteen days to Jerusalem.

We may now pursue the history of the world, sad as it is, with more pleasure, seeing that there is a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and that the circle of grace is not limited by any earthly bounds.

CHAP. VII.

TIBERIUS.—PILATE.—HEROD ANTIPAS.—HEROD AGRIPPA.—
CALIGULA.—HIS DESIRE FOR WORSHIP.—HIS CRUELTY
AND FOLLY.—RESISTANCE OF THE JEWS.—CALIGULA'S
MURDER.

THE close of the history of Tiberius is the more worthy of remark, when we remember that it was he whom the Jews preferred to Christ, saying, "We have no king but Cæsar." And this they said, notwithstanding their exceeding dislike to Gentile dominion, and their eighteen years' knowledge of the character of Tiberius.

The death of Sejanus, A. D. 31, did not lessen his master's cruelties. Rome was filled with mourners; for the emperor was no longer contented with single executions, but sentenced all the accused without examination. When one whom he intended to put to the torture killed himself, he lamented, saying, "Has that man been able to escape me?" and when another asked to be saved from a lingering death, he replied, "I am not sufficiently your friend to shorten your torments."

Such were the doings of the world's king whilst God's king was going about in such a lowly form, doing good—healing every where, not destroying men's lives but saving them; and enduring a life and death of agony to deliver poor sinners from eternal death and misery.

It is said, but on doubtful authority, that Pilate sent to Tiberius some account of the miracles of Christ, and informed him that it was commonly reported throughout Judea that he had risen again from the dead and ascended into heaven; and therefore many believed him to be a god. Upon receiving this intelligence, the emperor proposed that Christ should be numbered among the gods of Rome; but the senate, who had the right of regulating the national religion, were jealous of the interference of Tiberius, and even tried to pass a law that would have shut out of the city all the worshippers of Christ. Tiberius, however, angry at their opposition to his will, threatened with death all the accusers of the disciples of Christ. Whether in this remarkable manner, or otherwise, it is certain through the providence

of God, there was time allowed for the spreading of the truth at Rome, without interruption from its enemies.

In A. D. 36, Vitellius, the newly appointed prefect of Syria, resolved to show his superiority over Pilate, by visiting Jerusalem at the time of the passover, and interfering with his arrangements. On this occasion he pleased the people by lessening some of the taxes, and by appointing Jonathan, son of Annas, to be high-priest in the place of Caiaphas. He who rent his clothes in self-righteous abhorrence of the confession of Christ, saying, "he hath spoken blasphemy," was proved to be without the fear of God, by killing himself when he became unpopular and lost his office. Vitellius gratified the Jews by giving up to Jonathan the priestly robes hitherto kept in the fortress adjoining the Temple, and which had been often refused by the Roman guards on the great feast-days, on purpose to annoy the people.

In the same year, on hearing that great multitudes of Samaritans had been led to Mount Gerizim by an impostor who pretended he would discover some vessels of great value hidden there by Moses, Pilate sent out his troops, with his usual decision, and desired them to watch round the mountain in order to cut off the leaders of the party. His commands were executed with great cruelty, and the crowd dispersed in terror. But the chief Samaritans carried their complaints against Pilate, to Vitellius; and the prefect sent the proud governor to Rome, to take his trial there.

The following year, A. D. 37, the pride of Herod Antipas was also humbled. This prince was boldly reproved by John the Baptist for marrying his brother's wife, and for all the evils which he had done; but instead of repenting, he added to his sin by shutting up John in prison, at the desire of Herodias. But he was unwilling to yield to her wishes in putting him to death; for he feared John, knowing he was a just and holy man, and not only heard him gladly, but did many things for his sake.

The weak Herod is however a memorable example, that what is done through human influence alone, stronger human influence will undo. Excited by his birth-day supper and the dancing of the daughter of Herodias, he rashly promised

to give her whatever she asked; and when, by the instruction of her mother, she desired to have John's head, Herod, fearful of losing his character for faithfulness and the esteem of the captains and chiefs who sat around him, overcame the exceeding sorrow of a partially awakened conscience, and granted the request. After beheading John his conscience apparently became seared, for it was in his heart to kill Jesus also; and when at length, as a supposed Galilean, the Lord stood before his judgment-seat, the proud Tetrarch, amidst his men of war, *set him at nought*; being disappointed that his idle questions were not answered, nor his curiosity gratified by seeing some miracle. Three years afterwards, Aretas, the Arabian king, attacked Herod on account of the insult he had offered to his daughter, and the Tetrarch, having lost almost his whole army, applied to Tiberius for help. Vitellius at once received orders from the emperor to march his forces into Arabia; and the prefect, who always favoured the Jews, sent his troops across the Jordan towards Petra, in compliance with a request from the chief men at Jerusalem, that the offensive standards might not be displayed in their land: but he himself accompanied Herod to Jerusalem, desiring to witness the feast of the passover a second time. At this season he displaced Jonathan, and made Theophilus high-priest. On the fourth day of unleavened bread, the death of Tiberius was announced, and Herod was obliged to retreat to his own dominions, as Vitellius could not assist him in his war with Aretas, till the wishes of the new emperor were known.

The history of Herod Agrippa (mentioned Acts xii.) is so closely connected with that of Tiberius and his successor, that it properly belongs to this period. He was the son of Aristobulus, one of the murdered children of the lamented Mariamne, and therefore the representative of the Asmonean family. After his father's execution, he met with many strange adventures, and was at one time reduced to beggary by his own extravagance. His uncle, Herod Antipas, then supported him for a time; but at last he found a more agreeable refuge at Rome, where he had a kind protectress in Antonia the emperor's sister-in-law, who had been his mother's friend. By Antonia's influence he gained the favour

of Tiberius, and lived at court, where he soon attached himself to the Cæsar Caligula: and a spy, whom the jealous emperor set to watch the Jewish prince, overheard him say one day to his friend, that he hoped the empire would soon fall into his hands. This alarmed Tiberius; and Herod Agrippa, though clothed in purple, was at once thrown into prison. Tiberius, with his numerous armies, powerful guards, and unlimited power, lived in the hourly fear of assassination; and his alarm naturally increased after every fresh act of cruelty. Nor did he suffer less from the fear of death through the diseases by which he was oppressed, for the indulgence of every kind of excess had destroyed his health; and though he offered rewards to any one who could invent new pleasures or find fresh luxuries, he felt the evil days were come in which he could find no pleasure. Still hoping to be benefited by change of air, he left his favourite island in his seventy-eighth year, and went to the sea-side at Misenum, near Naples. There he fell into fainting fits; and Caligula, supposing him to be dead, caused the Prætorian guards to proclaim him, Augustus. But Tiberius revived; and the son of Germanicus, who was most unlike his generous father, fearing that the old emperor might punish him for his hastiness, persuaded the attendants to secure his death by poison, or suffocation, A. D. 37. At the first report of the death of Tiberius, a Hebrew slave hastened to Herod Agrippa's prison, and said to him in his own language, "The lion is dead." The keeper, on hearing the meaning of his communication, hastened to show his respect for Caligula's friend by striking off his chains and inviting him to supper. But whilst they were at table another messenger arrived, saying that Tiberius still lived. The Jewish prince was obliged to return to his prison and his fetters; but only passed that one night in anxious suspense, as in the morning it was publicly made known that Caligula was emperor.

Herod was richly rewarded by the friend for whose sake he had suffered. He received from Caligula the title of king, with all the dominions that had belonged to his uncle Philip, the Tetrarch; and he was also presented with a chain of gold equal in weight to that of iron from which he had been freed. On his way into Judea he visited Alexandria;

and the Jews of that city, in number about a million, desired their royal countryman to offer to his friend, the emperor, every mark of honour from them, short of worship; for, according to their law, they could not unite in that with the Greeks and Egyptians. These three classes of people inhabited three different quarters of this great city, and were continually at enmity with each other on account of their diversity of religion and customs. The sight of a royal Jew freshly excited the jealousy and hatred of the Greeks, and the new prefect, appointed at the accession of Caligula, desiring their favour, permitted them to persecute the Jews; so that after Agrippa's visit, thousands perished in different ways, and the general suffering was immense.

On Agrippa's appearance in his own country in royal pomp, Herodias was very angry at seeing one who had been dependent on her husband's bounty, exalted above him; and she would not rest till he yielded to her ambitious desires, and set out for Rome to ask for the title of king. At the same time Herod Agrippa privately sent to Caligula a larger present than the tetrarch could offer; and informed him that his uncle only wanted an opportunity to make himself independent, having long designed to revolt. He accused him of having once corresponded with Sejanus; at another time of a secret alliance with the Parthians, and said that he had stored up arms in his palace. From this account of his doings, the expression of "that fox," used concerning Herod by the Searcher of hearts, seems peculiarly applicable to him even as to his temporal affairs.

As Herod Antipas could not deny the charges brought against him, he was sentenced to banishment; and his dominions were added to those of Herod Agrippa. Herodias was offered her freedom; but she haughtily refused the favour, and accompanied her husband to Lyons, his place of exile. Archelaus, you will remember, had been previously sent by Tiberius to Vienne. Thus were the two sons of the elder Herod banished to a distant and half-civilized province; for, in those days, France appeared to be in the Roman empire, much like New Holland in our own.

Pontius Pilate, being tried before Caligula, was condemned to death; but he killed himself to avoid execution. We read

in the Scriptures, that he resisted every evidence of the truth, and sacrificed his conscience for the sake of Cæsar's friendship! He gained nothing even in this world: and "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The first eight months of Caligula's reign endeared him to the people; and, on one occasion, when he was ill, the palace gates were thronged with anxious inquirers: many passed whole nights in watching, and some sacrificed their own lives, hoping to incline the gods to restore his health. But in less than a year every trace of justice or mercy disappeared, and his real character was unfolded.

The life of Caligula is so much like that of a madman, that the compassionate historian begins to hope he was really such; and wishes that he, and others like him, had been restrained as unhappy maniacs, unfit to govern themselves, far less to reign over others. In another point of view, as a Roman moralist remarked, he was an example of the mischief that can be done when the greatest vices are supported by the greatest authority. In the intemperance of absolute power, Caligula caused a temple to be built for himself, where his golden statue, daily dressed in robes similar to those he intended to wear, was adored by the people. The wealthiest citizens sought the emperor's favour by offering themselves to be his priests: but his wife and his horse were in turn admitted to the same honour; and, at last, the mad Caligula said he would be priest to himself, requiring the most expensive delicacies as his daily offerings.

Not contented, however, with worship in this temple, he ordered the statues of the gods to be beheaded, and had the image of his own head placed upon each. He then took the name of the younger Jupiter; and had some contrivance to imitate thunder, which the heathens supposed to be the voice of their chief god. The Gentiles, whose religion was merely imaginative, could bear these follies: but the Jews, who clung more closely to the letter of the law than ever, were greatly alarmed by an edict that required them to worship Cæsar's image. Some ambassadors, who came from Alexandria to entreat the emperor's protection for the suffering Jews there, were asked many foolish questions by

him as to the nature of their religion; and at last he exclaimed, that he could not see much harm in them, but they were a poor silly people, who would not believe he was a god. Some of them assured him that sacrifice had been offered for him three times since he came to the throne. "Very well," replied the emperor passionately, "you have sacrificed *for me not to me:*" and from that moment he seems never to have given up the hope of making them submit to his will.

While so anxious to set himself up as a god, Caligula was proving himself to be of the devil, by his acts of unrighteousness and murder. The remembrance of the recent rejection of the Prince of Peace, makes the state of the world, under such a master as this, appear still more terrible. It was now that the Romans had cause to regret that the amusements of the amphitheatre had ever been introduced among them; for the barbarous Caligula caused the wild beasts to be fed with the bodies of condemned criminals, and had numbers of the old and infirm thrown to them, to clear the state, as he said, of unserviceable citizens; and such horrid work as this, he called the settling of his accounts. One day, when he found there were no malefactors to fight with the beasts, he desired the guards to throw down some of the spectators; first causing their tongues to be cut out, that his entertainment might not be spoiled by their cries. Caligula's common delight was to watch men expiring in slow tortures, saying he liked them to feel themselves dying. At another time he expressed a wish that all the citizens had but one neck, that he might destroy them by a single blow. One of his favourite expressions was, "Let them hate me, so that they do but fear me." It may seem less surprising that *one* should so madly exercise supreme power, than that so many should be ready executioners of his will; but the love of money, that great root of evil, attached many to Caligula and other tyrants: and this will account for many of the dark and wicked deeds recorded in these pages. Yet liberty is, in some minds, a stronger passion than avarice; and there were in this day some lovers of freedom ready to take away Caligula's life. It was only his expedition into Gaul that put a stop to his cruelties, and delayed his death for a

season. His whole proceedings on this occasion were those of a madman, and he did none of the great things which he boasted he could perform; for it seems he was too fearful to meet the fierce Germans, or any other enemy, face to face. On the coast of Gaul he drew up his army in order of battle, and caused the trumpets to be blown whilst he was rowed along the shore in a vessel. At a given signal the soldiers, who had received instructions beforehand, began to gather the shells and pebbles into their helmets; and when they had collected, as Caligula boasted, the spoils of the conquered ocean, he made a speech, commending their bravery, and distributed rewards among them.

The story that is told of Incitatus, Caligula's horse, is another example of that emperor's folly which may draw a smile even from children. Incitatus was often brought to the emperor's table, and treated, or rather teased, with gilded oats, and wine in a golden cup. But this was not all; he had a separate palace for himself and his attendants, his stable was a marble hall, and his manger of ivory; and the night before he was to run in a race, guards were stationed around him to prevent any one from approaching to disturb his slumbers. This was the horse that was one of Caligula's priests; and the Roman people would have been insulted by its appointment to the consulship if its death had not prevented.

On his return to Rome, Caligula sent orders to Petronius, the prefect of Syria, that some of the most skilful workmen of Sidon should prepare a colossal statue of himself in gold, as he intended to have it placed in the Temple at Jerusalem; for the Jews alone, of all his subjects, still refused to worship his image. As soon as the emperor's pleasure was made known, there was general excitement throughout Judea. Thousands of people flocked together of every age and rank, mourning deeply, and many of them clothed in sackcloth. It was sowing time, but none went to their usual labours; and for forty days the rulers of the Jews, and the gathered multitude, besought Petronius not to attempt to obey the emperor's orders, saying, they dreaded the wrath of God more than that of man, and they would rather die than see an image in their Temple. The governor was of a humane

disposition : he knew that famine must follow if the land were left unsown ; and he saw that nothing but the sword, which indeed he had Caligula's authority to use, could avail, and that the struggle could only be ended by the utter destruction of the nation. He therefore resolved to restore peace to the country by not carrying the emperor's commands into effect ; and sent a letter to Rome representing the circumstances of the case. But in the meanwhile Herod Agrippa was exerting his powerful influence, with his imperial friend, in person. The story is differently related ; but it is commonly supposed that the Jewish prince invited the emperor to a feast ; and after he had gratified his tastes to the utmost, Caligula, as was usual on such occasions, asked what he could do to please his host. Agrippa expressed his desire that the image might not be placed in the Temple ; and though probably the emperor would rather have given him any addition to his wealth or dominions, he could not deny that which was asked as a personal favour. But when the letter from Petronius arrived, he showed his displeasure towards that merciful governor by sending him, in reply, a command to put himself to death, as an example to all who should dare to dispute his will : but the emperor's letter was delayed by contrary winds, and did not reach Syria till after the intelligence of the death of the cruel writer, so the humane Petronius was spared.

The time was come when Caligula, so long the terror and the destroyer of his fellow-men, had to feel in his turn the anguish of a violent death. Cherea, a tribune of the Prætorian bands, who had often been ridiculed by the emperor on account of a natural weakness of voice, at length sought to stir up others who had been injured, to unite with him against the tyrant. All their names, however, would have been discovered, but for the firmness of a woman who was accused as being in the secret. As she was led to the rack, an instrument whereby the limbs of accused persons were dislocated, she trod upon the toe of one of the conspirators, in order to assure him that nothing should escape her lips ; and though Cherea was appointed to superintend her torture, she said not a word whereby the plot could be discovered. Cherea resolved he would never

again be the instrument of the tyrant's cruelty; and from that moment sought an opportunity to destroy him.

A few days afterwards, Caligula was amusing himself at the public games, little thinking that his foolish sport would soon end. He appeared gayer than usual, and having caused some fruits and other rarities to be scattered among the people, laughed heartily at seeing the scramble for them. If he had had any friends left at this time, the report of the plot against his life must have reached his ears; for it was the common subject of conversation. "What news?" said one of the senators to another, as they were standing together near the emperor: "This day will be represented the death of a tyrant," was the reply. Soon after, one of the conspirators treacherously invited Caligula to retire to his luxurious bathing-place, telling him that he would better enjoy the rest of the entertainment after this refreshment. Without suspicion, he passed into a covered gallery that led to the bath, and was met by Cherea, who plunged a dagger into his bosom, exclaiming, "Tyrant, think of this." Caligula struggled for life; but the other conspirators fell upon him, and he died after thirty wounds, A. D. 41.

Such scenes, the particulars of which it may be in general better not to dwell upon, are, alas! common in history. Power, whether righteously or unrighteously used, is a dangerous possession in this evil world; the holder of it, in the one case, often drawing forth the envy or rebellion, and in the other, exciting the hatred and revenge of his fellow-men. And thus it will be, as long as it is lodged in the hands of sinful men, and exercised over such: but He, "whose right it is," the Son of Man, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, will soon take to himself his great power and reign; and no established blessing can be expected upon earth till the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of Jehovah and of his anointed king.

It may be well to add, that however tyrannical or iniquitous be the exercise of power, the Christian's place is never to resist it. The description of the just, given by the Holy Ghost, is, "*He doth not resist*," even when condemnation or death is his portion. It was in the reign of Nero that

the apostle wrote, "Whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." And again, "*Ye must needs be subject*, not only for [fear of] wrath, but also for conscience' sake" (Rom. xiii). Whatever God permits, his children must be content to suffer; and Jesus said, that his friends need not be afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

CHAP. VIII.

THE DOOR OF FAITH OPENED TO THE GENTILES.—CLAUDIUS, EMPEROR.—REIGN OF HEROD AGRIPPA.—WEAKNESS OF CLAUDIUS.—CONQUEST OF BRITAIN.—MURDER OF CLAUDIUS.

THE close of Caligula's terrible reign of four years brings us to a very remarkable period in the history of the Church. Peter, who had been the Lord's appointed instrument in first opening the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, is now directed, in a vision, to open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles. He is taught that the difference formerly made between Jews and Gentiles is at an end, among all whom the Lord pleases to call; that both need the same cleansing, and that the hearts of both, being purified by faith in the same Saviour, are equally accepted with God (Acts x).

The Jews had hitherto always looked upon the Gentiles as common, or unclean, and considered themselves the peculiar and holy people of God; and it was difficult even for those who believed in Christ, and knew their salvation through Him, to believe that any besides their own nation were to be sharers of their privileges, or to have a portion in their Messiah. Three times were these emphatic words repeated in the significant vision of Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common:" and whilst he was in meditation over it, the Spirit bade him go with the messengers from Cæsarea, *doubting nothing*, for he had sent them. This was sufficient authority for the apostle; and he goes to the house of an uncircumcised Gentile, a centurion of the Italian band; it may be, even, one of the Prætorians; for they, as we have before noticed, were a

chosen band of Italians. Cornelius was prepared by God to receive the instruction of Peter; for through grace he had been faithful to the light already given to him. He and his kinsmen and near friends, who were waiting to hear the words promised to them, were addressed by the apostle as those who already knew that peace had been preached to the children of Israel by Jesus Christ, and how God had anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power, so that he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him. Thus far they knew; and now Peter is sent to them to testify of the resurrection of Christ, and that he was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead; with the all-important truth to them as Gentiles, that "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name *whosoever* believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." And this blessed gospel was accompanied with the gift of the Holy Ghost to all who heard it; so that they spoke with tongues and magnified God, as the Jewish disciples had done on the day of Pentecost. And after God, who knoweth the hearts, had thus borne them witness, Peter at once says, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized!" Could he indeed call that common which God had so manifestly cleansed? Therefore he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

I have dwelt on these interesting circumstances, because they have a most important bearing on the whole of our future history. It was in this manner that God at *first* did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people; and in the same sovereign grace he continues, through the whole of this dispensation, taking out whom He will: and if it were not so, there would be no hope of salvation for any one whose eye rests on this page.

Henceforth, as writing the history of the world on Scriptural principles, the divisions made by Roman historians will not be suitable: we must speak of its inhabitants as they are spoken of by the Spirit of God, under these three great classes: "The Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God."

In our next period, these classes are seen in strong con-

trast, and with the most marked distinctiveness: the Jews hating and resisting the Gentiles, and still more the Church of God; the Gentiles oppressing both the Jews and the Church of God; and the Church of God acting in grace and patience towards Jews and Gentiles.

The doing away of the grand distinction that had hitherto subsisted between Jew and Gentile, and their oneness as soon as they believed and were baptized into Christ, greatly astonished even the apostles and brethren in Judea; and they questioned whether this could be the mind of the Lord: but when convinced by Peter's testimony that it was really so, they glorified God, saying, **THEN HATH GOD ALSO TO THE GENTILES GRANTED REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE** (Acts xi. 18).

When tidings soon after reached the Church at Jerusalem that a great number of the Greeks at Antioch had believed and turned to the Lord, through the preaching of the men who were scattered in the first persecution, they at once sent Barnabas to see them. Barnabas quickly sought the help of Paul, who had been up to this period labouring in a different sphere from that of the twelve: being a chosen vessel, filled as it were with the extraordinary grace of the risen Lord—an unexpected witness for Him—his calling and apostleship being a surprise to those who were the Lord's apostles when he was on earth. Thus does the Lord ever delight to go beyond the expectations of his people, and to give exceedingly abundantly above all they can ask or think. When the chief apostles perceived that the Gospel of the Gentiles was committed to Paul, as the Gospel of the Jews was to Peter, and that their apostleship was by the same mighty power, and when they perceived, moreover, the grace that was given to Paul, they gave to him and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.

It was at Antioch, that city disgraced in history by the wickedness of the Syrian kings, and defiled by every form of iniquity, that these blessed fellow-labourers assembled with the church and taught many people; and it was there that the disciples were first called Christians (Acts xi. 26).

As it was usual among the Greeks to distinguish the disciples in the different schools of philosophy by the

master's name, as the Epicureans, the Platonists, &c., so it appears the name of Christians was given to the believers in Christ; and, as the disciples of a crucified master, it was an especial term of contempt. It is only made use of in one other passage of Scripture (1 Peter iv. 16), "If any man *suffer as a Christian*, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf." In those days, therefore, and during nearly three centuries, it was a name that brought suffering and reproach.

Before we pursue the history contained in the book of the Acts, we must notice the chief events of general history during this period.

A. D. 41. The successor of Caligula was his uncle, Claudius, who had been only saved from the destruction that fell on so many members of the imperial family, because his weakness of mind and deformity of body served as an amusement to the cruel emperor and his court.

After Caligula's murder, Claudius hid himself in a corner of the palace, and being discovered by some soldiers he was carried to the Prætorian camp, and immediately proclaimed emperor; as these licentious guards hoped to rule in his name. Claudius had no desire to reign; but Herod Agrippa, who was still at Rome, tried to strengthen his mind for the office, and persuaded the senate to yield to the wishes of the Prætorians, whilst, on the other hand, he made the passive emperor pardon all whom the soldiers wished to destroy.

Claudius, on his part, was ready, in compliance with the desire of the Jewish prince, to refuse all acts of worship: and, to reward him for the help received in this time of need, he added to his dominions all that had belonged to the elder Herod; thus the whole land was again one kingdom, and the Jews every where had a little season of quietness.

It was, however, but a short calm after and before a terrible storm; for, besides the late troubles in Alexandria, the Babylonian Jews, who had been a distinct and flourishing people for centuries, had experienced great calamities. Two Jewish youths, weavers by trade, had assumed supreme power in their own district, and reigned almost like kings; but the natives of the province of Babylon rose up against

the ambitious strangers; and before peace was restored to the country fifty thousand Jews perished. The remnant were left undisturbed during the reign of Agrippa, and increased so rapidly that they soon became as prosperous and wealthy as before.

Herod Agrippa entered Jerusalem in great pomp, and hung up in the Temple his heavy golden chain as a memorial of God's preserving care. He tried to win the favour of the people, by observing all the ceremonies with great exactness, attending to sacrifice daily, and carefully avoiding the outward uncleanness pointed out in the law. It is not then surprising that such a man should vex the Church, as related Acts xii., in order to please the Jews.

His first act was to kill James, the brother of John, with the sword. It is related, that the man who had accused him to the king was led to believe that Jesus was the Christ, by seeing the apostle's readiness to die; and, having confessed his own faith, he was condemned to the same punishment. As they went together to the place of execution, he asked the apostle's forgiveness; and, in the spirit of his Master, James replied, "Peace be to thee," and kissed him.* When Herod Agrippa saw that the Jews were pleased at the death of James, he put Peter in prison, and would have killed him also, if he had not been miraculously delivered out of his hands in answer to the unceasing prayers of the church. After Peter's deliverance, the king put the keepers of the prison to death; and shortly afterwards he left Jerusalem and went to reside at Cæsarea. This was probably to avoid the suspicions that had been excited in the emperor's mind by hearing that the Jewish prince was strongly fortifying the capital. Notwithstanding his general popularity, Herod had offended the stricter Jews by building a musical theatre at Berytus, and by his shows of gladiators in that city; for, on one occasion, he condemned two troops of

* It does not come within the compass of this work to relate the different traditions concerning the apostles, to which some degree of uncertainty must be attached, or to give the details of the sufferings of the martyrs of Christ. The young reader is referred to an interesting little work, entitled "Last Words of the Martyrs," by the authoress of "Little Mary."

malefactors to fight together till they were all killed. It was after reigning three years that Herod gave a grand festival at Cæsarea in honour of his friend the emperor; and this was probably the "set day" spoken of at the close of Acts xii. According to the account given by Josephus,* a great multitude assembled on this occasion from all quarters; and on the second day of the public entertainment, the king entered the theatre in a robe of silver, which glittered so brightly in the morning sun that the whole assembly were astonished by his dazzling appearance. As he was beginning to speak, some of his impious flatterers exclaimed, "A present God!" Herod did not rebuke them, or speak of the only "God of glory," in whom he professed to believe: but being immediately smitten with violent pain, he was carried to his palace, and died after five days of extreme agony, being eaten of worms, A. D. 44.

Claudius, or rather his ministers, decided that the younger Herod Agrippa, son of the late king, being only seventeen, was too young to reign; and Judea was again put into the condition of a Roman province.

The Greeks at Cæsarea, as well as the Roman troops, rejoiced at the news of Herod's death; and the latter made a feast to celebrate, as they said, the king's *departure*. Claudius, out of respect for his late friend, ordered these ill-behaved soldiers to be displaced by others from the Syrian legions: but this was never done; and their continuance in Judea under this sentence of disgrace only increased their bitterness towards the Jews, and kept up an irritation that was followed by terrible struggles.

The first years of the reign of Claudius were not marked by oppression or cruelty; he pleased the people by adorning the capital, and, in A. D. 49, wishing to gratify them by some foreign conquest, he sent an army against the British tribes who were still independent.

According to a census taken by this emperor's command, Italy was found to contain twenty millions of free citizens; and as it was reckoned that there must be at least twice as many in the provinces, the Romans at this time were pro-

* We cannot expect this historian's narrative to be as simple and correct as that of an inspired writer.

bably sixty millions in number. The slaves throughout the empire were, it is supposed, as numerous as the free-born ; and, according to this calculation, a hundred and twenty millions of people were at this time held together by one form of government, and acknowledged one master. The natural infirmities of Claudius would have been far less injurious to his subjects than the dreadful abuse of the power which, in his weakness, he permitted to fall into stronger and more violent hands. His wife Messalina, whose very name became proverbial for female wickedness, entirely succeeded in governing him, aided by Pallas, a favourite freed slave, and others equally covetous and cruel. So ignorant was Claudius of the crimes, and even of the names of those whom he was persuaded to condemn, that he often invited to supper those who had been put to death the day before, and denied that he had given orders for an execution but a few hours after pronouncing sentence.

Messalina played with her timid husband's fears by inventing stories of secret plots against his life, so that at last he was afraid to let any one approach him, even a child, without a strict search; and in this state of mind he was induced to consent to cruelties which he afterwards bitterly lamented. At length, one of Messalina's companions in crime told him of her acts of excessive wickedness; and she was herself put to death by his orders: such was his indifference about her end, that, a few days after, he asked why she did not come to supper. Claudius married three wives, the last of whom, Agrippina, almost equalled Messalina in crime. Her sole object was to secure the throne for Nero, her son by a former marriage, and she persuaded the emperor to adopt him as his successor, A.D. 50.

About this time, Claudius visited Britain, to obtain the honour of the victories won by his generals. He only remained there sixteen days, and returned in triumph to Rome, leaving Plautius with his lieutenant, Vespasian, to carry on the war. After many battles, they succeeded in bringing a part of the island into the condition of a Roman province; but under the weaker government of Ostorius, the successor of Plautius, the Britons rebelled against the Roman power; and it was long before the war-

like tribes were forced to submit. Caractacus, their king, by taking advantage of the mountainous part of the country, was able to resist, and even to alarm, the Romans during nine years. He was at length taken prisoner by Ostorius Scapula and brought to Rome; and, as he walked in chains through the streets, amidst throngs of people, curious to see a man who had so long struggled against superior power, he exclaimed with surprise, "How can a people, possessed of such magnificence at home, envy me a humble cottage in Britain?" Caractacus pleaded his own cause before Claudius, and was pardoned.

Nero had just reached his seventeenth year, when the ambitious Agrippina, anxious to see him in possession of the empire, determined to poison her husband. As Claudius often ate till he was stupified, his attendants were not surprised at being called one night to carry him to bed in an insensible state. Agrippina had concealed the poison in a dish of mushrooms, of which the emperor was excessively fond; but, seeing that he was likely to recover from its effects, she persuaded his physician to introduce a poisoned feather into his throat, under pretence of making him vomit; and in this shocking manner he died, A.D. 55.

The latter part of the reign of Claudius takes us through the important events connected with the ministry of Paul (Acts xiii.—xix). The command of Claudius that all Jews should depart from Rome, was the means of making Priscilla and Aquila, the Roman tent-makers, useful to the churches of the Gentiles, as well as the instructors of Apollos, and the helpers of Paul. How often the wrath of man is made to praise God; for He can use it at any moment for his own glory! Towards the close of the reign of Claudius the state of things in Judea became worse and worse. In A.D. 48, a quarrel arose between the Romans and Jews, in which twenty thousand of the latter were destroyed. In A.D. 51, Felix, the brother of Pallas, was appointed governor of Judea; and, under the protection of that powerful minister, he committed the great crimes we shall hereafter relate.

CHAP. IX.

REIGN OF NERO.—HIS CHARACTER AND CONDUCT.—DEATH OF SENECA.—BURNING OF ROME.—PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.—CLOSE OF NERO'S REIGN.

There is a time, said Solomon, wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt (Eccl. viii. 9); and the time of Nero's reign was as striking an example of this as we are furnished with in history.

The power which his mother was so anxious he should possess proved ruinous to both; so vain are human expectations of happiness from an exalted position. Seneca, one of the ablest teachers of morality among the heathens, was the tutor of Nero; and his pupil was at first universally admired for his justice, liberality, and humanity. On one occasion, when called upon to sign his name to the sentence of death written against a list of malefactors, the young emperor expressed a wish that he could not write; and, again, when the senate commended the wisdom of his government, he begged them to keep back their praise till he deserved it. But, as if to prove the vanity, as well as uncertainty, of that morality which does not flow from the life of God within, this was the man whose name is, to this day, proverbial for monstrous cruelty and self-exaltation.

Before he was twenty-one years of age, Nero became impatient of control or advice; and, after dismissing Seneca from his court, he caused his own mother to be killed. Instead of showing any sorrow for this act, he went to look at the dead body, and coldly remarked he had never before thought his mother such a beautiful woman.

A. D. 59. Under the reign of Nero, Suetonius Paulinus was sent into Britain to complete the subjection of the island; and knowing it was impossible the natives could heartily obey their Roman masters whilst under the more powerful influence of their own priests, he determined to attack the Druids in their stronghold, the island of Mona, now Anglesea. The landing of the Romans was opposed not only by the priests and soldiers, but even by the

women, who ran about with flaming torches making a terrific howling. But Suetonius urged his troops to despise the apparent danger, and having succeeded in dispersing the defenders of the Druids, he caused those priests to be burned in the same fires which they had prepared for their expected captives, and destroyed all their groves and altars.

The usual practice of the conquering Romans was to protect, and even to adopt in some measure the religion of the conquered: but the horrid rites of the Celtic priests shocked the more civilized Pagans, and made the emperors desire to have them prevented. The immediate consequence of these decisive measures was increased irritation on the part of the Britons. They took up arms with one accord, and Boadicea, a native queen who had been insulted by a Roman officer, was willing to lead them on to revenge. Before Suetonius could reach Londinum (London), which was already a flourishing Roman colony, it was burned to ashes, and seventy thousand Romans and other strangers were put to death by the enraged Britons. But in a regular battle which took place soon afterwards, eighty thousand Britons are said to have perished, and Boadicea poisoned herself, that she might not fall alive into the hands of Suetonius. This general was recalled by Nero shortly after, and Vespasian, with some other officers, in turn succeeded to the command. The destruction of the Druids is an important era in the history of our own land, as it doubtless prepared the way for the reception of the gospel, though we know not at what period it was first introduced.

All the worst features in that dreadful picture of the state of the Gentiles, set before the church at Rome by the Epistle of Paul, are mentioned by the historians of the times in their description of Nero's character. And when the head of the empire was such, it is not surprising that the torrent of iniquity was unchecked. Juvenal, a poet of this age, exposed the vices of his countrymen with great severity, but in a manner so opposite to that of the Spirit of God by the hand of Paul, that it is plain he comes under the description of those "who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are *worthy of death*, not only do the same, but have pleasure in [or

consent with] them that do them" (Rom. i. 32). The worst vices now took the place of those old Roman virtues, which a Christian writer has wisely called their "splendid sins"—for, as we have seen, personal courage, fortitude, temperance, patriotism, &c., were all used in the service of the prince of darkness. All the abominations that can be conceived accompanied the increase of wealth and luxury; and these were at their height in the reign of Nero.

Nero, from his childhood, was fond of those pursuits which are commonly encouraged as tending to soften the feelings and refine the mind. He delighted in music and poetry; and, in order to improve a naturally hoarse voice, sometimes passed a day without food. He performed publicly at the theatre in Rome, and went into Greece to contend for the prizes offered to those who excelled in chariot-racing and wrestling. Although he was outdone by others, the flattering spectators declared him the victor; and he returned to Italy in the pride of an eastern conqueror, followed by a company of dancers and singers. His conduct then became daily more abominable. He divorced his wife Octavia, and having married Poppea, killed her soon after by a violent blow with his foot, A. D. 65. About the same period, he condemned Seneca to die with many others who were accused of conspiring against his life; and, under pretence of showing a particular favour to his old preceptor, he allowed him to choose his own mode of death. The character of Seneca among the Romans, resembles that of Socrates among the Greeks; but so many Christian precepts are found in the writings of the former, that it seems probable he had learned something of the blessed doctrine which was then spreading at Rome. Seneca chose to have his veins opened, and, as he was slowly dying, he dictated a moral discourse; at length his agony becoming great, he drank poison to hasten his escape from bodily suffering, and that not operating quickly, he was suffocated. His wife, Paulina, determined to die with him; but when she fainted from loss of blood, her veins were closed, and she recovered.

In A. D. 64, Nero, like a madman casting firebrands for his own sport, ordered the city of Rome to be set on fire in

several places ; partly, it appears, that he might have room to build a great palace for himself, and partly that he might be gratified by a sight similar to that of which he had read the description in Homer's verses about the burning of Troy ; and whilst the flames were spreading, and the streets filled with lamentations, the emperor gazed at the scene from a high tower, and sung to his lyre that part of his favourite poem. The fire was not extinguished during a whole week, and out of the fourteen quarters into which the city was divided, only four remained entire. Nero, however, contrived to escape the public indignation by offering to rebuild the city at his own expense with greater magnificence, and by accusing the Christians as the authors of this terrible calamity.

It is possible that the Christians were at first considered as a sect of the Jews, whose difference from their brethren was not a matter of general interest : but when they were manifestly separated from them, after the rejection of the apostle's testimony, as recorded in the close of the Acts, they were likely to attract more attention, and to become the objects of the suspicion and enmity of the Gentiles. The religion of the Jews was in some measure understood ; for it was well known they had a temple at Jerusalem, where sacrifices were offered, and an established priesthood existed : but as the Christians had no temple, and nothing in their religion that a natural man could understand, the common thought was, that they were atheists ; and this we shall find was the constant accusation brought against them. Horrid tales were circulated concerning the practices supposed to be carried on in their private meetings ; and, though any one might have gone amongst them to prove the truth or falsehood of these reports, it was boldly said they concealed what they were ashamed to disclose. Nero was glad to take advantage of the general hatred towards these despised people, in order to screen himself ; and commenced a cruel persecution, under pretence that they were guilty of setting the city on fire : but even Tacitus, the historian of these times, whilst he expresses himself with great bitterness towards the Christians, says, people could not help pitying them, because it was clear they suffered

to gratify a tyrant's cruelty, and not for the public good.

It seems as if the devil on this occasion, as on many others, had stirred up his agents to try every mode of making death horrible, knowing that it was the last act of his power against the Lord's people, as they were on the point of escaping him for ever. Some were crucified by Nero's order in his own gardens; others, covered with the skins of wild beasts, were torn to pieces by dogs. Some of the bodies were covered with wax, or other combustible materials, and, being fixed upright with stakes, were used as torches, to give light to the spectators who attended the public entertainments given by the emperor.

The Christians suffered meekly; and it might have been said to Nero and his officers, "Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you." But it was not so with other subjects of the emperor's tyranny; for a great many plots were formed against his life by those who hated him for his cruelty and extravagance. Lucan, the chief poet of the age, was condemned to death for taking part in one of these conspiracies. His veins were opened, and, as he saw his hands and legs becoming lifeless, he discovered no emotion, but repeated aloud a passage in his poem on the battle of Pharsalia, describing the death of a wounded soldier from loss of blood. The indifference of Petronius, one of the Epicureans, in the same circumstances, is another proof that he who has the power of death often disguises its terrors to those who have its real sting, even sin, fixed for ever in their souls. He employed his dying hours in the gayest conversation with his friends, reciting the lightest poems, and betraying nothing like fear, by any word or look. Whilst Nero was becoming more and more hateful to his people, his self-idolatry increased, and he acted as if everything were to minister to his pleasure. The palace which he built for himself was so magnificent, that, if the descriptions of it are true, it exceeded in splendour anything that has ever been seen in the world. Its entrance was lofty enough to admit a statue of the emperor one hundred and twenty feet high, and the covered galleries, which enclosed the pleasure grounds, were a mile in length, and

filled with grand apartments. The ceilings of the dining halls were so contrived as to represent the firmament with the heavenly bodies in motion; and the whole palace was covered with a gilded roof, so that it was commonly called the golden house. The space in the centre contained wooded grounds, ornamental gardens, and artificial lakes, where Nero amused himself in fishing with nets made of gold and silk. So extravagant was he, in his dress, that he would never wear the same robe twice, and he required multitudes of servants to attend to his wardrobe. When his palace was finished, he exclaimed with delight, "I can now lodge like a man:" but his foolish pleasure was soon over.

In A.D. 66, the news of a determined revolt in the small province of Judea astonished the emperor; for the greatest part of Europe quietly submitted to the Roman yoke; and none but the Parthians were in hostile independence in Asia. He professed, however, to despise his Jewish enemies, though the proofs they had already given of their strength and courage, led him to see the importance of appointing one of his best generals to head the legions sent against them. He therefore chose Vespasian, who had long practised the arts of war with success among the fierce savages of Britain and Germany; and even forgave him the offence of refusing to admire his singing, for which the honest soldier was in prison at the time.

Nero had offended his generals abroad as much as his subjects at home: for some of his most faithful officers had been, at different periods, sacrificed to his jealousy. At length, Servius Galba, the general of the armies in Spain and Germany, accepted the invitation of the discontented citizens, and marched towards Rome. As soon as Nero heard of his approach, he escaped into the country; and Galba was proclaimed emperor by the Prætorians, with the approval of the senate. The tyrant was condemned to die as the vilest malefactor; but he stabbed himself that he might not be taken alive, A.D. 68.

CHAP. X.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF NERO.—
 PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL.—THE LAW NOT BINDING ON
 THE GENTILES.—EPISTLE OF JAMES.—EPISTLE TO THE
 HEBREWS.—CHURCHES IN THE HEATHEN CITIES.—THE
 CLOSE OF PAUL'S LABOURS.—MARTYRDOM OF PAUL AND
 PETER.

It is most desirable and important to trace the history of the Church of God as it may be gathered from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles; for in these writings it is given us, not by any partial observer, but by the Spirit of Truth himself.

God, infinitely wise, who arranged all his dispensations towards the human family before the foundation of the world, proved his long-suffering in his dealings with the Jewish nation at the close of this dispensation; and gradually instructed his children who belonged to that nation, showing them the beauty of the new garment whilst he drew away the old; filling them as new bottles with new wine, whilst he dried up the old wine in the old bottles.* The Jewish believers well knew that circumcision and the whole of the Mosaical law came from God; and they could not give up the one or the other till they were instructed by the Spirit of God. Moreover, the question naturally arose, Was it necessary for the Gentile believers to be brought under the same yoke?

After the awful death of Herod Agrippa, the word of God, the blessed seed scattered every where, grew and multiplied; and Paul, as an extraordinary witness of the grace of God, was called with Barnabas to leave the church at Antioch for a while, and to preach in other cities. In

* The parable here referred to, is to be found in Luke v. 36—39. A contrast is here drawn between two things, one old and the other new, as in Heb. viii. 13. And the Lord speaks as one who is going to establish something altogether new: a new dispensation that "agreeth not with the old:" and the effect of putting parts of them both together must be *ruinous*. He also says, that those who have been accustomed to the old, will not *immediately* desire the new.

every place the synagogues were first visited ; and they proceeded through the island of Cyprus, where they abounded. It was there that Elymas, a child of the devil, tried to prevent the Roman prefect from believing the glad tidings brought by the servants of Christ ; and it was only when Elymas was struck blind that he believed. Thus we shall now continually find the Jew seeking to hinder the Gentile from receiving the Messiah whom he himself rejects. At Antioch, in Pisidia, Paul delivered the fullest testimony concerning Christ, in the synagogue, ending thus : “ Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts xiii. 39). But whilst he fully proclaimed the grace of Christ, he warned them that the despisers must perish ; and when they contradicted and blasphemed, he said, “ Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” From that time the Jews, for the most part, became enemies and persecutors ; though a remnant, saved according to the election of grace, still declares that God hath not cast away his people. But it was in this way, as a nation, that the Jews filled up the measure of their sins, so that the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost (see 1 Thess. ii. 14—16).

Wherever Paul and Barnabas went, “ some believed, and some believed not ;” and this has been the experience of all the preachers of the Gospel ever since : so clearly is this an elective, and not a national dispensation, that we do not find, even when the Gospel was proclaimed in its greatest power, and accompanied by the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, any nation, or any city, formed into a church of God. Hence it is, “ the church of God which is at Corinth,” not the church of *Corinth*, and so on. “ I have much people *in this city*,” not, *all* the people.

In Cyprus, Paul wrought a miracle of judgment : at Lycaonia he performed a miracle of grace by the same power ; and the idolatrous people, concluding that the gods, celebrated in their fables, were come to visit them in the form of men, called Barnabas, Jupiter ; and Paul, Mercurius. The delighted people would have honoured them

in deed as well as in word ; but Paul restrained the priest of Jupiter from offering their sacrifices, by preaching to them the living God, and shewing them that their religious ceremonies were only vanities. Here, the unbelieving Jews interfered again, and persuaded the people to let them stone the very men whom they had just been wanting to worship (Acts xiv). But notwithstanding all the opposition of the Jews, and all the ignorance of the Gentiles, the powerful working of the Holy Ghost was experienced in many souls, and churches were gathered in many places in blessed separation from both. In every city where there was such an assembly of believers, Paul and Barnabas ordained, or set apart, elders, to be guides or overseers of the rest. Much spiritual wisdom and sound judgment were needed both in giving and receiving such a charge. All its requirements were afterwards stated in Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus.

At the close of their important mission, Paul and Barnabas returned to the church at Antioch, and related " what God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

Whilst these fellow-labourers still remained among the Christians at Antioch, some men from Judea, without any commandment from the apostles, came and taught the brethren that they could not be saved except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses. Paul and Barnabas, as faithful ministers of the grace of God, dissented from them, and disputed with them, and at length determined to go to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, to get this important question settled. As they passed through Phœnicia and Samaria, on their way, they declared the conversion of the Gentiles ; and it caused great joy to all the brethren of the Jewish nation. Upon their arrival at Jerusalem, some of the Pharisees who believed, said it was needful to circumcise the Gentile believers, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. The apostles and elders then came together to consider the matter ; and, after much disputing, the Holy Ghost, by the mouths of Peter and James, decided this question in the negative for ever ; and an epistle was written in the name of the whole church at Jerusalem,

declaring their brotherhood with the Gentile believers, and rejoicing their hearts by telling them they were not to be troubled by Jewish observances, but only to shun the evil practices of the Gentiles around them, by abstaining from meats offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication (Acts xv).

Circumcision, and probably many of the lesser ceremonies of the law, were however still practised by Jewish believers; and as long as an assembly of them remained within the walls of Jerusalem, they differed in this respect from the churches elsewhere. In A. D. 53, Paul himself circumcised Timothy, the son of a Jewess; although in his epistle to the Galatians, written probably the year before, he says, if they, as Gentile believers, were circumcised, they came under an obligation to do the whole law, and Christ would profit them nothing. The difference seems to be, that the believing Jews knew these ordinances had nothing to do with their justification before God; but, in mercy to their countrymen, they were permitted to use them, in order to win them to Christ, who was "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." We have other examples of this in Paul's conduct towards the Jews (Acts xxi. 20—26; 1 Cor. ix. 20).

About A. D. 60, James wrote *to the twelve tribes scattered abroad*. This, which is rightly called a *general* epistle, abundantly proved God's remembrance of all the seed of Jacob. It would have been impossible to address a general epistle to the Gentiles; but there were some things which were common to all the Jews whether they had believed in Christ or not; they were brethren (Rom. ix. 3, 4); to them belonged the adoption, and the promises, &c.; and, at the close of their trial, as a nation, they were called to repentance by James, as they had been by Peter at the beginning (Acts ii. 38). Reproofs are addressed to the quarrelsome (iv. 1), worldly (4), double-minded (8), &c. among them; and suitable warnings to those who were bent on getting gain, or heaping up treasures against the last days. As the Lord had said to the Jewish women, "Weep for yourselves and your children," so his servant

says to the rich men, "Weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." The testimony to the nation probably excited still greater enmity; but this epistle comforted and instructed "the remnant according to the election of grace," and warned all the professed believers in Christ, that a barren confession of faith would profit them nothing. The observations on this and the other epistles are offered very diffidently; and, in speaking of any particular application of the truths contained in them to the circumstances of the times, we have no idea of lessening the exceeding value and importance of the general instruction to the whole church of God.

About A. D. 63, when Jerusalem was about to be given up, and the trial of the Jews under the first covenant was just at an end, the epistle to the Hebrews was written; the needed instruction being given in due season. The passing away of the Jewish dispensation, which we trace through the Acts, is now fully unfolded. Precious truth for the church in all ages is contained in this epistle; but the Hebrew believers gained from it the special instruction which was suited to their circumstances.

1. They learned that the priesthood of Christ took the place of all other priesthood, and rendered utterly useless all that was still going on at Jerusalem.
2. Their worship was not to be in the Temple, or according to its ordinances; it was to be spiritual worship in the presence of God, where Jesus is.
3. They must hold fast their profession; for, if anything were put in the place of the blood of the covenant, whereby they were sanctified, it would be sinning wilfully, and only fiery indignation could follow, whereby the adversaries of Christ would be consumed.
4. They must not forsake the assembling of *themselves* together, though they could not go with the multitude.
5. They had no continuing city, and were to be ready to go without the camp, bearing the reproach of Jesus.

The believers who meekly received this instruction with obedient hearts, were prepared to bear the breaking up of that establishment in which they formerly gloried, and to expect the cessation of sacrifice, the scattering of the priests, the destruction of the Temple, and the fleeing from Jerusalem: all that would have been so distressing and terrible

to them, simply as Jews, they were reconciled to, by this clear revelation from God.

In reading of the apostles' journeyings, and noticing the addresses in their epistles, it is most interesting to remark, that the great cities, which we have hitherto considered in such a different point of view, are places for the display of God's grace. At Babylon, we find, there was an elect church; and of that at Rome, we have frequent occasion to speak. To Macedonia, the source of the second great empire, Paul is called, and the churches in its chief cities sound abroad the praises of the Lord by turning from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven. At Athens, a city so full of idolatry and vain philosophy, a church is gathered, and one of the council of Areopagus belongs to it. Among the learned and luxurious inhabitants of the wealthy city of Corinth, the Lord had much people. At Ephesus, which contained the grandest heathen temple of the world, the word of God mightily grew and prevailed. Troy, which had such poetical fame in the heathen world, is chiefly interesting to the Christian from the remembrance of the company of disciples gathered there to break bread on the first day of the week.

In A. D. 60, Paul was called to witness publicly for Christ at Jerusalem; but he was rejected, as Stephen had been, and only escaped death because he had the privileges of a Roman citizen, as he was born in Cilicia, one of the favoured provinces of the empire.

He was accused by the Jews before the two successive governors, Felix and Porcius Festus; and the latter complimented the young Agrippa, who had been recently made king of a small part of his father's dominions, by bringing before him this remarkable prisoner when he came to visit him at Cæsarea. Festus, in listening to Paul's eloquent defence, failed to understand him, and concluded that much learning had made him mad; but Agrippa, unable to resist the appeal made to the prophets and to his own conscience, said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Let us connect this memorable exclamation with the future history of Agrippa; for we shall find this almost Christian, died an unbelieving Jew.

The innocence of Paul was fully proved, and he might have been set at liberty, had not his appeal to Nero obliged them to send him to the emperor. Thus was God's purpose to be fulfilled in having a witness to his truth given before the Gentile head of the fourth great empire. At this period (A.D. 61), Nero had not begun to persecute the Christians; and he was willing to preserve the life of a Roman citizen from the violence of the Jews; but his savage disposition is powerfully brought before us by the name of *lion* applied to him by Paul, who wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Tim. iv. 17). The apostle had an opportunity of fully preaching to the Gentiles, and many at Rome, and even in the vicious household of Nero, were made partakers of the salvation of God. These facts bring us to the close of the book of Acts. From A.D. 63 to A.D. 65, it appears that Paul was at liberty to resume his labours; and it is probable he only returned to Rome to strengthen the church during its fiery trial. There is a tradition that the immediate cause of Nero's anger towards Paul, was the conversion of his favourite cup-bearer by his means. The second epistle to Timothy, and the last that this blessed apostle ever wrote, proves that he was looking forwards to martyrdom. "I am now," says he, "ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." He was beheaded by the emperor's command, A.D. 66. Neither Paul nor Peter lived to see the commencement of the Jewish war; but they must have known that the city was ripe for destruction. Church historians relate that Peter came to Rome at the time of the persecution, and wrote his epistles there, shortly before his decease.

At this season, they say, he met with Simon Magus (the magician), whom he had formerly rebuked in Samaria; he was practising sorcery at Rome, and almost idolized by the people. They also relate that the brethren besought Peter to escape from Rome; but that he was taught in a vision Christ would have him suffer there. He was crucified with his head downwards, saying it was too great an honour for him to suffer in the same position as his Lord, A.D. 66. Great uncertainty attends all the traditions respecting the apostles, and some have doubted whether Peter ever went to Rome.

CHAP. XI.

HISTORY OF THE JEWS DURING THE REIGN OF NERO.—GOVERNMENT OF FELIX.—PORCIUS FESTUS.—MARTYRDOM OF JAMES.—GOVERNMENT OF ALBINUS.—FLORUS.—STATE OF JERUSALEM AND OF JUDEA.—OVERTHROW OF CESTIUS.—ESCAPE OF THE CHRISTIANS FROM JERUSALEM.

FELIX was permitted by Nero to continue in the government of Judea, because his brother Pallas had been one of the chief instruments in settling him on the throne; but, under the dominion of this wicked governor, the Jews became still more weary of the yoke they had always hated.

Great indignation was excited when Drusilla, daughter of Herod Agrippa, was persuaded by Felix to give up her own husband, in order to marry him. His next offence was in uniting with some of the most daring leaders of the armed robbers who wasted the country, on condition of sharing their spoils; and when Jonathan, the high-priest, spoke to him of his evil deeds, he hired some of the Sicarii, the worst of the Galilean zealots, and assassins by profession, to murder him in the Temple. Thus encouraged by the only man who had authority to punish them, the robbers and assassins became so bold that no one felt secure; for these zealots pretended that the law of Moses gave them a right to kill any whom they judged to be enemies of God. At the same time many false Christs arose, pretending to work miracles; and, assembling the people in desert places, they addressed them on the impiety of obedience to the Roman government. As fast as these disturbers of the peace were seized and crucified, others stirred up the people afresh; but the believers in Christ were kept from being led away by these deceivers, through the gracious warnings left them by the Lord himself.

A. D. 55. A Jew, by birth an Egyptian, gathered as many as 30,000 followers; and, leading them to the Mount of Olives, from whence they could view the city, he declared the walls would fall down to admit of his triumphal entrance. But when Felix marched against him at the head of his cavalry, the impostor fled. Many of his followers

were killed or imprisoned, and the rest were scattered (see Acts xxi. 38). The quarrelling among the priests was another sad feature in this scene of confusion ; and the chief priests having taken by force the tithes belonging to the lower orders, numbers of them perished from hunger.

Cæsarea, however, was the scene of those events which led the Jews to throw off all appearance of submission to the Romans. The quarrel began between the Greek and Jewish inhabitants, both foolishly contending for the pre-eminence : the former, pointing to the proofs that it was a Pagan city ; the latter, urging their claims because it was founded by Herod. An absurd report, concerning the origin of the Jews, was common among these proud heathens ; namely, that they had been chased out of Egypt as a company of lepers : and one day, when the Jews went to their synagogue, they found a Greek, in mockery of the ceremonials used in the cleansing of a leper, killing a bird over an earthen vessel. This insult led to acts of violence on both sides : but, as the Roman soldiers aided the Greeks by the command of Felix, many of the Jews were killed, and the richest houses spoiled. Their wealth was quite sufficient to make the governor their enemy. It was towards the close of the government of Felix, that Paul reasoned with him concerning "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," so as to make him tremble : but the guilty Roman sent away his reprovor, promising to call for him when he had a convenient season. He hoped, also, that Paul would gratify his avarice by giving him money ; for he had often let even criminals escape for the sake of gain : and therefore he sent for him oftener and conversed with him.

In A. D. 62, Felix was recalled, and left Paul bound to please the Jews, yet the serious accusations they brought against him would have cost him his life, had not his brother Pallas interceded for him with the emperor. Porcius Festus, the successor of Felix, bore the character of an upright, but rather severe governor. He caused a short interval of tranquility by keeping down the robbers, punishing the assassins, and putting to death an impostor, who had led multitudes into the desert. But the Greeks of Cæsarea obtained a

decree from Nero which deprived the Jews of equal rights of citizenship with themselves : and from that time there was no more hope of peace between them.

The younger Agrippa had been appointed captain or governor of the Temple, when he was made king, and his dominions were enlarged by Claudius before his death. This last representative of the Asmonean family was satisfied with his dependent condition, and made great efforts to persuade his countrymen to submit quietly to their Roman governors : hence he was never popular at Jerusalem. He first offended the priests by erecting a lofty building from which he could see all their proceedings in the temple courts. They built a wall to shut out the view ; and he, in his turn, ordered it to be thrown down. The high priest, with the governor's consent, went to Rome about this matter, and obtained the emperor's permission to let it stand : but whilst he was absent, Agrippa put Joseph in his place, and, shortly afterwards, gave the office to Ananias, the fifth son of Annas, and degraded Joseph. In A.D. 62, Festus died, as governor of Judea : and before his successor, Albinus, could arrive at Jerusalem, the high priest, who was a Sadducee, and others of his sect, determined to destroy the Apostle James, as they knew he could not claim the protection given to Paul as a Roman citizen. It is said, James was so universally beloved and honoured on account of his holy life, that he was commonly called the Just ; but he was condemned by the Sanhedrin for breaking the law of Moses : and these judges, troubled, as they said, by the vastness of the mischief he had done, desired him to try to remedy the evil by a confession of his sin before the multitudes then gathered to keep the Passover. For this purpose they led him up to one of the pinnacles of the Temple ; but James took this last opportunity of confessing Christ before the people, and told them that the Crucified One, even Jesus, was now sitting at the right hand of God, and would shortly come again in the clouds of heaven. The high priest's party, who surrounded him, loudly exclaimed, with pretended surprise, that Justus himself was led away by this deadly error, and at once cast him down. He was not killed by the fall, and contrived to rise on his knees to pray

for the people. Whilst they were throwing stones at him, one of the priests cried, "Cease; what do you mean? this just man is praying for you;" but a bystander, seeing he was so much bruised that he could not live, ended his sufferings by a blow with a club. I have related these circumstances particularly, because even Albinus and Agrippa were displeased at the treatment of James; and, on account of it, deprived Ananias of the priesthood, and gave it to one Jesus, son of Damnai. Josephus also remarks, that the calamities of the Jews happened as a judgment upon them after the murder of James the Just, and mentions, in a more indirect way, the crucifixion of Christ.

Albinus was more rapacious and unjust than any former governor; and, whilst he let the robbers escape, upon the payment of enormous ransoms, he further enriched himself, by loading the people with burdensome taxes. Agrippa, seeing that danger was at hand, withdrew to Berytus, and made that city the most splendid in his kingdom. This, together with a further change of the high-priests, increased his unpopularity at Jerusalem. Jesus, the son of Gamaliel, whom he appointed, found the son of Damnai unwilling to give place: and these rival high-priests, at the head of their different parties, attacked each other in the streets.

Albinus was displaced by Gessius Florus; but, before his recall, and to increase his unjust gains, he opened the crowded prisons, and only executing some of the most noted malefactors, allowed all the rest to escape on paying their ransoms; and thus the province was filled with desperate criminals. At this critical period, 18,000 workmen were thrown out of employment, by the completion of the buildings of the Temple. The more prudent of the people entreated Agrippa to give them occupation in adding still further to its magnificence, but he refused, and set them about paving the city with stone. He then put an end to the quarrels of the two high-priests by establishing Matthias in their place; and this was the last Jewish high-priest legally appointed. The conduct of Florus too much resembled that of his master, Nero; it was so crafty, shameless, and cruel, that the people looked back to the government of Albinus with regret. Cestius Gallus, a man of like spirit, was, at

the same time, prefect of Syria : and it was in vain that the vast concourse of people assembled at the Passover sought his interference during his visit to Jerusalem, as Florus stood by his side ridiculing their complaints.

In a tumult which occurred shortly afterwards at Cæsarea, Florus made no effort to restore peace : and it appears from his whole conduct, he wished the Jews to revolt, thinking his oppression would be overlooked in the case of war, and that it would give him better opportunities for plunder. He not only suffered the Jews at Cæsarea to be ill-treated, but, whilst the greatest excitement prevailed at Jerusalem on this account, he sent to demand seventeen talents from the sacred treasury, to supply, as he pretended, the necessities of the emperor.

The enraged people added every epithet of hatred and contempt to the name of the governor : and some, bolder than the rest, in derision of his avarice, went about with a basket, asking alms for the poor beggar, Florus ! Being, however, afraid of his power, they pretended to give him a hearty welcome when he arrived at Jerusalem with his troops ; but it was too late ; his heart was full of vengeance, and he had no thought of mercy. His soldiers were sent to plunder the market, with orders to kill all whom they met, and those who escaped the sword were trampled to death by the horsemen in the narrow streets. As the Sanhedrin still refused to give up those who had insulted the governor, the most unoffending citizens were brought before his tribunal, scourged and crucified. That day 3,600 were destroyed ; and even those who could plead the rights of Roman citizens did not escape. King Agrippa was not then at Jerusalem ; but his sister Berenice, who had come there to fulfil some vow, sent repeatedly to entreat Florus to prevent farther slaughter, and at length appeared before him with her head shorn, and barefooted. But he would not listen ; her countrymen were scourged and cut down in her presence, and she was obliged to retreat to her guarded palace, where she passed a sleepless night, trembling for her own safety.

The next morning two fresh cohorts arrived from Cæsarea. and, though the priests and heads of the people showed every mark of submission, many more were trampled to

death by the horsemen. The soldiers, in their turn, were beaten down by stones thrown from the roofs of the houses ; and Florus thought it best to retire, leaving, however, one cohort behind him. King Agrippa, and a centurion sent from the prefect of Syria, soon came to observe the state of Jerusalem : they found every thing quiet ; and the centurion, after worshipping, as was usual, in the court of the Gentiles, took back a good report to Cestius. Agrippa, with Berenice at his side, then addressed the people, comforting them with the hope of a better governor as soon as the conduct of Florus could be reported at Rome, and beseeching them not to bring upon themselves the horrors of war by a mad revolt against the masters of the world. He told them, Greeks, Germans, Gauls, Africans, and Asiatics, alike submitted to the Roman legions placed among them ; and he ended his oration with tears, whilst his sister confirmed all he said by weeping aloud. At first the Jews seemed willing to listen, saying, they were at war not with the Romans, but with Florus ; but when the king besought them to obey this governor till another should arrive, the popular feeling turned against himself, and they even threw stones at him and desired he would leave the city. Agrippa then retreated to his own kingdom, angrily resolving to make no farther effort to save them from ruin. After the king's departure, things daily became worse ; and, as some wished to preserve peace with Rome, whilst others were bent on war, the city was soon divided into these two parties, the latter being the strongest.

Eleazar, son of Ananus the chief priest, headed the war party, and persuaded the lower order of priests both to refuse the imperial offerings which had been regularly made in the Temple ever since the time of Julius Cæsar, and to forbid any foreigner to sacrifice in the outer court. The chief priests and heads of the Pharisees opposed this open declaration of war with the Romans, and set before the people all the honour and wealth which they were thus on the point of losing. But the violent party cared for nothing ; and the priests refused any longer to make offerings for strangers. The peace party implored Agrippa's help, and he sent them three thousand horsemen, hoping to preserve

the city and Temple by overawing those who were determined on war; but Florus refused to interfere, and watched with delight the progress of the mischief.

Menahem, the son of Judas the Galilean, now came forward as the leader of the zealots and assassins who were disposed to carry out his father's principles to their fullest extent; and under his command the war party gained the advantage. But this young man soon offended the populace by going up to the Temple in royal attire surrounded by guards: and he was sacrificed to their rage. After his death, there was no acknowledged head of the whole rebel party; and the want of such a one was felt by them throughout the war. Nevertheless, they got the complete mastery in Jerusalem: Agrippa's troops were obliged to withdraw; and the Romans, who garrisoned the Antonia, being persuaded to come out of that strong fortress by a promise of safety, were all massacred on the Sabbath day. On that same day the Greeks of Cæsarea, probably excited by Florus, destroyed all the Jews in that city; many thousands in number. This act served toadden the whole nation, and led to the most bloody scenes in all the towns inhabited by Syrians and Jews. The latter began to feel as if every man were armed against them, for "the Lord sent upon them cursing, vexation, and rebuke; because of the wickedness of their doings, and because they had forsaken him" (Deut. xxviii. 20, &c.). The "*madness of heart*" with which the whole nation was smitten will be apparent in all that follows; for the vexation that was first felt in Judea, spread with all its evil consequences to other parts of the earth where the Jewish race was found. At Alexandria, the Jewish population assailed the Greeks with stones, in revenge for the wrongs of their countrymen at Cæsarea and elsewhere; and the governor could not bring them to submission till 50,000 of them were slain.

Cestius, the prefect of Syria, thought it would be easy to put an end to the revolt at Jerusalem by marching thither with his Roman and Syrian troops. Agrippa, hearing of their advance, made a last effort to save his countrymen by sending his earnest entreaties that they would submit; but the war party killed or drove away his messengers, and

prepared to resist the entrance of Cestius. Still there was a large party in the city desiring peace; and had the prefect known the real state of the case, he would not have been so easily discouraged. The obstinate defence of the Temple, during an assault of five days, made him despair; and to the general surprise he hastily retreated from the city. A bold party of the Jews pursued him, and in a narrow pass in the mountains, near Bethoron, they slew 5,300 foot and 380 horse; and the rest of the army only escaped by the coming on of night. All the military engines fell into the hands of the Jews, with an immense booty, and they returned to Jerusalem, singing hymns of victory, having scarcely lost a man. The overthrow of Cestius left no room for hopes of peace with Rome, and the revolted Jews were now only occupied with preparations for war; many of them confidently expecting that the Messiah would now appear, and not only deliver them from the Romans, but make them the head of the nations. The Christians at Jerusalem had far other thoughts: and they took advantage of the providential retreat of Cestius to make their escape to Pella, a city beyond the Jordan, supposed to be the same part of the country to which David fled at the news of Absalom's rebellion. There they remained in peace and safety till the end of the war; and during this exile they were gradually weaned from all Jewish observances.

CHAP. XII.

VESPASIAN.—JOSEPHUS.—THE ROMANS IN GALILEE.—JOTAPATA.—TARICHEA.—GAMALA.—JOHN OF GISCHALA.—
PROGRESS OF THE ROMANS TILL THE DEATH OF NERO.

IN writing on Scriptural principles, it will be consistent at this period to give the first place to the important events in the war between the Jews and the Romans, and to mention less interesting facts by the way. Judea, at this time, was the place that attracted universal attention: there alone was Roman power openly resisted; and the proud Nero, who gloried in the thought of being the master of the world,

could not rest under the knowledge that his authority was disowned, even in the most distant part of his dominions.

Vespasian, to whom the care of the war had been committed, was by birth only the son of a taxgatherer, and had risen step by step to the highest rank in the army, where he was distinguished by his valour, temperance, simplicity of manners, and indefatigable exertions. He was more like one of the ancient Romans in his conduct and habits, than any of his own times : but it is evident, like other ambitious generals, he had his eye upon the empire, for he knew there was a possibility of obtaining it through the favour of the legions under his command. Vespasian had two sons, Titus and Domitian, whose early dispositions and habits were equally unpromising. The former was trained to war by his father, and accompanied him into Judea as his lieutenant : and at this period of life he was distinguished equally by his bravery and licentiousness. Early in A.D. 67, Vespasian and Titus, with three of the strongest and bravest of the Roman legions, and all the forces they could collect in Syria or from the neighbouring tributary kings, came into Galilee, where Josephus had been appointed governor : and was prepared to receive the first shock. This remarkable man, the historian of the Jews and of these memorable times in particular, was of high rank, as belonging to a priestly family ; for the priests and their descendants were, in fact, the upper class, or nobility, among the Jews. He was a learned man, as well as a warrior, and had been to Rome for his own improvement ; so that he was intimately acquainted with the language and military arts of those with whom he contended. He was therefore chosen, by a council of war held at Jerusalem, to take the important command of Galilee ; as they hoped to gain time for the needed preparations in the capital and in the southern region, by detaining the enemy among the mountain passes, or before the fortified cities of the north. The Galileans were a bold and hardy people, but, as we have before noticed, a very fierce and wicked people also ; and they were considered rather barbarous in manners and dialect by the inhabitants of the capital : they used the

Syro-Chaldaic language, commonly spoken in Palestine,* and gave it a peculiarly harsh and guttural sound. It will be remembered that Peter was known as a Galilean from his manner of speaking.

Josephus says that he raised an army of 100,000 men in Galilee, and though he probably exaggerates, it was certainly a populous district; for, besides the strong cities, there were numerous large open villages or towns which contained many thousands of inhabitants. The Jews, however, had no power to meet a well disciplined Roman army in the open field; and at the approach of the enemy they took refuge, by Josephus's command, in the fortified places; a few who tarried behind the rest were at once cut off by the Romans. Agrippa, with a powerful army, had joined Vespasian at Antioch in the spring; so that the last representative of that family which had so long struggled to maintain the independence of their nation was now on the side of the strangers; and the Jewish people were without a head. But had their generals been firmly united in their purposes, or the whole people of one mind, there might have been, humanly speaking, some prospect of freedom; such was the strength of their cities, both by nature and art, and so strong and determined was the spirit of those who were bent on defending them. But the generals were jealous of each other; and the people were everywhere divided into two opposite parties, and weakened by the Syrian inhabitants who had no concern in their quarrel with Rome. John, one of the Galilean commanders, who defended and reigned over his own stronghold of Gischala, continually opposed Josephus, and would have willingly destroyed him that he might himself take the lead. But the approach of the Romans ended their strife; and Josephus, who had shut himself up in the fortified city of Jotapata, the strongest in Galilee, was the first to resist the whole force of Vespasian. As the boldest of the Roman generals, at the head of 60,000 regular fighting men, besides a great many who might be occasionally called to

* The few words given us in the Gospels are in this dialect; so it appears the Lord himself used it, and not the pure Hebrew of the Scriptures, for that was never commonly spoken after the captivity.

their aid, Vespasian himself was astonished at the obstinate and skilful defence of Jotapata, during forty-seven days, and alarmed, moreover, at the great loss and suffering of his own army. But superior force, or rather the failure of food and water, at length made the besieged give way; and the city was taken. All the male inhabitants, including the bravest of the Galilean warriors, fell by the sword, but the women and infants, were, on this occasion, spared. It is at this point of our history that the artfulness and selfishness of the character of Josephus come to light. As soon as he perceived a longer defence to be hopeless, he made some attempts to escape, under pretence of getting aid from without; but the people, who suspected him of a design of falling to the Romans, would not suffer him to leave them. When the city was taken, he descended into a cavern with some of his companions; and there it was proposed they should kill each other to avoid the disgrace of falling into the hands of the conquerors; for self-murder was considered as honourable by these valiant Jews as by the Stoics themselves. All consented to die, and drew their swords: but the cunning Josephus, who had determined to secure his own life, suggested that it would be better to draw lots, and to kill one another in turn. In this way, by some artful management, Josephus contrived to be left with only one other man, whom he persuaded to accompany him out of the cavern. The Romans soon crowded round them with delight; for the Galilean chief was considered a great prize, and his appearance attracted general admiration. When Josephus was brought before Vespasian, he, with great subtlety, assumed the tone of a prophet; and said he had only refused to die with his friends because he had a message from God to him, assuring him of future success and of elevation to imperial power. Josephus was well enough acquainted with the state of the Roman world to know that Nero would not be much longer tolerated by the impatient people: and he probably suspected the ambitious views of Vespasian, and thought it was likely such a popular commander would sooner or later become the head of the empire.

Titus put in a plea for the life of the Galilean chief, out of

admiration for his bravery ; and Vespasian, flattered by the hope set before him, determined to keep the supposed prophet near his person, that he might make use of him in the war, and prove his sincerity by his readiness to assist him against the Jews. From that hour Josephus became the steady friend of the Romans, and of Vespasian's house in particular ; but so impossible did this change appear to his countrymen, that at the news of the taking of Jotapata the greatest lamentations were made at Jerusalem, on account of the supposed death of the governor of Galilee ; all deploring this event as a common calamity. But when it was known that Josephus was not only safe, but the honoured friend of Vespasian, nothing could exceed the rage and indignation of the people : they called him traitor and apostate ; and his very name became a curse.

In tracing the progress of the Roman army, we see the most fearful calamities taking place in those scenes where the peaceful, gracious ministry of the Lord Jesus had been rejected. From Jotapata, Vespasian proceeded to Tiberias, the chief city in Agrippa's dominions ; the king desiring his aid in bringing his revolted capital to obedience. After some resistance the war-party was overcome ; and out of respect for Agrippa, the Roman soldiers were forbidden to plunder the city. Tarichea, another city on the sea of Tiberias, had been strongly fortified by Josephus, except on that side which was washed by the water, and which the Galilean boatmen were little capable of defending. The slaughter on this lake was terrible ; for the Romans, in making their way to the city, killed or drowned the Taricheans in their light fishing boats : the waters were tinged with blood, and the corruption of six thousand bodies so tainted the air that the conquerors were glad to leave the neighbourhood.

Some of Vespasian's historians, endeavouring to prove the perfection of his character, throw the blame of the following circumstances on his counsellors. At Tarichea, he sat in judgment upon the inhabitants, and then promising them his protection, desired them to set off for Tiberias ; his troops meanwhile received orders to prevent their entrance ; and Vespasian himself pursued them with a body of soldiers. Twelve hundred of the aged and helpless were slain on the

road ; six thousand able-bodied men were sent into Greece to assist in Nero's foolish scheme of digging through the isthmus of Corinth ; and thirty thousand were sold as slaves.

The severity shown towards Tarichea led all the cities of Galilee to surrender, excepting Gamala, Gischala, and Itabyrium, which were all in mountainous situations, and strongly defended by art. Agrippa, in person, advanced to the walls of Gamala, hoping to persuade the inhabitants to submit ; but a stone from a sling was the only reply to his entreaties, and he was hastily carried off by his followers, having received a slight injury from the blow.

A great many Romans perished in the siege ; but at length Titus, having ascended the rocks with a chosen band of men, got possession of the upper part of the city. Five thousand of the people threw themselves down the precipices to escape from the Romans ; and the rest were killed without respect to age or sex, for even infants were flung from the rock. Among the curses for disobedience (Deut. xxviii.) to which our attention has often been called, we may here consider verses 49—52, which are as descriptive of the scenes taking place at this time as any words in which they can be expressed by the historian.

John of Gischala has been already mentioned. He might long have defended that city with his desperate company of fearless robbers, but he thought it better to escape to Jerusalem : therefore when Titus offered them mercy if they would surrender, John promised to do so, on condition of his withdrawing his troops till the sabbath was over. Titus consented, and retired to a neighbouring town till the morrow. At midnight, the subtle John set off with his followers and their families ; but at the end of a few miles the strength of the women and children failed, and they could not keep up with the rest. Regardless of their cries, the cruel John urged forward his men and left them behind. The next morning the people of Gischala opened their gates to Titus, as to a deliverer, and joyfully told him of the departure of their tyrant. The Roman troops pursued him in vain, and only brought back to the city three thousand women and children, having slain all the rest of the fugitives.

After this, the Romans made more rapid progress. In a battle fought near the Jordan, fifteen thousand Jews were killed, and a multitude taken prisoners: that river and the Dead Sea were almost choked by the bodies of the slain. As the conquerors passed on, the whole country was made desolate by fire and sword; for Vespasian was in haste to finish his work, thinking that his presence would be needed in Gaul, where a revolt had taken place. He sent forwards a body of troops with directions to waste the whole neighbourhood of Jerusalem; and he was almost within sight of that city, at the head of his dreaded legions, when the news of Nero's death stopped his progress. Had Vespasian been nearer Italy, he might at this season have made some attempt to reign; and it appears that he forbore to weaken his troops, by carrying on the Jewish war, during the year A. D. 68—69, because he was only waiting for a favourable opportunity to obtain the empire. Thus, for nearly two years after the entrance of the Romans into Judea, Jerusalem was spared; yet this devoted city was suffering so terribly from enemies within, and from the sins of her own children, that waters of a full cup seemed to be wrung out to her. But before we enter into the detail of the miseries that fell on Jerusalem, we must consider the events at Rome which preceded its destruction.

CHAP. XIII.

GALBA EMPEROR.—OTHO EMPEROR.—VITELLIUS EMPEROR.—
VESPASIAN EMPEROR.—VESPASIAN'S CHARACTER.—STATE
OF ROME.

SERVIVS GALBA was seventy-two years of age when he was proclaimed emperor; and his uneasy reign lasted only seven months. He found the treasury exhausted by the extravagance of Nero; and the insolent guards, over-paid and spoiled by the indulgence of him whose cruel commands they had obeyed, still endeavoured to increase both their wealth and their power. As a provincial governor, Galba had acted wisely: but the cares of the empire seemed to overwhelm him, and he foolishly shared them with favourites

still more unfit to rule than himself. His wicked ministers, under pretence of increasing the public funds, heaped up riches for themselves, by the most unjust proceedings: the rich, who could pay the sums demanded of them, were suffered to escape, whatever might be their crimes, whilst the poor were generally condemned unheard. Galba, feeling the infirmities of old age, chose as his successor, Piso, a young man whose amiable character was his chief recommendation. This choice excited the jealousy and ambition of Otho, one of his unworthy favourites who had it in his power to offer the covetous Prætorians the rewards that were sufficient to secure their help. In a short speech, made at the camp, he tried to persuade them that the aged emperor was avaricious and cruel, and that he himself could alone meet their desires. Some of them at once raised him on their shoulders, to carry him into the city; and the rest followed, sword in hand, shouting, Otho Augustus! In this tumultuous manner they proceeded to the forum, and many were trampled to death on their way. Galba, hearing the uproar, came forwards with astonishing calmness, and bending his hoary head, desired that it might be struck off, if it were for the good of his country. Untouched by the old man's gentle submission, one of the foremost of the guards severed his head from his shoulders, and having fixed it on a lance carried it round the camp.

Otho's first act was to advance the faithful friends of the murdered emperor to the highest honours, declaring that fidelity deserved a reward: this conduct is the more to be remarked, as he had acted in such a treacherous manner himself; and he soon experienced that his own want of fidelity met with no reward. The proud legions in Lower Germany, upon hearing of the death of Galba, elected their general, Vitellius, emperor, arguing that soldiers abroad had as much right to choose as soldiers at home. This was just the principle that Vespasian wished to see acknowledged; but during all these events he made no movement, as the favourable moment had not yet arrived. The forces of Vitellius and Otho met near Cremona, in Italy; and the latter, being defeated, killed himself shortly after the battle, probably despairing of success, but professing his wish to

save his country from the horrors of civil war. He had reigned only three months and five days.

Vitellius made his entry into Rome as a conqueror rather than a peaceable ruler ; but the senate, afraid of his power, were obliged to consent to the appointment of the army.

In the vicious court of Tiberius, and amidst the luxuries of Caprea, Vitellius first acquired those tastes, which he could now indulge without restraint. He lived wholly for himself, and far exceeded Tiberius in gluttony and intemperance ; but instead of feasting in private, as that emperor had done, he expected his subjects to entertain him at their own expense. He would breakfast with one, dine with another, and sup with a third, always expecting the most magnificent preparations for his reception ; and it is said, he even acquired a habit of vomiting, that he might be able to enjoy the pleasure of eating more frequently. It is calculated that the provision for his table cost as much as seven millions of our money in the course of a few months. Vitellius soon made himself so burdensome and contemptible to the chief citizens of Rome, that a large party in the capital were prepared to consent to the nomination of Vespasian, as emperor, by the legions in the East ; and to arm themselves in his behalf against the supporters of Vitellius. Vespasian was now satisfied to leave the care of the Jewish war to his son Titus ; and sending a choice body of troops to strengthen his partisans at Rome, he himself only proceeded as far as Alexandria. There he remained for some months ; and his flatterers boldly reported, amongst other things to his honour, that he had cured a cripple and a blind man by his touch.

After a short but severe struggle, Vespasian's lieutenants took possession of the capital in his name, and Vitellius was beaten to death and thrown into the Tiber. When the new emperor landed in Italy, the senators and citizens came out to meet him some miles from the city, with every expression of joy : and to all classes his reign was a delightful respite from the tumults and calamities they had so long endured. Vespasian did not attempt to reform the manners of his subjects without giving them an attractive example of moderation and moral virtue in his own person. The

alteration in his rank made no difference in his outward appearance or behaviour; he preserved his former simplicity, retained his old friends, and so much delighted in showing mercy that he condemned the greatest criminals with regret. He was courteous to all, excepting those whom he thought it right to rebuke on account of their evil or luxurious habits; and it is related that, on one occasion, when a certain officer, richly perfumed with scented oils, came to thank him for an appointment, the emperor sternly exclaimed, it would have been better if he had smelled of garlic, and recalled the commission he had given him. Some historians have accused Vespasian of avarice; but others say that he only exercised a necessary economy, as the public treasury was brought very low, by the excessive self-indulgence of his predecessor. Heathen Rome was perhaps, morally speaking, in its best estate when Jerusalem was given up to its destructive dominion, on account of the accumulated sins of her children against the law of the Lord, and their rejection of every manifestation of His grace. While Vespasian was ruling over the peaceful empire wherein his authority was universally acknowledged, Titus became God's instrument in executing the long-threatened wrath upon the rebellious city of Jerusalem and its blood-stained inhabitants.

CHAP. XIV.

PRESAGES OF EVIL IN JERUSALEM.—STATE OF JERUSALEM.
—JOHN, ELEAZAR, AND SIMON.—COMMENCEMENT OF THE
SIEGE.—FORTIFICATIONS OF JERUSALEM.

It is related (Luke xxiii. 28), that when a great company of Jewish people and of women followed the Lord Jesus on his way to Calvary, bewailing and lamenting him, he turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

And truly, if there were ever cause for weeping over the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart, it was now, when some of the bitterest effects and deadliest consequences of sin were exhibited in Jerusalem.

The prophecy recorded in Luke xxi. 1—24 seems to refer more particularly to this period of calamity; but the most partial observer must confess that the Lord's infinite mind goes far beyond this particular season, and embraces events still before us, only ending with his own appearing. Josephus, who was most probably ignorant of the Lord's prophecy, gives some account of "fearful sights and great signs from heaven," as preceding the ruin of the city in his days. He relates that, for a whole year, a comet, having the appearance of a sword, was seen in the sky immediately over Jerusalem. During the passover a bright light shone suddenly at midnight, and the inner gate of the Temple, which was of solid brass, and so heavy that twenty men were needed to close it, suddenly flew open after it had been fastened with the strong iron bolts which shot into the door-posts. A few days after the Passover, many eye-witnesses declared that the sky, just before sunset, appeared to be filled with chariots and armies in rapid motion. On the feast of Pentecost, the priests who served by night declared that they heard a rushing noise, and a great voice saying, "Let us depart hence!" Josephus also affirms, that when the city was in peace and apparent prosperity, a peasant called Jesus, son of Ananus, cried aloud in the Temple, "A voice from the East! a voice from the West! a voice from the four winds! a voice against Jerusalem and against the Temple! a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides! a voice against the whole people!" As he continued to repeat these words day and night through the streets and lanes of the city, he was seized and brought before the cruel Albinus, who ordered him to be scourged in his presence till his bones were seen. But he uttered no expression of pain, no cry for mercy; and, as if regardless of personal suffering, he continued to exclaim at every stroke, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" As he would neither tell who he was, nor whence he came, Albinus at length dismissed him, supposing him to be mad. During the four years preceding the war, he continued to repeat the sad cry at intervals; but more frequently, and in a deeper tone, at the time of the festivals. He took no notice of any one; he did not curse those who struck him, nor thank those who gave him

food ; but only exclaimed, " Woe, woe to the city and the Temple ! " His last words were, " Woe, woe to myself ! " He was killed by a stone from one of the Roman engines during the siege.

The grand question of peace or war divided every city and almost every family in Judea, and gave rise to such fierce domestic quarrels, that the peaceful had no increase of distress to fear from the success of the Romans. Bands of desperate robbers had spread misery through the country, committing murder, burning, and plundering, under pretence of punishing the traitors who would not join in the struggle for freedom ; and these ruffians had been received into Jerusalem by the war party, as they gladly welcomed any who were ready to sacrifice their lives in the defence of the city. These men, however, proved the most dreadful scourges, and John of Gischala was a fit leader for such a company. We class them under the general name of Zealots, as persons whose false zeal for their religion led them to the most outrageous acts of violence. Robbery, house-breaking, and assassination became daily and nightly evils in Jerusalem ; and citizens of the highest rank were put to death, under a false pretence that they were about to betray the city to the Romans. At length the Zealots took upon them the appointment of the members of the Sanhedrin, and declared that the high-priest should be chosen by lot, and not on account of his descent from Aaron. But as their violent doings met with great resistance from the opposite party, they took refuge in the Temple, and used it as a garrison, from whence they came out occasionally to fight. John of Gischala then determined to call in the aid of the Idumeans, well known for their love of war ; and these fierce soldiers, headed by Simon, son of Cathla, quickly obeyed his invitation, and appeared before the gates of Jerusalem. But Ananus, one of the chief priests and the leader of the peace party, refused to let them enter : and, notwithstanding a furious tempest of thunder and lightning, which seemed to shake the earth, they were obliged to encamp outside the walls. But during that awful night, some of the most daring Zealots stole out of the Temple, and, concealed by the storm and darkness,

passed the unwatchful guards posted by Ananus, and opened a gate for their allies. Their first work was the destruction of a body of 6,000 soldiers, who were stationed in the cloisters to prevent the Zealots from coming into the city; and that terrible night, amidst the raging of the storm, the court of the Temple was deluged with blood, and in the morning 8,500 dead bodies were carried out. Nor did the slaughter end there; for the next day the Idumeans rushed into the city, pillaging as they went. The chief priests were put to death, and their bodies left to the birds of prey. Ananus fell among the rest: and Josephus says, the ruin of Jerusalem may be dated from this terrible night. Twelve thousand of the noblest of the peace party perished by the sword of the Idumeans; many were cruelly scourged and tortured, and the dead bodies remained unburied in the streets. At length, to the surprise of both parties, most of the Idumeans withdrew from the city, as if tired of their bloody work; but the insatiable Zealots went on in the same course of lawless iniquity. Death was their punishment for every offence, whether real or imaginary; and their victims were commonly the rich and noble. Another domestic enemy now added to the misery of the condemned city. Simon, son of Gioras, the leader of the party that overtook Cestius, had since that period gathered a strong body of armed men whom he encouraged in wasting the country. Being at first driven away from Jerusalem by the Zealots, he sought revenge by turning into Idumea; and his army of 40,000 men did such a work of destruction there, that it was said, like the locusts, they left no sign of vegetation behind them.

In the spring of A.D. 69, Simon laid siege to Jerusalem, and the Roman cavalry were ordered to keep back, that the Jews might be weakened by civil war. The citizens now appeared to stand between two fires; Simon without, and John, in possession of the Temple, within. But at length John's followers divided, for the Idumeans who had remained with him became jealous of his kingly power, and agreed with the opposite party to admit Simon, in order to humble his pride.

Matthias, the high priest, a man of weak judgment, went

in person to invite the fierce chief to come in ; and, amidst the joyful shouts of the populace, Simon took possession of the upper city.

Jerusalem was now divided into three distinct garrisons, most fierce in their enmity towards each other, commanded by Eleazar, John, and Simon, the three rival chiefs.

Eleazar, the first to proclaim war with Rome by refusing the imperial offerings, occupied the inner court of the Temple. A party of Zealots, in number 2400, were attached to his interest ; and the flour, wine, oil, &c., stored up in the Temple for sacred uses, he freely used for their support. Sometimes, in the excitement of intoxication, they would venture forth to fight with John's soldiers who occupied the outer court. Stones and arrows were constantly discharged by both parties, and the pavement of the courts was strewn with dead bodies. The arms of the Zealots, stained with the blood of their brethren, rested in the holiest ; and many of them, wounded by those without, died beside the altar. Simon attacked John's party on the other side ; but his assaults were easily repelled, as the high position of the Temple commanded the upper city. John also had many destructive engines in his possession ; and whilst using them against his enemies, above and below, many were slain who persevered in coming up to offer the customary sacrifices in the appointed place. Strangers were permitted to come in for the purpose of worship without examination ; but the citizens were searched, for fear of concealed weapons. And although the stone or the arrow often laid the worshippers dead in the midst of their services, the devout Jews still continued to ask permission to visit this dangerous place. Whenever John perceived that Eleazar's men were overcome by sleep or intemperance, he sallied forth against Simon, and plundered the city ; and it was in order to disappoint him in these expeditions, that Simon burned the large granaries in which there was sufficient corn to have supplied the citizens for years. The troops of Simon consisted of 10,000 Jews, aided by 5,000 Idumeans ; and John, who had only 6,000, usually kept close to his stronghold in the Temple. The three fierce leaders agreed in nothing but the persecution of the citizens, and the punishment of every one

whom they suspected of wishing well to the Roman army. The people were obliged to suffer in silence; for every complaint was interpreted as an expression of desire for the speedy arrival of the Romans. In these dreadful circumstances, hardness of heart marked all classes; the nearest relations seemed to have no feeling for each other; and even the dead were left unburied. Religious superstition alone survived; and none of John's iniquities were so loudly condemned by the public, as his making use of the cedars Agrippa had given for the improvement of the Temple, in the construction of some military towers.

It was in April, A.D. 69, that the Jews poured in from all quarters, to keep the last Passover that was ever held by their nation; and the suddenness of the approach of Titus from Cæsarea, with the immediate formation of the siege, allowed no time for the escape of this multitude to their homes in the country. From the calculation of the number of lambs sacrificed on other occasions, and, reckoning on an average ten persons to each lamb, it is supposed that more than three millions of people were enclosed within the walls of Jerusalem at this time.

Four of the strongest legions, with their Arabian and Syrian allies, were led by Titus through Samaria, and encamped in a plain called the Valley of Thorns, about four miles from the city. Titus went forward with six hundred horsemen, to fix upon the most suitable point to make the first attack; and as he had no thought of danger, he rode without helmet or breastplate. All appeared perfectly still; but as he passed round the walls, a side gate was suddenly opened, and thousands of Jews burst forth encouraging one another to seize the inestimable prize. But Titus boldly cut his way through them, and all seemed to be so astonished at his bravery, that they fell back, and let the horsemen pass. Not a single arrow touched the Cæsar; but one of his followers, who had dismounted, was surrounded, and pierced with javelins, and his horse was led into the city in triumph. The Jews boldly declared Cæsar himself had been seen to fly, and many indulged the hope of final victory.

Eleazar, John, and Simon now felt the necessity of

uniting together against their common enemy; and from this time they ceased to fight with each other, and only thought of rivalry in furious hatred of the Romans. The day following, the legions approached within a mile of the city, and one was encamped at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The Jewish chiefs made the first attack upon them when they were unarmed and busily employed in digging a trench. The battle lasted the whole day, and Titus again narrowly escaped destruction; but the Jews were at length driven back into the city.

The whole space between the Roman army and the walls was occupied by beautiful gardens and orchards, now in the fresh beauty of spring; these were divided by stone walls and water-courses, and here and there the scene was varied by deep shady glens and rugged masses of rock. All was however soon reduced, by the labour of the besiegers, to a barren level; but, during this work, many of the legionaries were killed or wounded by the Jews.

Jerusalem was at this time fortified by three walls, except on the side where it was defended by steep rocky ravines, and even there one wall had been built. Josephus reckons that the city was rather more than four miles in circumference, and shows that the Romans had, as it were, the labour of taking four distinct cities instead of one, such was the artful construction of its fortifications. The first wall was seventeen feet and a half broad, and nearly forty-five feet high; and when this was forced, only Bezetha, the new part of the city, was laid open. The second wall only defended a part of the lower city; and, if that were broken up, the upper city, with the Temple and citadel Antonia, would not be in the least weakened. Ninety strong towers defended the first wall, fourteen were on the second, and sixty stood on the third. That called Psephina, before which Titus encamped, was an octagonal building, one hundred and twenty-two feet and a half high, commanding a fine view of the whole of Judea. The tower Hippicus, before which another part of the army was posted, was one hundred and forty feet in height. The towers built by Herod, and called after the names of his wife and his friend, Mariamne and Phasaelis, were still more magnificent buildings. Phasaelis

was the chosen palace of Simon ; it stood on the wall of Zion, or the upper city, and was one hundred and sixty seven feet high, including the battlements and pinnacles. Mariamne was about half the height, but fitted up in a more costly and luxurious manner. The large blocks of marble, of which these towers were built, were so nicely fitted together, that it seemed as if they had risen out of the quarry entire. The fortress Antonia, and the Temple, already described, rose high above the whole city. Such was Jerusalem when it defied, not only the powers of the Romans, but the word of the Lord, by which it was expressly declared, that, of the temple buildings, not one stone should be left upon another that should not be thrown down. And, again, "*The days shall come* when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee *even with the ground*, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the day of thy visitation" (Luke xix. 41—44).

The fulfilment of these predictions we are about to consider.

CHAP. XV.

SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.—THE HORRORS OF FAMINE.—
THE CURSES THREATENED BY THE LAW.—SUFFER-
INGS OF THE JEWS.—SIEGE OF THE TEMPLE.—ITS
DESTRUCTION BY FIRE.

As the day of assault approached, the citizens of Jerusalem were relieved from their enemies within the walls, whom they dreaded far more than the enemies without. The Roman engines at length came within reach of the walls, and huge pieces of rock thrown from them crushed whole ranks of Jews; whilst others, called the *helepolei*, or takers of cities, battered against the wall in three places. The Jews answered with shouts of terror; and the soldiers of John and Simon fought side by side, some trying to burn these terrible machines, others to destroy the engineers. But notwithstanding their extraordinary valour, they could not pre-

vent the mischief done by the *helepolei*; and one, which they called *Niko* (the victorious), seemed to beat down everything before it, and was made to work night and day. When the first wall began to totter, they resolved to give up the defence of Bezetha, for the defenders were tired of spending the nights so far from their own homes in the city; and with one accord they retreated within the second wall, and left the suburb to the Romans. Titus immediately entered, and his camp spread from Bezetha to the brook Cedron. That very night the second wall was attacked, and the conflict was most terrible; for the Jews seemed entirely careless of their own lives, and readily sacrificed themselves in order to kill one of their enemies. On the fifth day, however, they were obliged to give up the defence, and Titus entered at the breach with a thousand chosen men.

The part of the lower city left exposed, contained the streets of the woollers, the braziers, and the clothiers: and Titus immediately proclaimed that not one citizen should be injured, nor a single house destroyed, for he was at war with the garrison, not with the people. This declaration excited the fiercest passions of the armed rebels, and they slew without mercy all who uttered a word about making peace with the Romans. Then issuing forth they surprised the besiegers; appearing on every side where they were least expected, every lane and alley, of the city being well known to them. Titus, in his turn, was obliged to retreat; and for three days the Jews defended the narrow breach with their own bodies. On the fourth day, they were forced back; and the Romans, at their second entrance, threw down great part of the wall. During the four days that followed, Titus employed himself in reviewing his troops, and giving them their pay; and, in order to strike terror into the besieged, he displayed before them his whole army in their most splendid dress and glittering armour. At the same time, Josephus, who had some ability as an orator, was sent to persuade his countrymen to surrender. The fierce Zealots reviled him and threw their darts at his head: but the people listened readily; and some having sold their property, and concealing their gold and jewels about their persons,

escaped to the Roman camp. The news of their safety induced so many others to follow their example, that John and Simon ordered every outlet to be watched, and put to death every one whom they suspected of an intention to desert; this, also, they made a pretence for the destruction of some of the wealthiest citizens, on whose riches they had longed to seize. Upon the fifth day, as there was no offer of surrender, Titus recommenced the siege. The Jews renewed the struggle with more bitter hatred and fiercer valour, and not only set the engines on fire, but rushed out upon the besiegers and forced them back. Titus himself was so discouraged, that he called a council of his wisest officers; and it was resolved, that they should relax their labours, and see whether famine would force the citizens to surrender. The whole army, therefore, was set to work to make a trench; and, though it was nearly five miles in extent, and guarded by thirteen towers, it was finished in three days.

After the trench was completed, all hope was cut off from without, and the supplies within the city were wholly unequal to meet the wants of the people. Some of them still crept out by night to seek for herbs in the ravines within the trench, but they were constantly seized by the Roman guards and crucified within sight of the walls. Sometimes as many as five hundred have been seen writhing on crosses when the morning dawned, and the soldiers added mockery to their cruelties by placing the bodies in the most strange and ridiculous attitudes. These executions, however, prevented such frequent desertions to the Romans; for the Zealots brought to the walls such as were disposed to escape, that they might see these examples of the Roman cruelty. Titus had, moreover, sent back some of the deserters with their hands cut off, to desire their fellow-citizens not to force him to destroy their city and temple. But only loud curses of his name and his father's met the Cæsar's ear as he went round to look at the works of the besiegers.

The horrors of famine daily increased in Jerusalem; and the extremity of want destroyed every natural feeling. Wives snatched the last morsel from their husbands, chil-

dren from their aged parents, mothers from their children ; and it is said, that mothers would even take their own milk from the mouths of their pining babes. In the meantime, the rebel soldiers forced open the houses in search of food ; and, if they found none, tortured the owners—supposing there was some concealment: those who looked strong and well were condemned as guilty of hiding corn—those who looked pale and half starved were spared. As the robbers were always prowling about like beasts of prey, even those who had food ate it in terror. Some, who had sold all they possessed for a measure of wheat or barley, either devoured it in secret unground, or snatched the bread from the embers before it was half baked. If any house were closed, the plunderers suspected the inmates had a meal, and bursting in, tore the food from their mouths. Old men were scourged or dragged about by the hair till they gave up the morsel for which they struggled desperately, and children, as they clung to their food, were dashed against the pavement. John and Simon, friends only in crime, united together in the most horrible cruelties towards their fellow-citizens ; and their soldiers were commonly without the excuse of want, and plundered others only to save their own stores for a time of greater need.

After the Romans had completed the trench, the anguish of utter despair was added to that of hunger. Men fought with their nearest friends for a miserable morsel, and even the dead were searched in hopes of finding some scrap concealed about them. Chopped hay, shoots of trees, and the most loathsome food, sold at an enormous price ; and some ravenously gnawed their leather belts, or the coverings of their shields. Women, children, and old men, being the weakest, soon perished with hunger ; men beheld their dearest relations die without shedding a tear, and the bodies were left unburied either from indifference, or from want of strength for the work of interment ; as there were instances of persons dying in the act of burying their friends, and some even crept into the cemeteries and died there. The Jewish chiefs at first ordered the dead to be buried at the public expense, dreading a pestilence from the corruption of the atmosphere ; but as the numbers increased, they caused

the bodies to be thrown over the walls into the ravines below, or to be shut up in the deserted houses.

It is said, even Titus groaned as he went his rounds and saw the multitude of corpses rotting in the sun, and called upon the gods to witness that *he* was not the cause of the misery of this city. He said this, in ignorance: but we know that, in one sense, it was true, for what but misery could follow since those wretched, Christ-rejecting people had exclaimed, "His blood be upon us and upon our children"! And after the resurrection, those who would not believe in Christ as having been made a curse (Gal. iii. 13) for them, justly came under the curses of the law. The threatened yoke of iron had been put round their necks in the time of the Roman governors already mentioned; and a nation was now come against them from afar, with the eagle for their ensign,—a nation whose language they could not understand; for Josephus was obliged to be the mouth-piece of the Romans, and an interpreter for Titus. They were a nation of fierce countenance, who did not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: they ate the fruits of the land and the increase of their flocks: and they besieged them in all their gates till their high and fenced walls came down, wherein they trusted, throughout the whole land. But a story that reached the Roman camp at this juncture exceeded in horror all that had been heard before. Mary, a rich and noble lady, who had come to Jerusalem, from the country, with all her wealth before the siege began, had been like many others frequently plundered; but though she tried to provoke the robbers by her curses, no sword was raised against her. They came day after day; for the very robbers began to stagger through weakness, and, in the madness of hunger, searched the same houses again and again.

This noble lady had often been deprived of her food; and at last, having nothing to eat, and no milk for the infant at her breast, she killed it in the wildest fit of despair, and having cooked it, eat one half and set aside the other. The smell of food soon attracted the robbers; and when they forced open the door, and commanded her to give it up, she uncovered the remains of her child, with the indifference of a maniac, and bitterly remarked, she had taken care to

keep some for her good friends! Even these savage-hearted men looked at her with astonishment; but she exclaimed in a shrill unearthly voice, "Eat, for I have eaten; be not more delicate than a woman—more tender than a mother; or, if you are too religious to touch such food, leave me the rest as I have eaten half already" (see Deut. xxviii. 56, 57).

It seems probable that this and other horrid reports which reached the ears of Titus, and shocked even the heathen, urged him to renew the siege with greater vigour than ever, seeing that the obstinate defenders of the city were determined not to yield. New military engines were prepared in the place of those that had been destroyed, and these seemed to be the last hope of the Romans, for there was not a tree remaining within ten miles of the city, and the whole surrounding region was like a wilderness. A conspiracy was now made to deliver up the city, as many wished to get rid of the three tyrants, especially as they had just caused Matthias and his three sons to be executed, with almost all the remaining members of the Sanhedrin, under pretence that they had some intelligence with the Romans. But the vigilant Simon discovered the conspirators, put them to death within sight of the camp, and in fierce defiance of the enemy, threw their bodies down from the walls. The famished people still contrived to desert in great numbers; but most of them perished in a wretched manner. Some died from eating too greedily of the food that was given them; and two thousand living bodies were cut open in one night, by the fierce and avaricious allies of the Romans, in fruitless search for the gold, which it was reported the Jews were accustomed to swallow before they left the city. The number of the offenders alone prevented Titus from punishing their barbarity with death; but, though he threatened with destruction any who should be guilty of the same crime, it was afterwards repeated in some instances.

Meanwhile, John of Gischala, within the city, grievously offended the prejudices of the more superstitious, by distributing the Temple stores among the famishing people; and by melting down the golden vessels, and especially the costly gifts of the emperors, in order to pay the soldiers; as he argued, the holy treasures ought to be used in carrying on a

holy war! The Jewish troops were inspirited; but their bold and obstinate defence of the walls could avail nothing, whilst the frightful engines of the Romans continually thundered against them.

In the beginning of July, the third month of the siege, the Antonia was taken, and a way opened to the Temple. It was then that Titus, having heard the daily sacrifice was interrupted for want of persons to make the offering, made a last appeal to the religious feelings of the Jews, and sent Josephus to promise John that he should come forth unhurt if he would fight without the Temple; as the Romans had hitherto always conformed to their law in not venturing beyond the outer court. John answered with loud and bitter curses, that he feared not the taking of the city, for it was the city of God. The engines were now drawn up to the Temple gates, and Titus himself repeated the demand made by Josephus; calling the gods, the whole army, and the Jews, to witness that *he* did not force them to defile this holy place. Still the Zealots would not forsake their stronghold, confidently maintaining that God would appear on their side and smite their enemies. All through the siege they had hired false prophets, who kept up the hopes of the people by telling them that the promised Deliverer was about to appear in Zion; and many, to the last hour, expected their Messiah would come, destroy the Roman legions with a word, and make Jerusalem the seat of universal empire.* Six thousand unarmed citizens, with their wives and children, were, at this time, led up to the Temple by one of these prophets who proclaimed that God had commanded them all to go thither. They were in the outer cloister when the Roman soldiers set fire to it, and every one of them perished.

The destruction of the cloisters made Titus master of the

* It is quite true the Scriptures contain most distinct promises of the appearing of the Lord in the day of Israel's *greatest* trouble (Dan. xii. 1), to destroy those who are besieging and fighting against Jerusalem (Zech. xiv). But at that season the inhabitants of Jerusalem will have the spirit of grace and supplication, and mourn bitterly at the sight of their once crucified Lord (Zech. xii. 8-10). The Redeemer shall come to them that *turn from* transgression, and *shall turn away* ungodliness from Jacob. Compare Isa. lix. 20, with Rom. xi. 26.

court of the Gentiles; and, on the eighth of August, the engines began to batter against the eastern chambers of the inner court. The strength of the wall resisted every assault, and the Jews threw down headlong all who had the boldness to mount to the top; even ladders, loaded with armed men, were thrown backwards and dashed upon the pavement.

Other methods failing, Titus ordered fire to be applied to the gates; the flames soon spread along the second range of cloisters, and the defenders of the Temple saw themselves surrounded by a circle of fire the whole night and the next day.

It was now that Titus called a council of war, to decide whether the magnificent building within should be preserved or destroyed. The council was divided; some were willing to spare it on account of its beauty, and because it was not the custom of the Romans to destroy the temples of conquered nations; but others said it was no longer a temple, but the citadel of a rebellious people, and as such ought not to be suffered to stand. But the Cæsar's opinion at length decided the point; and it was resolved that every thing should be done to preserve it, as one of the wonders of the Roman empire.

On the tenth of August, a day marked in the Jewish calendar as the anniversary of the destruction of the first Temple by the king of Babylon, Titus, who had retired to rest in the Antonia, was awakened by a cry of alarm that the Temple was on fire. A soldier, without orders, had mounted on the shoulders of another, on purpose to throw a lighted torch into a small gilded door in the outer building or porch, and the flames were rapidly spreading. Titus immediately hastened to the spot and shouted to the soldiers to quench the fire, but, in the general confusion, they could not, or would not hear. Each encouraged the other in the work of slaughter, and many were trampled down in their furious haste. Thousands of Jews were heaped like sacrifices round the altar, and the steps of the Temple streamed with blood. When Titus and his chief officers entered, they were filled with wonder at the beauty and splendour of the interior, and a last effort was made to save the holiest which was still untouched by the flames. But even respect for the

Cæsar's authority could not stop the soldiers, being as much excited by their thorough hatred of the Jews, as by the gold that glittered everywhere. A soldier, unperceived by those who were trying to enforce the commands of Titus, thrust a lighted torch between the hinges, of the door; and the blinding smoke and fire soon forced them all to retire.

The burning of the Temple was a terrible sight to the crowds in the upper city, and their loud wailings answered to the dreadful howlings of those who were perishing in the flames below. Meanwhile, the legionaries clambered over heaps of dead bodies to pursue their work of destruction, till, it is said, the slain exceeded the number of the slayers. Men and women, old and young, rebels and priests, those who fought and those who only asked for mercy, alike perished by the sword. The plunder was immense; and such was the quantity of gold obtained by the Romans, that this metal soon fell to half its common value in Syria.

The Roman standards were now set up amidst the smoking ruins of the Temple; sacrifices were offered to celebrate the victory, and Titus was complimented with the title of Augustus by the whole army.

The destruction of the Temple may teach us how vain is that zeal which is not according to knowledge (see Rom. x. 2—4). The Jews had rejected Moses, crucified Christ, and resisted the Holy Ghost; they would not hearken to the law, nor to that prophet, neither would they believe and be saved. They went on *in their own way*, adding sin to sin, contending for the form and letter when they were without the spirit of the law of God; and, trusting in lying words, they continued to cry, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord!" after He had left it desolate, and the things which belonged to their peace were hid from their eyes. Let us not forget that religion is but a vain thing, if it does not occupy the heart with God, and so produce subjection to His will.

There is not a more certain principle in Scripture, than that "the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord;" and again, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." The prophet Isaiah was commissioned to express the Lord's hatred of the sacrifices, offerings, solemn meetings, appointed feasts,

and many prayers of those who were yet in their sins (see Isa. i. 10—18). The first thing for us, as convinced sinners, is to plead the shed blood of Jesus, through which we may obtain the forgiveness of sins; and then, being ourselves "*accepted in the Beloved,*" our works and our worship will be also *accepted* through Him (see Rom. xii. 1, and 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5).

CHAP. XVI.

TAKING OF JERUSALEM.—TREATMENT OF THE JEWS.—BEHAVIOUR OF TITUS.—WORKS OF JOSEPHUS.

THE victory of the Romans was not complete; for John, at the head of his boldest men, had cut his way through the besiegers, and, escaping both fire and sword, rejoined Simon in the upper city; but both these leaders were so dispirited by the destruction of the Temple, that they sought to make terms with Titus. He agreed to spare their lives if they would instantly surrender; but when they proudly asked to go free into the wilderness with their wives and children, the Cæsar declared he would root out the whole people. On the seventh of September, the last wall was attacked, and the exhausted Jews were so little able to defend it, that, when a breach was made, they fled on all sides, whilst John and Simon, with many others, descended into the vaults and subterraneous passages that led to the lower city. Nothing but famine could have compelled these leaders to desert the strong towers where they might have resisted every assault; and when Titus entered and perceived the strength of the fortifications, he was surprised at the easy termination of this long and violent struggle. The legionaries spread through the city, burning and slaying as they went, till they were weary of their work, and night put an end to it. In many houses they found nothing but heaps of putrid bodies; for whole families had died of hunger. On the day following, orders were given not to kill any who made no resistance; and some of the tallest and finest of the rebels, or those best known among them, were saved to adorn the triumphal procession which Titus expected on his return to

Rome. The rest were publicly executed, and the old and infirm were generally killed as unsaleable.

During the whole war, Josephus reckons that 1,356,460 men were killed by the Romans, and 101,700 taken prisoners: but he only gives the number of prisoners from two places besides Jerusalem, and among the dead does not include the immense waste of life from massacre, famine, and disease.

In the siege alone, one million, one hundred thousand were killed, and ninety-seven thousand made prisoners. Of the latter, all above the age of seventeen were sent to Egypt to work in the mines, or dispersed through the provinces to be exhibited as gladiators: the rest were sold as slaves. Twelve thousand of the prisoners died of hunger; some not being properly supplied, others absolutely refusing food.

Thus, according to the prophecy so often referred to, the Jewish people were "plucked from off the land," and the Lord scattered them among all people, from one end of the earth to the other (Deut. xxviii. 62—64). They were taken into Egypt in ships, and sold to their enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and there were some whom *no man would buy* (verses 64, 68).

John of Gischala and most of his companions were forced by famine to come out of the underground caverns; and the life of this rebel leader was spared on account of his extraordinary bravery, which in the opinion of the Romans counterbalanced the greatest crimes. Simon continued in concealment, as he had a store of provisions, and some miners and hewers of stone were with him, by whose aid he hoped to dig his way out beyond the Roman entrenchment. When Titus left the city, he committed the charge of the ruins to one of his officers, Terentius, or Turnus Rufus; and he executed the work of destruction so faithfully, that nothing remained of this great city but the three towers, Phasaelis, Mariamne, and Hippicus, which were left as worthy monuments of the victory of Titus, and a part of the western wall which was spared as a defence of the Roman camp. Towards the end of October, Simon's provisions failed; and, despairing of any other mode of escape, he resolved to appear suddenly among the Roman soldiers, clothed in white, with

a purple robe, hoping to save his life by exciting their terror. The news of the capture of this extraordinary person was sent to Titus, and he desired to have him preserved for the day of his triumph.

Wherever the Cæsar went, his miserable captives were dragged after him. At Cæsarea more than two thousand perished as gladiators, or in fighting with wild beasts in honour of Domitian's birthday; and Vespasian's birthday was kept at Berytus in a similar manner!

After the taking of Jerusalem, Josephus rose high in favour with Titus; and the conqueror promised to grant him any request he should make. He asked for the sacred books, and the lives of his brother and fifty friends. He obtained these favours and many more; for he was allowed to select nearly two hundred of his relatives and friends from among the multitudes shut up to be sold; and, a little time after, Titus permitted him to take down from the crosses on which they were suffering, with many others, three of his most intimate friends. Two of them expired; but the third survived, though he had been hanging on the cross for many hours.

After Titus had subdued the rebels still remaining in Judea, he went to Alexandria, and there assisted at the foolish ceremony of installing the god Apis; in plain words, putting a new ox in the place of one, before worshipped, that was just dead. On this occasion of public rejoicing he wore a diadem; and this, together with the honour put upon him in Judea, was the origin of a report sent to Rome that the Cæsar was about to usurp his father's authority. Upon hearing of the alarm thus created, Titus immediately set off for the capital, to prove that he had no such evil intention. He was warmly received; and the splendour of the triumphal show, by which his victories and those of Vespasian were celebrated, could scarcely be exceeded.

Amidst the extraordinary exhibitions and vast display of treasure seen on this day, the eye of a Christian, familiar with the prophecies concerning the destruction of the city and Temple, would naturally rest upon the golden table, the seven-branched candlestick, and the book of the law, among the Jewish spoils; and still more upon the long train of

captives. The eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Roman believers was a fit preparation for such a scene as this, and would make it full of instruction to those who had hid the word in their hearts. And this, with every suffering of the Jewish nation, should speak aloud to the now privileged Gentiles. "Be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee."

Simon was scourged and publicly executed as soon as the triumphal procession reached the capitol; and thus ended that memorable day which marked the low estate into which Judah had fallen, before the whole world. The ruins of the triumphal arch, called the arch of Titus, may still be seen at Rome; and the curious examiner can yet trace upon it the representation of these Jewish spoils, and even the procession of captives. Coins, struck at this period, have also been discovered: upon them is the figure of a mourning woman, sitting under a palm-tree, with a Roman soldier standing by; being touchingly descriptive of the captivity of Judea. The inscription is, "JUDEA CAPTA."

The forfeited land of promise was sold by an imperial edict; and the money passed into the public treasury. Eight hundred veteran soldiers received a portion of it as the reward of their services, and these colonists were settled at Emmaus, seven and a half miles from Jerusalem. Vespasian also made some addition to the dominions of Agrippa, his faithful ally: but the Jewish king chiefly resided at Rome, and seemed, in his own prosperity and luxury, to forget the calamities of his country and people. His sister Berenice so much attracted the admiration and love of Titus, that the Romans were afraid he would make her his wife; and it is probable they would never have consented to his succession to the empire, had he not sacrificed his own wishes to theirs by sending away the royal Jewess. She returned to Rome after he became emperor, but never regained her place in his affections.

The war in Judea was followed by disturbances in Egypt, caused by some of the zealots who escaped thither and excited a revolt among the Alexandrian Jews: but the heads of the people soon delivered them up to the Roman governor

as enemies of the public peace. Such was their spirit, however, that the most lingering torments would not induce the tenderest boy to own Cæsar as his lord. At the time of this tumult Vespasian ordered the temple in Egypt to be shut up; and it was destroyed shortly afterwards.

Josephus ended his life at Rome, and never lost the imperial favour. There he wrote the history of the Jewish war in the Syro-Chaldaic language, for the use of the Jews in the East; and afterwards translated it into Greek, for the information of the Western Jews and the Romans. It is said, both Titus and Agrippa bore witness to the correctness of his account; and the former signed it with his own hand, and placed it in the public library. Many years after, Josephus wrote the "Antiquities of the Jews," to correct some false reports concerning his people and their religion. It is evident that his works were written with a view of pleasing his Roman friends; in his first work there is a disposition to exaggerate for his own honour or theirs; and in the last, in some instances he varies from the Scripture narrative to make his nation appear greater, or their religion more agreeable to the minds of the Gentiles.

The remarkable passage in which Christ is mentioned has been supposed by some not to be genuine: but others are inclined to believe that Josephus was constrained to give this testimony, though his own heart was unaffected by it. "About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed we may call him a man; for he performed wonderful things, and was an instructor of such as received the truth with pleasure. He made many converts both among the Jews and Greeks. This was the Christ. And when Pilate, on the accusation of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who before entertained a respect for him continued to do so; for he appeared to them alive again on the third day: the divine prophets having declared these and many other wonderful things concerning him. And the sect of Christians, so named from him, subsists to this very time" (written, A. D. 93).

CHAP. XVII.

REIGN OF VESPASIAN. — TITUS, EMPEROR. — ERUPTION OF
MOUNT VESUVIUS. — AGRICOLA. — DEATH OF TITUS.

At the close of the Jewish war, Vespasian built a temple to peace, in which he placed the book of the law and some of the spoils of Jerusalem; and, no other war occurring in any part of the empire, the temple of Janus was shut. Titus, as the acknowledged heir of the empire, being now associated with his father, assisted him in the government; and Vespasian was unwearied in his attempts to correct the abuses caused by the tyranny of his predecessors, and to restrain the general licentiousness. Pliny, the celebrated naturalist, who stood high in his favour, remarks, that "he was a man in whom power made no alteration, except in giving him the opportunity of doing good equal to his will."

He seemed always to dislike, rather than to court, the flattering titles offered him by the senate and people: and when the king of Parthia, in beginning one of his letters, styled himself "the king of kings," the Roman emperor, in his answer, simply wrote, "Flavius Vespasian." After reigning ten years, beloved by his subjects, he was attacked by a sudden illness, which he felt would be fatal to him; and exclaimed, in the spirit of a pagan philosopher, "Methinks I am going to be a god!" As his end approached, he remarked that an emperor ought to die standing; and making a great effort to raise himself upon his feet, he fell back and expired in the arms of his supporters.

Titus, on his succession to the empire, A. D. 79, imitated and exceeded his father in humanity and moderation; and even Christian writers have noticed his courtesy and readiness to do good. He dismissed all his vicious companions, and encouraged, as Vespasian had done, every man of learning or wisdom; and his generosity procured him such universal love, that he was called "The delight of mankind." It was his rule not to send away any petitioner dissatisfied; and he was so active in his exertions for others, that one

night, on recollecting that he had done no benefit to any one in the course of the day, he sorrowfully exclaimed, "I have lost a day."

Titus, as emperor, seems to have been an example of a ruler using rightly the power given to him: for, notwithstanding his benevolence, he was a "terror to evil-doers;" the criminals who had escaped punishment in the former reign, now received the due reward of their deeds: and he tried to silence all mischievous persons, false witnesses, and disturbers of the public peace.

It was in the first year of the reign of Titus, on the twenty-fourth of August, that the most tremendous eruption of Mount Vesuvius took place; on which occasion the two large towns of Herculaneum and Pompeii were completely overwhelmed. Pliny, commander of the Roman fleet in the Adriatic, took a boat and went to the place of danger, from which every one was trying to escape; for his curiosity to observe the progress of the eruption overcame every other feeling. But he stayed too long, and was suffocated, by the sulphureous vapours, in the midst of his observations. This extraordinary man had pursued his favourite studies with such ardour, notwithstanding the toils of a military life, that he had accumulated one hundred and sixty volumes of original notes on various authors; and thirty books of the "Natural History" which he compiled still exist. These were preserved by his nephew Pliny, surnamed the Younger, of whom we shall have to speak hereafter. It was he who found the body of the naturalist, on searching for it, three days afterwards. In A. D. 1713, the towns, so suddenly buried in the earth, were accidentally discovered, as some labourers digging for water found remains which led to further examination. As the streets and houses, with all their contents, were found many feet under ground just as they existed so many centuries before, it was easy to gain a certain knowledge of the fashions of those times. But this is far less instructive than the example given to us, of a destruction as sudden as that of Sodom and Gomorrah; for in these Roman cities people were about their daily work as usual, and employed in their different pursuits, just as we may be at this hour, when destruction came upon

them. And so we are assured it will be in the day of the Lord's coming (Matt. xxiv. 40).

In A. D. 80, a great fire took place at Rome, which destroyed the Capitol, or temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, with other public buildings. In order to repair this loss, it was decreed, that the annual tribute which the Jews had been accustomed to pay in support of their temple worship, should be raised for this purpose. They were thus to be instrumental in rebuilding an idol temple, whilst their own lay in ruins: and this circumstance increased their bitter feeling of degradation, and their desire to recover their independence.

In the reign of Titus, his general, Agricola, became master of South Britain, and began seriously to attempt the civilization of the natives. Their rude dwellings were gradually exchanged for substantial houses: temples, and even theatres, were built, and the dress and manners of their conquerors were in some measure imitated. The sons of the chiefs were taught the Latin tongue, and instructed in the arts; so that by degrees, the civilised islanders began to consider the Romans as their friends. On account of the successes of Agricola, the senate saluted Titus with the title of Emperor, which was the compliment usually paid to the emperor after a victory, and which had been received by him fourteen times before. This empty honour afforded him a very brief pleasure; for he was taken ill shortly afterwards, in the great amphitheatre, which he had caused to be built for the public entertainment. Some thought it was fever, others suspected he had been poisoned by his wicked brother Domitian. In his dying hours he declared there was only one action of his life that he regretted; and it was afterwards generally supposed he alluded to the nomination of Domitian as his successor, A. D. 81. In looking back through the history of Titus, how many things does the Christian historian view with regret; and wonder that even the conscience of a heathen should not be affected by the remembrance of them. But it is too frequently supposed that former excesses, and especially the sins of youth, are atoned for by improvement of conduct in later life. Alas! how different are the thoughts of man from the thoughts of

God. It is only those who have learnt to measure themselves, not by others, but by God's standard of righteousness and true holiness, who can feel there is no covering for sin but that which he has himself provided in his well-beloved Son: and even those who can rejoice in this great salvation will be ready to confess, in the words of an eminent Christian—

“Life's one blot in every page,
Childhood, youth, and riper age.”

CHAP. XVIII.

THE PRESENT DISPENSATION.—CONTRAST BETWEEN THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN DISPENSATIONS.—THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.—OUTLINES OF THE EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS, TO THE CORINTHIANS, TO THE ROMANS, AND TO THE EPHESIANS.—LAST EPISTLES OF PETER, PAUL, AND JUDE.

THROUGH the whole course of our history we have been tracing the goodness of the Creator, and the failure of the creature in every position. Man failed in the garden of Eden: and in the favoured circumstances of Israel, kings, priests, prophets, and people, proved again and again that in the flesh dwelleth no good thing. The national rejection of the Gospel put an end, for a time, to the *national* blessings of the Jews (see Rom. xi): and their peculiar dispensation ended at the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple; for, according to the law, the sacrifices could not be offered anywhere but in that appointed place. It is not our present object to dwell upon their future national repentance and restoration; but rather to consider the distinguishing characteristics of the New Dispensation, commonly called the Christian dispensation.

1. God is not now dealing, as of old, with a particular nation, and suffering other nations to be ignorant, or giving them up to a reprobate mind because they do not like to retain the knowledge of Him (Acts xvii. 30; Rom. i. 28). On the contrary, that particular nation, even Israel, is in part blinded (Acts xxviii. 26—27; Rom. xi. 25), and

salvation is now proclaimed to all nations. God is gathering a great multitude, which no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues : and for this purpose, the Gospel will be preached in all the world, " for a witness to *all nations*,"* before the end of the dispensation comes.

2. Another grand distinction between the two dispensations is, that whereas the obedience of Israel secured outward honour, and prosperity in the world (see Deut. xxviii. 1—14), the obedience of the Church brings persecution and outward trial (2 Tim. iii. 12). It is plain that in a national church, as that of Israel, the profession would raise no opposition if all were faithful : but, on the contrary, where the church is an election, that is, gathered out of all nations, as in the present dispensation, there will be opposition, if all are faithful to their calling. Hence the instruction of the Lord and His apostles to this effect—the prospect of tribulation and persecution always set before the disciples of Christ—the marked contrast always drawn between the church and the world. In our history we shall find this manifest difference, and the persecution consequent upon it, continue, till the church so far declines as to have fellowship with the world, and thus to exchange its frowns for its smiles. In tracing this decline, we shall again learn the often repeated lesson of the failure of the creature under all circumstances : and we must also observe, that the greater the blessing, the more striking is the failure under it. It might have been supposed that, even if man had failed to walk uprightly in the very presence of the Lord upon earth, and the darkness was made more manifest by the bright shining of the Light from above ; yet when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven, and the bodies of believers in Jesus became his temple (John xiv. 17 ; 1 Cor. vi. 15—19), being the members of Christ—there could be no failure. But this supposition is fully disproved by the whole history of the Church. Paul, who knew more, perhaps, of the power of the in-dwelling Spirit and of union with the risen Lord, than

* Matt. xxiv. 14. seems to be an answer to the last question in ver. 3, where " world," does not mean the habitable earth, but the age, or dispensation.

any one besides, plainly says, "I know that in me, that is, *in my flesh*, dwelleth no *good thing*." This truth explains much that would otherwise appear unaccountable in the history of the Church of God; and it is this that makes the believer in Jesus look forward with such joy to that day when he shall enjoy the redemption of the body (Rom. viii. 23), and when he shall be like Jesus, seeing him as He is (1 John iii. 2).

3. In considering the two dispensations, we must also remember that the Jews were to be the witnesses, or representatives of God, upon earth, according to the manner in which he had at that time revealed himself in the Law; and Christians, on the other hand, were to be the witnesses, or representatives, of Him, as he revealed himself in the Gospel. One of the plainest examples of this difference occurs Luke ix. 52—56. Christ had been rejected by some of the Samaritans, and his disciples asked him if they should command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, *as Elijah did*; but he rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village." Therefore, that which was according to the spirit of the Jewish dispensation, when God was trying *by the law* whether man would obey or not, was not according to the spirit of the Christian dispensation, in other terms, "the dispensation of the *grace* of God." And as the spirit of the dispensation was to be different, so would be the position and the circumstances of those placed under it. The witnesses of Jehovah, *as He manifested himself upon the mount* in thunderings and lightnings, in great power and glory, might, if they were faithful, execute His judgments, and be a powerful and glorious people upon earth: but His witnesses, *as he manifested himself on the cross*, would, if they were faithful, show forth his grace, and be a weak, despised, and rejected people upon earth. But, alas! as we traced the unfaithfulness of the former, so we shall have to trace that of the latter, through the whole course of the dispensation; though not so apparently in either case, at the commencement.

The Lord himself, in his parable of the wheat and the

tares (Matt. xiii.) gave his people no room to expect that the world would be filled with the children of God, or that the things which offend, and the evil-doers, would be rooted out before the end of the world (literally, the age). On the contrary, he tells us that the children of the kingdom, and the children of the wicked one, will be scattered through the world till the end. The serpent who had wrought such mischief in the garden of Eden, was equally busy in the Lord's spiritual garden, that is, among the children of God. The enemy introduced his children and his doctrines *whilst men slept*: this gives the idea of a want of watchfulness; and the apostle Jude afterwards observes, "there are certain men crept in *unawares*:" as also Peter had prophesied of those who should "*privily* bring in damnable heresies." And after the apostles passed away, there was not the same power to arouse the slothful, or to correct that which was evil, for it is certain the gifts of the Spirit were at first bestowed in an extraordinary manner, and for special purposes.

A short sketch of the books of the New Testament, will now be necessary, according to the order of time in which they are supposed to have been written. About A. D. 38, Matthew, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, wrote the history of what he had heard and seen. His Gospel appears to have been originally written in Hebrew, but was probably translated into Greek at a very early period.

In A. D. 54, Paul wrote, by the same inspiration, his epistle to the church of the Thessalonians, whom he had, a little while before, been the happy instrument of turning from the power of Satan to God. He rejoices over them with great joy, and, remembering their work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope, &c. is confident about their election of God, for they had received the gospel, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, and became such faithful followers of the Lord, that they were examples to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. They had turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, with the happy confidence that he had delivered them from the wrath to come, and their state was a testimony to the comfort arising from this blessed hope, when in lively exercise. From the second

epistle, we find that their faith grew exceedingly, and their love abounded: but in the midst of all their joy they were taught this solemn truth, "The mystery of iniquity doth *already* work;" and prophecies concerning events still before us were committed to their faithful keeping. But even in this blessed church some of the brethren were walking in a disorderly manner, and the rest were commanded to withdraw from them. The fault among them seemed to be, that they were not quietly going on with their daily work, earning their bread by the labour of their hands; and, for such a fault, a man was not to be accounted as an enemy, but admonished as a brother.

In A. D. 56, the first epistle to the Corinthians was written; and here it is that we have such a humiliating view of the failure of man, even as the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is the most lively picture of the lusting, or warring, of the flesh against the Spirit; and Satan too had been very busy in this part of the field, for the natural soil was a favourable one for him to work upon; and as the husbandman sows the seed in ground where it is most likely to prosper, so does this subtle adversary. The *philosophical* spirit and habits of the Greeks, whereby they were divided into various schools, some preferring one master and some another, led to serious evil in the church gathered out of this learned and highly polished people. There were divisions or factions among the saints, some admiring the teaching of Paul, some that of Apollos, and so on. A *worldly* spirit was also among them; and Paul contrasts their condition with his own. They were full and rich, and reigned as kings (forgetting that one body of saints could not be rightly reigning before the rest, or while Christ was still rejected by the world): they were accounted wise, and strong, and honourable, but the exact reverse of all this was the state of the Lord's faithful servants; and he entreats them to follow him. Their *republican* spirit was also stirred up by the devil; and there were some who were puffed up, and ready to despise the rule of the Holy Ghost through the apostle. And so, all through the epistle, there is nothing but exposure of evil, and the remedy of it all by the grace of Christ, through the energy of the Spirit of God. In fact, in this

short epistle, there seems to be a summing up of all the evils that can afflict the church of God internally. There was backwardness to judge the evil within the church; brother going to law with brother, disorder in the common relationships of life, offending weak brethren, questioning even Paul's apostleship, abuse of the Lord's supper and of the Pentecostal gifts, denial of the resurrection, or foolish reasoning about it, &c. Thus Paul's letter was to serve as lasting instruction for the Church in every age; but the power lodged in the apostles' hands has never been given to any other men (see 1 Cor. v. 3; 2 Cor. i. 23; xiii. 1, 3, 10); and if such were the manifestations of evil in their days, we cannot be astonished at any that have taken place since.

In A. D. 57, the second epistle to the Corinthians was written. The Lord, by his servant's hand, pours oil and wine into the salutary wounds made by the sword of the Spirit: He binds up the broken-hearted, and comforts them that mourn. It is a letter full of consolation, mingled with the most powerful exhortations and warnings: and from subsequent church history, we have reason to believe that the health of the church of Corinth was preserved as long as that of other churches.

In A. D. 58, the seventh year of Nero's reign, the epistle to the Romans was written. The character of it is, instruction, and not rebuke. It is possible "the lion" without, kept the sheep clinging more closely to their Shepherd, and more united in the fold: but all the precepts and warnings, at the close, showed the danger of their going astray, and the precipices down which they might fall. Conformity to the world, self-esteem, neglect of their right places in the body, want of love, pride, insubjection, and all other evils might creep in amongst them and cause them to stumble by the way (Rom. xii.—xiv.). Difference of judgment about things immaterial, and condemnation of one another on that account, had already sprung up; and the growth of these evils, we shall afterwards see, occasioned the most grievous sin among the Roman Christians.

In A. D. 61, the epistle to the church of Ephesus was written. The year before, on his way to Jerusalem, Paul had made a farewell address to the elders, or overseers, of

this blessed flock (Acts xx. 17—38.). Before he takes leave of them, he says, "I know this, that *after my departing* shall grievous wolves enter in *among* you, not sparing the flock.* Also, of your own selves, shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch," &c. With this perilous prospect of evil from without and evil from within, there is no room to lean upon apostolical succession: the safety of the church depends upon something surer; and he therefore says, with the greatest distinctness and simplicity, "*I commend you to God and to the word of his grace.*" And in writing to all the believers at Ephesus, it is still "God, and the word of his grace," that he sets before them. This epistle contains; Chap. i.—What the church is, as the body of Christ. Chap. ii.—The way in which His members are formed; being quickened with Christ—by grace—through faith—built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Chap. iii.—The wisdom and glory of God displayed in the church. Chaps. iv. v.—The oneness of the body, and the becoming walk of the children of God. The mystery of the union between Christ and his church. Chap. vi.—Final exhortations, suited to the children of God in their earthly relationships, and state of warfare.

About A. D. 64, it is supposed that Luke wrote his two treatises to Theophilus; viz. the Gospel, and the Acts of the Apostles. In the same year, probably, the epistle to the Hebrews was written, as before mentioned: also those to the churches at Philippi and Colosse; and that to Philemon.

About A. D. 65, it is said that Mark, being imprisoned at Rome, was directed to write his Gospel. In the same year Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy, and that to Titus; and Peter, his first epistle. The year following, Peter and Paul probably wrote their second epistles, shortly before

* See Matt. vi. 15, and John x. 12. Satan's cheats seem often to follow close on God's gifts: the grievous wolves—the ravening wolves in sheep's clothing—the hireling shepherd who leaves the sheep for the wolf to catch and scatter—these are described as "not sparing the flock," *entering in among* the overseers made by the Holy Ghost, who feed the flock and watch over it.

their martyrdom. The epistle of Jude is supposed to have been written about the same time. The character of these three epistles is very marked; and there is a striking agreement between them. All of them contain the most distinct exhibition of evils already apparent in the church of God, with prophecies of coming danger and increasing evil: and all, moreover, contain the plainest directions for the faithful till the end of the dispensation. The epistle of Jude is simply addressed to those who are *preserved in Christ Jesus*, not to any particular church: and in the midst of all the evils around them, they are told to remember the words spoken by the apostles, directed to build themselves up on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, &c., and commended to no human* care, but solely to Him who is able to keep them from falling.

The epistles of John, the Revelation, and the Gospel, belong to a later period, and will be mentioned hereafter.

CHAP. XIX.

DOMITIAN EMPEROR.—HIS CHARACTER.—HIS CRUELTY.—
 PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.—MURDER OF DOMITIAN.
 —NERVA EMPEROR.—HIS CHARACTER.—DEATH OF NERVA.

DOMITIAN, who succeeded his brother Titus, A. D. 81, was the last and worst of the emperors distinguished as the twelve Cæsars. He had not lived on good terms with his father; and only the entreaties of Titus, during the Jewish war, had reconciled Vespasiah to his disobedient son: yet,

* Far be it from the writer to imply, here or elsewhere, that the Lord did not graciously purpose to "send forth labourers;"—to make "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also;" to appoint "faithful and wise servants as rulers over his household;" and to give "pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body," &c., even to the end of the dispensation. This is more than *human* care; it is the provision of Christ by the Holy Ghost: but if, in any place, or at any time, Christians are without it, they must depend on the Chief Shepherd, not on anything of human substitution, otherwise they may be led into serious errors (Matt. xv. 14).

as we have said before, he was suspected of hastening the death of his affectionate brother. Domitian began his reign with some appearance of justice and mercy; but his real disposition was soon discovered: and it is probable the respect entertained for him, as the son and brother of their most beloved emperors, preserved him from the rage of the people, during sixteen years, more effectually than the strong guard with which he was surrounded. Vespasian and Titus had encouraged literature; and the latter was both a poet and an orator; but Domitian had never applied himself to study, and banished all learned men from his presence. Archery, horsemanship, and wrestling were his favourite pursuits; and he was so skilful in his aim, that he could send his arrows through the extended fingers of a slave, who stood for that purpose at a great distance. In his solitude he amused himself by catching flies, and sticking them through with a sharp bodkin; and so expert did he become in this cruel sport, that when a servant belonging to the palace was once asked if his master were alone, he replied, that "he had not even a fly left to keep him company." Domitian's rapid progress in cruelty from these small beginnings, may remind us to love mercy, and not wilfully to increase the groans of the creation, which is already in the bondage of corruption, and in pain, on account of man's sin (Rom. viii. 20—22).

At the commencement of his reign, Domitian renewed an inquiry which his father had before made, whether there remained any of the royal line, among the Jews, who would be likely to dispute his title to the possession of Judea. On this occasion, it is said, that some one, out of enmity to the Christians, brought forwards the grandsons of Jude, the Lord's brother, as descendants of the house of David. Upon examination, they spoke to the emperor of Christ and his kingdom; and he, being satisfied from their poverty, for they only supported themselves by the labour of their hands, that they were not likely to be his rivals, dismissed them with contempt.

Whilst Domitian was indulging in luxury and vice at Rome, the news of Agricola's success in the West filled him with envy. This general had overcome Galgacus, a British

chief, who had gathered an army of thirty thousand men ; and he had also, in a great measure, subdued the people of Caledonia (the ancient name for Scotland). The fleet under his command had discovered Great Britain to be an island ; and, sailing all round it, they went as far north as the Orkney Isles. By this intelligence, Domitian was roused from his indolence, and induced to pay a visit to Gaul. On his return, he boasted that he had conquered the independent tribes of Germany, whom he had never seen ; and, entering the city with a long train of slaves, purposely dressed in the German fashion, he asked for a triumph, and took the surname of Germanicus. Nor was this all ; he enviously recalled Agricola from the province he had governed with justice, obliged him to end his life in retirement, and probably contrived his death.

The loss of this able general was soon felt, as the empire was invaded first by the Sarmatians of Europe and Asia, and then by the Dacians, a barbarous people inhabiting the countries now called Wallachia and Moldavia. Decebalus, king of the Dacians, long contended with the Roman armies ; and Domitian only got rid of the barbarians for a little while, by giving them large sums of money. Yet, after they had withdrawn, the weak emperor expected not only to be treated as a victor, but to be worshipped as a god ; and, since the poor heathens imagined there were gods in hell, as well as in heaven, Domitian might have fitly represented one of their infernal deities. In A.D. 89, his cruelties led the troops in Upper Germany to revolt ; and they proclaimed their commander, emperor. But his defeat increased the pride and inhumanity of Domitian ; and he treated not only the offending parties, but his most innocent subjects, in a savage manner, inventing cruel tortures to discover those who belonged to the party of his adversary.

It was Domitian's custom to treat with particular marks of favour those whom he intended to destroy, and to use the most gentle language towards a person whom he was about to condemn. It is said, he sent the steward of his house a dish from his own supper-table, and ordered him to be crucified the next morning ; and he carried another with him in his litter the very day of his execution. We can,

therefore, imagine the terror of the senators, whom he had often threatened to destroy, when they were invited one night to sup at the palace, and the emperor himself welcomed them at the gates. Their horror increased when they were conducted into a hall hung with black, and lighted by a few lamps which just enabled them to see a number of funeral couches with their own names inscribed upon them. They were soon surrounded by men having their bodies blackened, each of them holding a lighted torch in one hand, and a sword in the other. These frightful figures danced round the astonished guests; and, whilst they were expecting nothing but death, a servant entered and told them they had the emperor's permission to return home. But, in other cases, Domitian's cruelties were real; and becoming gradually more hardened, he delighted to be present at the execution of his commands; and the sight of the tyrant, flushed with intemperance, constantly added to the agony of the sufferers.

In A. D. 95, after a rest of thirty years, the Christians again became objects of imperial persecution. It is said, the apostle John was brought before Domitian and thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil by his command; but, his life being miraculously preserved, he was banished to Patmos, and probably condemned to labour in the mines, as that was the usual punishment in that island. Flavius Clemens, Domitian's cousin and the consul of Rome, was one of the most distinguished martyrs at this period. After his conversion, he was entirely unfitted for the office he held, as the loss of his former ambition and his aversion to the worldliness and evil around him, soon brought upon him the accusation of slothfulness and neglect of the duties of his station. Many Christians suffered death during this persecution; others were banished, or deprived of their possessions; but the death of Domitian put an end to their sufferings in about two years. This wretched emperor's fears had increased with his cruelties; and he suffered dreadfully at times from the accusations of conscience and the dread of assassination. It is said, he had a wall of shining stones built round a terrace where alone he dared to walk by himself, in order that he might observe by the reflection

whether any one was behind him. His wife Domitia, whom he sometimes caressed and sometimes threatened, at last bribed one of his household to murder him whilst he was taking his morning bath; having been informed that he intended to have her put to death among many others.

In A. D. 97, Nerva, a native of Crete, the first foreigner who became master of the Roman empire, was chosen emperor by the Senate, on the day that Domitian was murdered. The late tyrant was refused the common funeral honours; and all his statues of gold and silver were melted down for the public treasury. Nerva's conduct is spoken of by historians as blameless; and his extreme gentleness and benevolence often led him to forgive, when, as a just judge, he should have punished the evil-doers. We know not whether he was acquainted with the doctrines of the Christians, but he ceased to persecute them, and recalled all who had been banished, except the wife of Flavius Clemens; and she was only left in exile on account of her relationship to Domitian.

In gratitude to the senate, who had raised him to the imperial dignity, Nerva took a solemn oath that no senator should be put to death during his reign; and he was not induced to break his promise, even when two of them plotted against his life. He even appeared with them at the theatre, and, in the sight of the people, presented them with a dagger, bidding them strike him if they would; and thus they were made ashamed of their intention. Another anecdote respecting Nerva proves he had not that love of money which is a root of great evil. One of his subjects having found a treasure, came to ask him what he should do with it? Nerva replied, "Use it:" and when the man offered to give it to him, saying, it was too much for a private person to use, he replied with a smile, "Then you may abuse it." The Prætorian guards alone were dissatisfied with the emperor, because he would not gratify their avarice; and a tumult arose among them under pretence of revenging the death of Domitian. The gentle Nerva laid his bosom bare, desiring them to take revenge upon him rather than any other: but they still persisted in finding out all who had been concerned in Domitian's murder, and having put them to death compelled the emperor to make a

speech thanking them for their fidelity. Nerva convinced of his own weakness, chose, as his partner and successor in the empire, Trajan, a Spaniard by birth, and at that time governor of Lower Germany. In the adoption of a man so fitted to rule, instead of one of his own family, Nerva showed much wisdom; but, about three months after, he gave a more memorable proof of human folly and imperfection, as he fell into such a violent passion with one of the senators who had displeased him, that it brought on a fever of which he died, A. D. 98.

CHAP. XX.

FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.—HERESIES OF THE FIRST CENTURY.—CHURCH GOVERNMENT.—SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES OF JOHN.—THE BOOK OF REVELATION —FAILURE OF THE CHURCH AT LARGE.—MEANINGS OF THE WORD CHURCH.—LAST DAYS OF THE APOSTLE JOHN.

THE writings of the Apostle John are now to be noticed, as chronologically belonging to the foregoing period. The value of them cannot be measured any more than that of the other inspired writings; and their seasonableness will also be most apparent as we learn the state of the Church at the time when they were written.

The date of the epistles of John is usually fixed in A. D. 90, or even later. The first is addressed to the whole family of God: the second and third are addressed to individuals. Hence there is instruction for the children of God in their relationship to God, and to each other; and there is instruction concerning the personal responsibility of any single member of the family, without reference to what others are doing around him. Paul, in his last epistles, had spoken of heretics, that is, persons who were not sound in the faith themselves, or taught false doctrines to others: and he had given directions as to the right treatment of such, writing thus to Titus, "A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." And he also warned Timothy that the profane and vain babblings

about the things of God, already begun, would increase unto more ungodliness, and that the word of such men would eat as a canker. From the epistles of John we find this had really been the case : and he uses stronger language, saying, "As ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists:" he also adds, "they went out from us," thus fulfilling the prophecy of Paul before referred to, "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things," &c.

The chief heresies in the first century of the Church arose from the foolish attempts of men to explain "the great mystery"—God manifest in the flesh. One class of heretics, commonly called the Gnostics or Docetæ, denied the reality of Christ's human nature, and tried to explain the mystery of his person, by saying he only suffered in appearance on the cross: and another class, known by the name of Ebionites, allowed the reality and perfection of his human nature, but denied him as God. Neither of these classes could understand the value of the atoning blood; and therefore, preached that men could be justified by their own works. In the Epistles, John seems particularly to allude to the former class, those who deny Jesus Christ come in the flesh; and, in the Gospel, he sets forth the godhead of Christ, in contradiction of the errors of the latter. Here we have the ministry of the Holy Ghost, contradicting the doctrines of the devil, and triumphing over all the adversaries of the truth.

The Docetæ were probably called Gnostics from some resemblance between their notions and those of the Oriental philosophers. They pretended the world was created by an evil being; denied that the Old Testament was a divine revelation; venerated the serpent as the author of sin, and honoured some of the worst characters in the Bible. The Ebionites held that obedience to the law of Moses was necessary to salvation; they made use of another gospel, and despised the writings of the Apostle Paul.

Some of these heretics bore an appearance of great holiness, and pretended they were beyond the reach of the defilements of the world or the flesh; others boasted

they were saved by Christ, and freely indulged every sinful inclination.

None of them, however, went to such extremes, at first, either in doctrine or practice; but the Apostle lays bare the very root of every subsequent evil.

The second epistle of John is most important as establishing the right of private Christian judgment; or rather the solemn responsibility laid on every individual believer, male or female, not to receive any one who does not bring the doctrine of Christ, whoever he may be, or with whatever authority he may come. Those who are walking in the truth are not only *able* to distinguish the doctrine of Christ, but also *bound* to reject that which is contrary to it.

The third epistle of John is as important in establishing it as the *duty* of every individual believer to receive such as go forth for Christ's name's sake, and not for the sake of gain (verses 7, 8). This last epistle contains the first record of that usurpation of power in the Church, which in its after-progress led to such evil consequences. Here is a description of one who had so far departed from the mind and law of Christ (Mark x. 42—45), that in his love of pre-eminence, he despises the apostle's letter, speaks evil of him, does not himself receive the brethren, and forbids those who were disposed to do so, casting them out of the church. Thus the closing epistles of the apostles end with a sorrowful picture of decline; and the last of all describes a church in which one man ruled so despotically, that he cast out those who received brethren whom he had refused to receive himself. John, being an apostle, as also Paul with the same authority, had power to correct; but after their decease such evils grew and multiplied. It may here be observed that all the difficulties with regard to church government originate in that want of subjection to the rule of the Holy Ghost which arises from the rebellion or self-will of human nature. Persons not walking after the Spirit themselves, could not, or would not, own the gifts manifestly proceeding from the Head of the Church; even Paul's apostleship was disputed by such; and so the ability of all who have since been sent by Christ has been disputed more or less. We must believe that God in his love would never have left his people with-

out pastors according to his own heart, if they had been willing to receive, and submit to them. But whilst God's apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, pastors or overseers, have been often rejected through the rebellion of man, carnal usurpers of these offices have been often set up by man's self-will, and established in all the power that human authority can bestow. Nothing can more clearly prove the perverseness of human nature than these well-known facts.

The history of the abuse of power in the Church is even more terrible than the history of the abuse of power in the world, inasmuch as the former is a higher and holier thing. In the first churches there were several overseers or elders,* or, at least, more than one (see Acts xiv. 23; xx. 17—28; Phil. i. 1): *a collective ministry*. And this was probably according to the Scripture, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward of their labour;" and according to the grace of Christ, who sent out his disciples two and two, and thus put them in a situation to plead his own promise, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Even the apostles had fellow-labourers; and Barnabas accompanied Paul, though Paul was the chief speaker. It seems, however, that all who ruled did not teach publicly (1 Tim. v. 17).

The book of the Revelation was probably written in A. D. 97, the year in which Domitian was killed; or in the year following, when John was set free, with all other Christian prisoners and exiles, by the direction of Nerva. The epistles to the seven churches, alone belong to the province of the historian; but with regard to the prophetic part of this book, it may be observed that the various and opposite interpretations of it seem to prove that its contents have never

* It may be remarked with regard to the wide difference now made between an Episcopalian and Presbyterian mode of church government, that both were one in apostolical times; for the *Episcopos* (literally overseer) and the *Presbyter* (elder) are terms often interchanged and used indifferently in the word of God. All the elders at Ephesus are called overseers (Acts xx. 17, 28). The people of God, with the Apostle of old, will always be most anxious to know *the power*, and where that is wanting they will not be satisfied with either the name or the form. (1 Cor iv. 19, 20.)

yet been rightly understood ; and, what is still more important, that they remain still to be fulfilled, as to their final intention.

The seven epistles will give us some idea of the condition of the Church at the close of the first century from the birth of Christ ; for it is generally supposed, the churches addressed were the fittest samples of the state of the Church at large. It has been well observed, that notwithstanding all the evil discovered, there is no exhortation to the faithful to separate themselves ; for these churches were rightly constituted, and under the direct government of Christ. " He was in their midst, and the power to be exercised proceeded from Him " (Rev. i. 13, 20). And therefore there was still a possibility of their being purged (see 1 Cor. v. 4—13).

It will be easily perceived that the churches at Ephesus and Laodicea were in a very different state from the time at which the epistles of Paul were written ; for that apostle did not speak of declension, or rebuke lukewarmness (see Ephesians and Col. ii. 1 ; iv. 13, 16). And there was also a marked change since Peter wrote his general address to the elect of God scattered throughout Asia (1 Peter i. 1): It is very instructive to get these successive epistles from three of the most eminent apostles, to the same churches, as we may thus learn the changes that are ever to be expected through the failure and infirmity of man. The faithful brethren, for whose love Paul gives thanks, have either themselves declined, or are succeeded by others who have not the first love, and, consequently, do not the first works. Moreover, the errors alluded to by Paul, and Peter, and Jude, in their last epistles, are now abounding in these Asiatic churches ; and the only church without blame, Philadelphia, is that which had obeyed former exhortations, in *keeping the word of Christ*.

In the address to the first church there is a warning that, unless there should be recovery, the candlestick—that is, the power of bearing the light of Christ—would be taken away : and in the address to the last, we have these solemn words, " Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth ! " in other words, Christ

could not speak through such a channel. We have no reason to hope there was any *general* recovery, or restoration from lukewarmness : far otherwise. And we must acknowledge, the Church at no period since, has ever been, as it once was, the fitting representative of Christ, as the light, and His faithful mouth-piece to the world ; even as Israel after its failure could not be the fitting representative of Jehovah, or His faithful witness to the nations. The abundant proof which we have, in the close of the New Testament, that the *collective* testimony of believers was marred by the general unfaithfulness, is confirmed by all subsequent church history : and as in the former dispensation, so in this, the energy of the Spirit—the faithful witness—the full blessing—can only be found in individuals, and not in the mass, or outward profession. The reception of this truth is most necessary to the understanding of all that follows. Throughout our future history we shall find, here and there, amongst those who name the name of Christ, *he that hath an ear*, hears and obeys what the Spirit says, but the mass do not : we shall also look, here and there, upon *him that overcometh* the world, the flesh, and the devil, but the major part are themselves seen to be overcome by one kind of temptation or another.

In a previous chapter it has been noticed that the original Greek word rendered, *Church*, or *Assembly*, is used by the Holy Ghost, first to signify the whole assembly of the redeemed, purchased by the blood of Christ (Eph. v. 25 ; Acts xx. 28) ; secondly any number of professed believers gathered together in any place in His name (Rom. xvi. 4, 5 ; Gal. i. 2, and elsewhere).* But in process of time this word obtained two very different meanings, which we shall notice hereafter.

* In the former sense, it will be found to include only those who are finally presented to Christ as a glorious Church, not having spot, &c. In the latter sense, it will be found to include all who have made a credible personal profession of "the obedience of faith." See Rom. i. and all the addresses in the Epistles. Among these, many may fall into sin and yet finally be recovered, as in the Corinthian Church ; and others, in time of temptation may fall away (Luke viii. 13 ; 2 Tim. iv. 10).

For the sake of clearness then we may take up the apostle's expression (1 Cor. xiv. 33), and distinguish the first gatherings as "the churches of the saints;" for this term seems to be applicable to them as long as any pains were taken to keep up the distinction between the church and the world; and this, we shall see, in some measure continued during the first three centuries.

The Apostle John, after his deliverance from the isle of Patmos, spent his remaining days in visiting different churches of the saints. It is said he became very infirm, and was able to speak so little that he used only to repeat the same words in all the Christian assemblies—"Little children, love one another." He was probably more than a hundred years old when he fell asleep. The Gospel is supposed to have been written soon after his return from exile.

The declension of the church seems to have proceeded more rapidly after the death of the last apostle. It appears to be a case in some degree parallel with that of Israel, as recorded, Judges ii. 7—10. But this we shall observe as we proceed.

CHAP. XXI.

TRAJAN EMPEROR.—HIS CHARACTER.—CONQUEST OF DACIA.
 —CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN TRAJAN AND PLINY.—
 TRAJAN'S EASTERN EXPEDITION.—INTERCOURSE WITH
 IGNATIUS.—THE JEWS IN EGYPT AND CYPRUS.

TRAJAN hastened to Rome, A.D. 98, as soon as he heard of the death of Nerva; and was received with great gladness. Historians speak of him as the best of the emperors; and suppose that he owed much to the instructions of Plutarch, the most celebrated of the Roman moralists, and the author of a well known work, entitled "Lives of Illustrious Men." A letter which Plutarch wrote to his pupil when he succeeded to the empire, contained very suitable advice, and, according to his desire, was sufficient to prove that if Trajan acted wrongly it would not be by his counsel. Being naturally docile, the new emperor was anxious to obey his

master's precepts. He was most cautious in pronouncing sentence against any one, and used to say it was better for a thousand guilty persons to escape, than for one innocent person to suffer. Again, on presenting a sword to the officer who was appointed prefect of the Prætorians, he said, "Use this for me, or against me, if I deserve it."

Trajan was remarkable for his diligence and modesty, for liberality to others, and frugality in his own expences; and, in war, he was equal to the best generals of whom we have read, and distinguished for his willing endurance of fatigue. In his reign, Decebalus again invaded the empire; but he was so far overcome by Trajan as to consent to pay him a yearly tribute. In a battle fought at this period, it is said the emperor was seen tearing up his own robes to make bandages for his wounded soldiers. Shortly afterwards, Decebalus again appeared in arms; and Trajan, on his way to oppose him, caused a bridge to be thrown across the Danube, such as no modern architect would attempt to construct. It consisted of twenty-two arches, and the ruins of it that remain are reckoned among the wonders of ancient art. The boldness and contempt of life shown by the Dacians are said to have arisen from an expectation of immortality, which they had in common with many other barbarians. They were only subdued after a war of five years; and then, Decebalus having killed himself, the whole of their uncultivated country (now Moldavia and Wallachia), one thousand three hundred miles in circumference, fell into the hands of the Romans. The hardy natives gradually submitted to the laws, and learned the arts of their conquerors, and Dacia became one of the fairest provinces of the empire.* Upon

* The Roman empire reached its greatest extent at this period, and comprised, besides Italy, the modern countries of Spain and Portugal, Great Britain as far north as Edinburgh, France, Savoy, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Germany as far north as the source of the Rhine, all the Austrian dominions with the exception of Bohemia, Moravia, the northern skirts of Austria, and that part of Hungary between the Teiss and the Danube. Dacia was the only province beyond the Danube, but Turkey and Greece were included in the empire; also Asia Minor, Syria as far as the mountains of Cappadocia, Crim Tartary, Circassia, Egypt, and the northern coasts of Africa, which were nowhere more than a hundred miles in breadth.

this increase of territory and dominion, the rejoicings at Rome lasted one hundred and twenty days ; and Trajan's fame spread so far, that even ambassadors came from India to seek his friendship. During the peace that followed, the emperor adorned the capital, and sought to improve the moral condition of his people ; and he found himself so generally beloved, that he could hardly believe he had any enemies. In such men as Trajan we cannot fail to acknowledge the hand of the Lord restraining evil, and drawing the moral virtues into exercise : as it is written, " By me kings reign, and princes decree justice " (Prov. viii. 15). But in reading the character and actions of Trajan, as set forth by the heathen historians, we must turn aside to inquire, whether he was nearer the kingdom of heaven than his predecessors, or the doctrine of Christ more acceptable to him than to them ? These questions, alas ! must be answered in the negative ; and it is in the ninth year of his reign, we find the third general persecution of the Christians carried on with the greatest rigour (A. D. 107).

The correspondence between Trajan and the younger Pliny, then governor of Bithynia, gives us some idea of the state of the Christians at this period, as well as of the general ignorance respecting their religion, or the prejudice against it. Pliny writes to the emperor, humbly asking how he ought to treat the Christians ; " a serious question," he observes, " as the number of these impious people of every age and sex so rapidly increases." He inquires if their punishment should be proportioned to their age and strength, and whether any time should be given them for repentance ; and finally, desires to know whether *the name alone*, or the crimes connected with it, were to be the object of punishment. He then tells the emperor that the plan which he pursues, whilst awaiting his wiser counsel, is to question all who are accused before his tribunal, whether they are Christians. If they plead guilty, the question is repeated, with a threatening of death. The obstinate he had, in all cases, punished with death, excepting those who were reserved, as Roman citizens, for the emperor's own judgment ; for he presumed that, whatever was the nature of their religion, their unwillingness to give it up deserved condemnation.

When we remember that the churches in Asia, referred to in the preceding chapter, fell within the limits of this persecution, the report of their condition, as given by a heathen judge, is particularly interesting. Some of the Asiatic Christians, when accused before him, declared they never had been Christians; others said they had professed to be such, five, ten, or even twenty years before, but did so no longer. All these proved their innocence, in his esteem, by calling upon the gods, and upon Cæsar, and by cursing the name of Christ. "This," adds the governor, "I have been assured, a *real Christian* could not be forced to do." We can easily suppose that the Philadelphian, or the Smyranean state would produce the most martyrs; the Laodicean state, the most apostates.

Pliny closely examined the apostates as to the nature of their former religion, and even their imperfect account made him begin to doubt, whether it was so much crime, as error! They told him that on a certain day (probably the Lord's day), it had been their custom to meet before daylight, and repeat a hymn to Christ, as God; after which they solemnly bound themselves not to commit any wickedness. Later in the day they met to partake of a common, harmless meal together, which, however, they had given up when they found it was contrary to the laws. Probably this was the feast of charity, and the Lord's Supper, which seems to have been at first connected with it (see 1 Cor. xi. 33, 34; Jude 12). Not satisfied with the evidence of the apostates, Pliny caused two deaconesses, or servants of the Church, to be tortured, in order that he might arrive at the truth; but after all, he says, it appeared to him, "a wicked and excessive superstition." He ends his long letter by saying, he hopes the evil is not beyond remedy, if he may absolutely promise safety to the repentant, as through his efforts the desolate temples had been revisited, and animals again bought for sacrifice.

Trajan's brief answer was as follows: "You have done perfectly right, my dear Pliny, in the inquiry which you have made concerning the Christians. For, truly, no general rule can be laid down which will apply itself to all cases. These people must not be sought after. If they are brought

before you and convicted, *let them be capitally punished*; but with this restriction, that if any one renounce Christianity, and prove his sincerity by worshipping our gods, however suspected he may be for the past, he shall obtain pardon for the future, on his repentance. But all libels in no case ought to be attended to; for the precedent would be of the worst sort, and perfectly inconsistent with the maxims of my government."

Pliny, it appears, was unwilling to act very harshly; but another governor, in Asia Minor, so cruelly persecuted the unoffending Christians, that the whole body of them came with one accord before his tribunal, probably to show their numbers, and their determination to confess Christ. He ordered a few of them to be executed, and then sent away the rest, contemptuously saying, "Miserable people! if you choose death, you may find precipices and halters enough."

In the tenth year of his reign, Trajan came to Antioch with his army, having a strong desire to subdue the independent kingdom of Parthia. While he rested in this city, Ignatius, bishop of the Christians there, came forwards expressing his willingness to suffer death if the emperor would spare the rest. If the conversation that took place between them has been faithfully reported, Trajan at this time heard and rejected the truth; yet it appears Ignatius, in his anxiety for martyrdom, spoke somewhat rashly, and instead of confining himself to the simplicity of the gospel, boldly telling the emperor he was a sinner, and testifying to him concerning the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, he dwelt much upon a doctrine that was altogether incomprehensible to Trajan, namely, his own union with Christ. From expressing this so strongly, he obtained the name of *Theophorus*, or *the one bearing God within him*; and the emperor passed sentence upon him, in the following words:—"Since Ignatius professes that he carries within him the Crucified One, let him be sent bound to Great Rome, and thrown to the wild beasts for the entertainment of the people." In this act Trajan appears to be without excuse: he was among the unhappy number who think the preaching of Christ crucified foolishness; and therefore he condemned those who believed, as impious persons. Ignatius

had in vain tried to convince him that the gods of the Gentiles were no gods ; and that, as the nations only worshipped devils, it was no impiety to renounce them.

Ignatius was conducted to Rome, as a prisoner, and Trajan pursued his ambitious designs with uninterrupted success ; obtaining victories over barbarians hitherto unknown, and subduing the Eastern nations, as far as the borders of India. Having arrived there, it is said, like a second Alexander, he sighed that there were no more worlds to conquer. In the meanwhile, the oppressed Jews in different places took advantage of the absence of the most powerful legions, and took up arms in their own defence. In Egypt, the contest was dreadful : for after the Greek inhabitants of the capital had obtained the mastery and succeeded in slaying the Jews residing there, the Cyrenian Jews came upon them and took the most terrible revenge. It is reported, they destroyed 220,000 people ; and, notwithstanding their strict profession of touching nothing unclean, they actually feasted on the bodies of their enemies, and, in some cases, made girdles of their skins. In Cyprus, where the Jews were the most wealthy and numerous people, 240,000 of the islanders fell victims to their revenge, and the populous city of Salamis became almost a desert. Adrian, the nephew and appointed successor of Trajan, assembled a body of troops, and came to the assistance of the remaining inhabitants ; and, after he had turned all the Jews out of the island, a law was passed threatening with death any of them who should again set foot upon it. It is reckoned, that as many of the descendants of Abraham perished in these wars as originally came out of Egypt.

Thus we shall continually see in the history of these scattered people, they find no ease ; neither can the sole of their foot have rest among the nations whither they are dispersed (Deut. xxviii. 65).

CHAP. XXII.

STATE OF THE CHURCH.—EPISTLES OF IGNATIUS.—MARTYR-
DOM OF IGNATIUS.—DEATH OF TRAJAN.

As Trajan remained in the East nine years, and no other remarkable events occurred during his absence, it will be well to consider at this time a little more particularly the state of the Church, as it may be gathered from the history of Ignatius. Some writings, supposed to be the genuine epistles of Ignatius, and "the acts of his martyrdom," still remain; but the mixture of truth and error makes it impossible to bring them forward as undoubted authorities. It must be remembered that the Church, at this time, was without the New Testament, as we have it: for, though all the books of it existed, and were preserved in different places, they were not collected together for general use. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, the witnesses of God to the truthfulness of those who testified what they had heard of his great salvation, from the Lord himself (Heb. ii. 3)—those which are usually spoken of as Pentecostal, or sign-gifts, had ceased, or nearly so; and the written word was not yet in general circulation, though it was the common property of the Church in their stead.

The epistles of Ignatius are said to have been written at Smyrna and Troas; at which places he was allowed to rest on his way to Rome.

Polycarp was then bishop of the church at Smyrna; and it has been supposed that he was addressed (Rev. ii. 10): but the persecution had not yet extended to this city. Both Ignatius and Polycarp had been instructed by the Apostle John, and could remember his account of the works and words of Christ; and it seems more than probable his gospel was in their hands. But the difference between the apostle, who wrote with the full inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the disciple, who, though a spiritual man, leaned to his own understanding, is very striking and instructive. The point in which Ignatius particularly fails is just the point where human nature, in his circumstances, would be most likely to fail; namely, in overrating the importance and

authority of the rulers in the church. It is very likely that he was tempted to this extreme, because there were many unruly persons in the churches, who were not subject to those who were appointed by God to watch over them : but in going beyond the word of God, he laid the foundation for evils more serious than those which he desired to correct. To a neighbouring church of saints, he writes thus : " I exhort you that ye study to do all things with a divine concord : your bishop presiding in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles."

To others he writes, " Inasmuch as ye are subject to your bishop, as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of men. It is therefore necessary that ye do nothing without your bishop, even as ye are wont : and that ye be also subject to the presbytery, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ. In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as Christ, and the bishop as the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God." In writing to the Christians at Smyrna, after he left them, he says, " See that ye all follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ, the Father, and the presbytery, as the apostles. It is good to bear due regard both to God and to the bishop. He that honours the bishop shall be honoured of God." And again, in his epistle to Polycarp, " Hearken ye all unto the bishop, that God also may hearken unto you. My soul be security for those who submit to their bishop, presbyters, and deacons, and may my portion be together with theirs in God !"

Let us compare this language with the simple exhortations of the apostles, " Remember them which have the rule over you, [*or*, which are the guides, (*marg.*)] who have spoken unto you the word of God ; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." " Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls," &c. " Salute all them that have the rule over you" (Heb. xiii.). Again, " Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. v. 12). " Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour" (1 Tim. v. 17). There is no scriptural warrant for expecting successors to the apostles ; " nor can we discover (says a godly clergyman) that a single bishop was actually linked to the

apostolic order." Much less can we discover that any bishop or teacher was to expect the reverence, honour and subjection, due to God alone. The rash expression of this most unscriptural idea was the stepping-stone to all their subsequent exaltation, and gradually led to the forgetfulness of this grand truth—that the very constitution of the Church demands the recognition of the Holy Ghost, as its common and abiding possession. (See 1 Cor. vi. 19; Eph. ii. 22; John. xiv. 16). That bishops, or overseers, of the saints; presbyters, or elders, among them; and deacons, or servants, of the church; existed in and after the times of the apostles, will be readily allowed. How they were appointed seems more doubtful: but in all cases there was, of necessity, a *fitness* for the work given by the Holy Ghost (Acts xx. 28); and often also a *desire* for it, proceeding from the same Spirit (1 Tim. iii. 1; 1 Pet. v. 2): and if the persons, thus prepared, answered to the apostle's description, they were rightly accepted and obeyed by the saints (1 Tim. iii). Fit persons kept back, by their own fault or that of others—and unfit persons, on the contrary, coming forwards, through their own fault or that of others—introduced great sorrow and sin into the church of God: and almost equal misery arose from godly men, such as Ignatius and others, taking too much upon themselves, and pretending to more than they had received. The style of Paul, in his epistles, was very different—"A *servant* of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle" (Rom. i. 1). And when using his power in correcting the worst abuses, he gently says, "not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." Peter says to the Christians of Asia, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ," &c. "Neither as being lords over (or over-ruling) God's heritage," &c. John calls himself simply "the elder."

But the *lordship* and *exercise of authority* soon became as decided among the professed followers of Christ, as among the Gentiles, though it ought to have been entirely otherwise (Mark x. 42): and in proportion as human power was established, the headship of Christ was disregarded, and

simple dependance on the lordship and authority of the Holy Ghost came to an end.

But in noticing thus largely the evil that was authorized by Ignatius, it is well to observe, he did not expect that his instructions would lead to such errors: he possibly supposed that the bishops, elders, and deacons would be guided by the Spirit; and did not, perhaps, contemplate a state of things in which persons so called might be *without* the Spirit of God. In his epistle to Polycarp, when he says "Let nothing be done without thy cognizance," he carefully adds, "And do thou nothing without the mind of God:" and of course, as long as an overseer thus acted, those who were spiritual and properly subject to the Spirit of God, would desire to do nothing without his knowledge or approval. But Ignatius went beyond the word in saying, that without the bishop there could be no baptism, communion, or marriage.

From his epistle to the church at Ephesus, we learn that the doctrine of Christ was preserved in it; and that persecution had been a means of some revival. He exhorts the believers there to union, on the ground of their common union to Christ, desires them not to neglect the assemblies for prayer and thanksgiving, to instruct the unconverted by their works, and finally, to think nothing becoming without Christ. At Corinth, the church was so large that the saints were obliged to assemble in different parts of the city, and the elders ministered to these different congregations; but neither here, nor elsewhere, was it as yet forgotten they were really but one Church.

At Philippi, we learn, from the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, that there was much of the Spirit of Christ, and a continued value for fellowship in the Gospel. Ignatius commends their bishop; because he had obtained that office simply for the good of the saints, and not by worldly means, or for selfish ends. He recommends them unity at the Lord's supper. The following extract from this epistle is very beautiful: "The objects dear to me are Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, and the faith in him. If circumcised or uncircumcised speak not of Jesus Christ, they are to me pillars and sepulchres of the dead, on which are

written only the names of men." Polycarp exhorts the brethren at Philippi to seek to restore one of their elders and his wife, who had sinned through covetousness.

At Troas, Ignatius was again suffered to rest ; and from thence sent a letter to the church at Smyrna, warning them against the Docetæ, saying they ought to be avoided as beasts ; but at the same time desiring that prayer might be made for them, because the Lord has power to save to the uttermost. From thence also he wrote to the Roman Christians, charging them not to attempt to save his life by their influence, or entreaties. Here again we see a marked difference between the excessive desire for martyrdom shown by Ignatius, and the quiet solemnity of the apostle, speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Paul says, "I am ready to be offered ;" yet he prayed that the backwardness of those who did not stand with him in the day of his trial might be forgiven them (2 Tim. iv. 16). Ignatius writes, "I know what is good for me. Now I begin to be a disciple : nor shall any thing visible or invisible move me. Let fire and the cross, let the wild beasts, let the breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil, come upon me ; be it so, only may I enjoy Jesus Christ. It is better for me to die for him, than to reign over the ends of the earth."

Yet truly, it was far better to be like Ignatius, even though torn to pieces in the amphitheatre at Rome, than to be like Trajan, violently attempting to reign over the ends of the earth, and yet living without God in the world. A few of the Roman brethren were allowed to accompany the martyr, and to join in his last prayers to the Son of God ; beseeching him to stop the persecution, and to continue the love of the brethren. The wild beasts, as he desired, were his grave : only a few bones were gathered up and sent to Antioch, as the relics of the bishop.

Another sufferer under this persecution was Simeon, the bishop of the saints in Judea. He was accused before Atticus, the Roman governor ; and at the age of one hundred and twenty years, he endured scourging for many days, and was at last crucified.

In A.D 117, Trajan began his march homewards, wishing

to end his days at Rome, where the people were prepared to honour, and almost to adore him. But they never saw him again, as he died suddenly of apoplexy in the city of Seleucia. His ashes were carried to Rome, and buried at the foot of a magnificent pillar which he had caused to be raised in remembrance of his victories. It is still standing, and is known by the name of Trajan's pillar.

Such was the place that Trajan held in the memory of his countrymen, that two hundred and fifty years after, when the senate were expressing their good wishes for a new emperor, they desired that he might be more fortunate than Augustus, and *better* even than Trajan!

CHAP. XXIII.

ADRIAN, EMPEROR.—ADRIAN'S CHARACTER AND TRAVELS.—
HIS TREATMENT OF THE CHRISTIANS AND OF THE JEWS.
—BARCOCHAB.—SECOND JEWISH WAR.—ELIA CAPITOLINA.—ILLNESS AND DEATH OF ADRIAN.

ADRIAN was accepted, A. D. 117, without hesitation as the successor of Trajan. The nations of the East made an immediate struggle for freedom upon hearing of the withdrawal and death of their conqueror: and Adrian avoided much bloodshed by recalling the Roman soldiers who were garrisoned in Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria; contenting himself with again making the Euphrates the eastern frontier of the empire, according to the counsel of Augustus Cæsar.

Yet Adrian was by no means a slothful emperor: on the contrary, he was so distinguished for his restless activity, that it has been remarked his life was one perpetual journey. He first settled home affairs, and made peace with the Parthians; and then set out with a determination to visit in turn every part of the empire.

Upon his arrival in Britain, he found the Caledonians had frequently passed the fortifications of Agricola and troubled their southern neighbours: but as it was his plan not to attempt to possess what he could not retain, he built a wall sixty miles in length, which ran between the modern towns

of Carlisle and Newcastle. He repelled the fierce barbarians, but left them in quiet possession of their heaths and mountains, contented with the fair province which was peopled by peaceable subjects. After leaving Britain, Adrian visited Gaul, Germany, Holland, and his own native country Spain; leaving everywhere some monument of his efforts to ornament or benefit the provinces. He displayed in turn the varied talents of a soldier, a statesman, and a scholar; directing the legions, overlooking the provincial governors and magistrates, and encouraging learning. It was one of his sayings, that an emperor should imitate the sun; by his presence, giving warmth and vigour to every part of his dominions in their turn. On his way back to Rome, Adrian ordered Trajan's bridge to be destroyed; as he feared the barbarians might take advantage of it, and invade the empire during his intended absence in the East. Whilst at Rome, he appointed *Ælius Verus* as his successor, and purchased the consent of the guards by a large donation: but in the midst of the public rejoicings the *Cæsar* died, to the exceeding grief of Adrian. He then chose *Titus Antoninus*, a senator, and desired him to adopt *Marcus Aurelius*, a promising young nobleman; but, in affectionate remembrance of his deceased friend, he made them both promise to adopt his son, the younger *Verus*.

Athens was the first residence of Adrian, on his journey eastward from Rome. There he took the title of Archon, or chief magistrate, and was introduced into all the foolish mysteries of the Grecian superstitions. The Athenians did not usually suffer any foreigner to enter their temples during their greatest feast: and it has been reasonably supposed, the abominable wickedness carried on at such times was their motive for enjoining secrecy on those who were present, under pain of death. The time spent by the hitherto wise and benevolent Adrian in his initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries, is the more to be remarked, as it appears he preferred them to the purity and simplicity of the doctrine of Christ; for this he had an opportunity of learning from some Christians at Athens. As Adrian did not reverse the edicts of Trajan, the persecution was recommenced with fresh violence in the second year of his reign, A.D. 119.

The church at Athens suffered deeply ; and two zealous Christians belonging to it took advantage of the emperor's visit, to present to him their explanations of the nature of their faith, or, as they were commonly called, " Apologies for the Christian religion."

They succeeded in convincing Adrian of the innocence of his Christian subjects ; and he even thought of placing Christ among the number of his gods. Shortly after, he received a letter from the proconsul, or chief magistrate of Asia, saying that he felt it was an unreasonable thing to put the Christians to death merely to satisfy the clamours of the people, as was customary, without trial and without any crime being proved against them. In reply to this, Adrian desired that the Christians should be allowed to answer for themselves ; and that they should not be condemned unless they were convicted of breaking the laws. Some heretics, who pretended to the name of Christians, were found guilty of the worst crimes ; but the churches of saints, carefully preserving their separation, were at length recognised by the pagans as distinct from them, and noticed for the purity of their lives, and as being the most peaceable and well-disposed of all the Roman subjects. From Greece, Adrian went into Africa to settle the affairs of that province, and ordered Carthage to be rebuilt : it was called, after his name, Adrianopolis, the termination *polis*, signifying *city* in the Greek language. In one of the emperor's letters to Rome he mentioned the number of Christians at Alexandria ; but only spoke of their priests with the same respect as those of the Egyptians. He never professed any esteem for their doctrines, and only protected them as an innocent people. At the same time he felt nothing but hatred towards the whole Jewish race, probably from having seen such terrible examples of their spirit in the island of Cyprus. His first edicts against the Jews forbade circumcision, the reading of the law, and the observance of the Sabbath ; and during his visit to the East he expressed his intention of erecting a temple to Jupiter on the ground where their temple had stood. At this moment, when the most decisive blow was aimed at their religion, the Jews confidently hoped Messiah would appear ; as they had

always been taught to expect him in their lowest state, and at the time of the greatest darkness. It was now therefore that a pretended deliverer took occasion to come forward, with the imposing name of *Barchochab*, that is, *the Son of a Star*, professing to be the Star mentioned in the prophecy of Balaam. This impostor had learned the trick of keeping lighted tow in his mouth; and his earliest followers reported that he could breathe forth flames which would destroy Adrian and all his armies.

In order to account for the immense numbers in Judea engaged in a second rebellion against the Romans, it is to be observed that the destruction in the first war was but partial; and during forty years of peace the people had greatly multiplied. The desolation had chiefly affected Galilee, Idumea, and the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; but the greatest part of Agrippa's dominions had escaped. Samaria and the cities on the sea-coast had submitted, and the populous region beyond the Jordan, containing many wealthy cities, had not been touched. Many of the rich and noble Jews, who fell to the Romans during the war, were sent home in peace; and, according to Jewish traditions, even a remnant of the Sanhedrin escaped to the town of Jamnia. However this may be, the school of Jamnia became famous soon after the destruction of Jerusalem; and the rabbins educated there, soon took the place of the priesthood, in the estimation of the Jews. It is true, most of the rabbins were priests or Levites: but it was not considered necessary that they should be so; and their authority at length rose so high, that it was a common saying, "The voice of the Rabbi, the voice of God!" This was exactly similar to the language of the epistles of Ignatius concerning the teachers in the church. The chief rabbi resided at Tiberias, and took the title of Patriarch of the West; because all the Jews on the western side of the Euphrates submitted to him as a spiritual ruler.

During the tranquillity that followed the resignation of Trajan's conquests, the Jews in Mesopotamia, and the East, prospered; and, though under the dominion of the Parthians, they also had a ruler of their own, called the Prince of

expect him in their lowest and greatest darkness. It was as if the deliverer took occasion to calling name of *Barchochab*, the name of the Star mentioned in the prophecy. This impostor had learned to speak in his mouth; and his eyes could breathe forth flames and lead all his armies.

For the immense numbers in Judea, a rebellion against the Romans, its destruction in the first war was in twenty years of peace the people in the desolation had chiefly affected the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Agrippa's dominions had escaped, on the sea-coast had submitted, and beyond the Jordan, countries not been touched. Many did not fall to the Romans during the peace; and, according to Josephus, out of the Sanhedrin escaped: however this may be, the schools were soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, and many of the Jews educated there, soon took place in the estimation of the Jews. Some of the rabbins were priests or Levites: it is necessary that they should be of high rank, that it was the voice of the Rabbi, the voice of the teachers in the cities of Galilee, Tiberias, and took the Jews on because all the Jews on the Jews submitted to him as a spirit

the Captivity. When Barchochab made his appearance, Rabbi Akiba, the most venerated teacher in Judea,* had just returned from a visit to his brethren in the East: he was easily deceived by the pretended Messiah, and hoped the Western Jews, by his means, would rise as high as those of Mesopotamia. Although he was now one hundred and twenty years old, Akiba attached himself to the fortunes of Barchochab, under the title of Standard-bearer to the Son of a Star; and from that moment the delusion spread most rapidly.

Multitudes of the deceived inhabitants of Judea crowded around Barchochab and his standard-bearer; and the false Christ was soon at the head of twenty thousand armed followers, while all the Jews, throughout the world, were in a state of anxious excitement. The Christians in Judea, however, perceived that Barchochab was a blood-thirsty robber, aiming at a temporal sovereignty; and their refusal to countenance him exposed them to suffering from his rage.

The history of the second Jewish war is very imperfect; but it appears that Barchochab took possession of the ruins of Jerusalem, and reigned there about three years. It is said, coins have been found with his superscription, and the date of the freedom of Jerusalem. In A. D. 130, Adrian sent an army into the revolted province, headed by a general named Turnus Rufus; so the Jewish nation had double reason to remember that name with abhorrence. This Rufus put to death thousands of unarmed men, women, and children; but avoided a battle with Barchochab.

Severus, a general who had successfully practised the arts

* Extravagant stories were told concerning this rabbi: his disciples said, more had been revealed to him than to Moses, that a thousand books could not contain the wonderful things he said, and that he could give a reason for the use of the least letter in the law. The Mishna, or comment on the law, begun by Akiba, professes to explain the hidden mysteries which the rabbins say are contained in the letters of the law, the number of times they occur, and their positions with relation to each other. The majority of the people at this time received the Masora, or unwritten traditions, on the authority of the rabbins; believing they had been delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, and handed down in a regular line from him.

that followed the resignation of the Jews in Mesopotamia, and the desire to be under the dominion of the Persians, called the Prince of their own, called the Prince

of war in Britain, was next sent into Judea, and found the rebels in possession of fifty of the strongest castles and nine hundred and eighty-five villages. Notwithstanding his abilities, he did not dare to attack Barchochab, who was at least an able warrior, but tried to cut off his supplies. The rebel leader, however, often rushed out from his different hiding places, with his numerous and desperate followers, to the great annoyance and injury of the Romans ; and though no particulars are given, it has been remarked, that Adrian himself being with the army in Judea, was obliged to omit, in his letter to the senate, the latter clause of the usual form of words, "I rejoice if all is well with you and your children, *with myself and the army all is well.*"

But the sudden falling in of some of the vast subterranean vaults, already mentioned, disheartened the rebels who occupied the ruins of Jerusalem ; and, in the bitterness of their disappointment, they called the pretender who had so cruelly deceived them, *Bar-cosba*, that is, *the Son of a lie*. When the Romans became masters of Jerusalem for the second time, Rufus caused every remaining building to be levelled with the ground, and a plough was then passed over the site of the city and temple that no traces might be left. Barchochab had taken refuge in Bithra, a fortified city ; but it was stormed on the 9th of August, A. D. 135, and the deceiver's head carried in triumph to the Roman camp. In another fortified town, all the men killed their wives and children to save them from the enemy ; and after these had gladly received death at their hands, they slew themselves : so that only a few who hid themselves remained to tell the story to the Romans on their entrance. It is calculated that 580,000 Jews fell by the sword in this second war, besides the multitudes that perished by famine, disease, and fire ; and thousands more were sold as slaves. Judea is described as wearing the appearance of a desert, and the wolves and hyenas howled in the streets of the desolate cities.

Rabbi Akiba was tried before Rufus ; and in the midst of his examination, remembering that it was the stated hour of prayer, he went through the usual forms regardless

of all around him. He was, indeed, a true specimen of the nation which so long preserved the form of godliness while denying the power of it. In prison, even when distressed by thirst, he spent a great part of his scanty allowance of water in the ceremonial washings prescribed by tradition. He was flayed alive as one of the chief actors in this disastrous war; and many of the rabbins suffered almost as severely, by command of the same judge, on the supposition that they were the authors of the revolt. One of them, being seized whilst expounding the law, was burned with his book.

Adrian was at length enabled to fulfil his design of founding a new city on the site of Jerusalem. It was called *Ælia*, after his family name, and *Capitolina*, on account of its dedication to the Jupiter worshipped in the Capitol. *Ælia Capitolina* was peopled with foreigners; and all Jews were forbidden to enter, or even to come within sight of it, on pain of death. The image of a swine was placed over the gate leading to Bethlehem, in order to frighten away any who should dare to approach near enough to behold the holy mountain. The peaceable Christians, however, were allowed to re-establish themselves on the spot, and quickly increased in number.

After spending thirteen years in his travels, Adrian returned to Rome, where he passed his time in the company of learned men, and made many useful laws. By some of his edicts he protected slaves; a class that had been so much neglected by former lawgivers, that any master might use them as he pleased, and even kill them if he would.

At the age of sixty, Adrian began to feel the infirmities of old age, his naturally weak constitution giving way, from the fatigues and hardships he had endured; for it was his custom to make long marches on foot and bare-headed, whether through the sultry plains of Egypt, or in the cold climate of North Britain. Adrian's disposition altered with his health; and the very man who, at the beginning of his reign, said to his worst enemy, "Ah, my good friend, you have escaped, for I am made emperor," now condemned to death many who were without offence, and, in the suffering of increased disease, tried to destroy himself. Antoninus,

his appointed successor, afterwards called Pius, chiefly on account of his behaviour towards the emperor, tried to reconcile him to life, and would not suffer any one to destroy him as he desired. Adrian, in the agony of pain, exclaimed, it was a miserable thing to seek death and not to be able to find it; and complained, he was master of the lives of others, but not of his own. He then tried to hasten his end by neglecting the advice of his physicians; and when he found death approaching, he dictated to one of his attendants a verse expressive of his state of feeling, and died whilst repeating it. From this, we find that he believed the soul to be only the guest of the body, and on the point of leaving its old companion; but we discover no expression of hope or fear as to its after state. Thus the weakest of the persecuted Christians was far better instructed, and infinitely happier, than the wisest of the heathen emperors. At the earnest desire of Antoninus, the senate passed over the tyrannical conduct of Adrian during his last illness, and consented to rank him among the gods, A. D. 138.

CHAP. XXIV.

POSITION OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH.—OBSERVANCE OF DAYS.—LEAVEN OF PHILOSOPHY.—JUSTIN MARTYR.

AN inquiry into the state of the Church, at the period immediately succeeding the apostolical age, must be very interesting, as it leads us to the contemplation of human nature in a new situation.

It must be remembered, that the Church of God on earth was placed between two powerful and attractive bodies, namely, the Jews and the Gentiles; and it was only by holding the Head, even Christ, in heaven, that it could be kept steady, without inclining to one or the other, or exercise its power to attract individuals from either of these bodies. The tendency to incline towards Judaism was shown in the epistle to the Galatians and elsewhere; and the tendency to Gentilism, in 1 Cor. x. and elsewhere. During the seasons of repose, when the Church was not persecuted by the Jews or the Gentiles, these tendencies naturally

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The great source of all error is, however, in the evil heart of unbelief, which leads to departure from the living God. We have seen this, in the history of Israel: they grew weary of walking in his ways, and then tempted him, saying, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" They might have looked to the cloud which marked his presence so undeniably, and yet they failed to believe in the living God. And so in the Church. How many visible proofs there were that the Holy Ghost was abiding in it, and that the living God was walking in his children according to his promise. Yet the rule and guidance of the Holy Spirit was so much forgotten or neglected by the Church, that human authority and human arrangements were speedily put in his place; and human teaching substituted for his own teaching by the written word.

But as the evil was progressive, and there have been, occasionally, recoveries from it, the work of the historian is to trace its progress, and to notice every measure of return to original simplicity.

Polycarp, the friend of Ignatius, already mentioned, came to Rome in the interval of peace during the reign of Adrian, to consult with the bishop there, as to the right time of observing the day of the Lord's resurrection, or Easter-day; some saying it should be according to the Jewish calculation for the observance of the Passover; others, that it should be on the same day every year. The question seemed for a time to be settled; but, before the end of the second century, it caused such strife, that the bishop at Rome excommunicated all the Asiatic bishops for not agreeing with him about it.

Polycarp does not appear to have been occupied about the matter to his own injury; but many who followed his example in making it a subject of discussion were so: and thus we always perceive the seed of any evil, or mistake, sown among men is very small, but, in such soil as the human heart, it soon grows up to a fearful height.

This cause of evil was foreseen by the Spirit, and the

remedy provided in the word which was in the possession of the Roman Christians (Rom. xiv. 5—10). And in another epistle, Paul expresses a fear concerning the Christians who observed "days and months, and times and years." If any one who loved the Lord, should particularly regard the day of the year, as well as the day of the week, on which He rose from the dead, condemnation was unjust and unreasonable; but if any were led away from the simplicity of Christ into Judaism, or into strife, by the observance of particular days, condemnation of them was just and scriptural. We have examples of both these cases among the Roman and Galatian believers alluded to above.

Polycarp was very faithful in caring for the saints at Smyrna, and in rebuking the heretics whom he met at Rome. On one occasion, when Marcion, a teacher among the Docetæ, greeted him in the street, and cried out, "Polycarp, own us!" (meaning own us as Christians), the old man replied, "I do own thee to be the firstborn of the devil." And so grieved was his spirit by the attempts of the chief teachers of heresy, to overthrow the faith of the saints, that he often exclaimed, "To what times, O God, hast thou reserved me!"

The church of saints, gathered at *Ælia* (Jerusalem) in the early part of the second century, prospered under the care of Mark, a faithful pastor, and was altogether freed from Jewish ordinances. But sorrow arose from their having too easily received the profession made by Aquila, governor of the city, and a relative of Adrian. When they found he was not a real Christian, and that he continued the study of magic and astrology, they excommunicated him; and this drew out all the enmity of his heart and made him openly profess Judaism. It was Aquila who made the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures which is called by his name; and it is said, he has in many instances purposely obscured the agreement between the Old and New Testament.

In the reign of Antoninus Pius, on which we are about to enter, another evil spread in the Church which had been, like all others, foreseen by the Spirit, and therefore suitable

warnings against it provided in the written word :—"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" (Col. ii. 8). And it is sorrowful again to observe that a good man, one who truly loved Christ, was the means of introducing into the Church that philosophy which spoiled its faithful testimony to the doctrine of Christ.

It was Justin, surnamed Martyr, who first corrupted the simplicity of the gospel by mixing up with it the notions firmly fixed in his mind before his conversion. He was by birth a Syrian Greek, and came to Alexandria for the improvement of his mind. There he tried the various schools of philosophy, and probably gleaned something from each, though he could not be satisfied with any. He left the Stoics, because he could learn nothing among them of the nature of God; and they even said it was not necessary knowledge. The love of gain shown by a Peripatetic philosopher disgusted him with that sect.* He was dismissed by a Pythagorean† because he did not understand the sciences of music, astronomy, and geometry, which were considered necessary according to his system. At last he settled among the Platonists, and drank in so much of the spirit of their philosophy, that he never entirely lost it. In the midst of these studies, he met with an old Christian man who spoke to him of the vanity of human philosophy, and recommended him to search the Hebrew Scriptures, as being of divine origin, and far more ancient than

* The followers of Aristotle were sometimes called Peripatetics from a Greek word, signifying *to walk*; because the scholars walked up and down whilst they received the instructions of the master. Their distinguishing doctrine was, that the due exercise of the moral and intellectual faculties was the chief good, and the means of procuring happiness.

† Pythagoras, the founder of this sect, died about 500 B. C. Among other strange doctrines he taught the transmigration or passage of the soul from one body into another, and pretended he could recollect all the bodies his soul had formerly inhabited. It was he who discovered that the sun was the centre, around which the earth and other planets revolved; but this theory was considered altogether improbable till it was proved to be undoubtedly true by the astronomers of the sixteenth century.

the writings of Plato and Pythagoras. Justin followed this advice, and prayed for light during the search. In the end he was convinced of the truth of Christianity; and the steadfastness of those who suffered for their faith, strengthened his convictions. He wrote an Apology for Christianity in the reign of Antoninus, and a second Apology in that of his successor. The particular errors introduced by Justin were the more dangerous, on account of his devotedness of life, and the general soundness of his doctrine. He confounded the light of the natural conscience, common to all men (Rom. ii. 15), with the new creation, or life of Christ, of which the believer alone partakes (Gal. i. 16; ii. 20), by the power of the Holy Ghost. He said, also, that Plato, the Stoic philosophers, and others, had in them the seed of the Logos, *i. e.* the word of God, thus, as it were, calling mental power divine life. Moreover, he erred greatly in exalting the human will: for, not discerning the utter corruption of it, he spoke of a self-determining power in man, as many persons now do who deny that salvation is wholly of grace. From this time it became common for Christians to speak and to write in such unscriptural language. The Scriptures in fact, as before remarked, were not within the reach of all the Churches, far less of individual believers; and they consequently depended more upon the teaching of their bishops than upon any other source of instruction: hence if these were not led of the Spirit, and thoroughly instructed in the written word, all were sure to suffer.

CHAP. XXV.

**ANTONINUS PIUS, EMPEROR.—CHARACTER OF HIS REIGN.—
PROTECTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.—MARCUS ANTONINUS,
EMPEROR.—PUBLIC CALAMITIES.—THE PARTHIAN WAR.
—THE PLAGUE.—PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.—
CONDUCT AND DEATH OF VERUS. — LITERATURE AND
LEARNED MEN.—STATE OF THE JEWS.—DEATH OF MARCUS.
—HIS CHARACTER AND WRITINGS.**

THE reign of Antoninus Pius has the advantage of furnishing few of the usual materials for history. It was a time

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of peace with the nations beyond the limits of the empire, so that the barbarians would sometimes choose the emperor to settle the differences among themselves; and ambassadors from the more civilised countries came to seek the honour of admission to the rank of Roman citizens. When told of the fame of conquerors, Antoninus replied, he would rather preserve the life of one citizen, than destroy a hundred enemies; and he found pleasure in rebuilding destroyed cities, and spending the sums usually wasted in war for the relief of the distressed. His wise government produced order and tranquillity throughout the empire, which was at this time occupying an extent of country two thousand miles in breadth, and three thousand in length. Antoninus had two sons; but the young patrician, Marcus Aurelius, having been appointed by Adrian as the most worthy to reign, he at once adopted him, gave him his daughter in marriage, and always treated him as the heir of the empire. Marcus, on his side, loved Antoninus as a father, whilst he obeyed him as a sovereign: and it was remarked that, during his whole reign of twenty-three years, the Cæsar was never absent from the emperor's palace more than two nights.

Antoninus was a great lover of learned men, and invited them to Rome from all parts of the empire. Amongst others, he sent for Apollonius, a famous Stoic philosopher of Greece, to assist him in the education of his adopted son. On his arrival at Rome, the emperor desired his attendance at the palace; but, as humility was not one of the virtues of the Stoic school, the philosopher sent a message in reply, saying, it was the scholar's duty to wait on the master. Antoninus only observed, with a smile, it was strange that Apollonius could come all the way from Greece at his bidding, and yet not walk from one part of Rome to another; and immediately sent Marcus to wait upon him. The Cæsar proved an apt scholar; and learned from the Stoic philosophy to submit his body to his mind, and passion to reason—to consider virtue as the only good, vice as the only evil, and all outward things as matters of indifference. In the third year of his reign, Antoninus received the Apology for Christianity, written by Justin; and, as a man of sense and humanity, he at once determined that the Christians

HAP. XXV.

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should not be denied the justice and mercy which he desired to extend to all his subjects. At the beginning of his reign they had suffered much, because the crimes committed by the heretics were charged upon them. Many false accusations were also brought against them, especially that of devouring infants; and it has been supposed the practice of baptizing infants, which was now becoming common, led to this strange idea. Others suppose that their manner of speaking of the Lord's Supper, led to these painful accusations.

Antoninus was convinced they were an innocent people, and made his opinion publicly known, on the following occasion:—

The Asiatic Christians, having been exposed to great persecution on account of an earthquake which had lately happened, and which the pagans considered as a proof of the wrath of the gods against the new religion, appealed to the emperor. Upon this, he addressed the following letter to the Common Council of Asia; and it was set up in the form of a decree at Ephesus, Thessalonica, and Athens, and sent throughout Greece, so that the Christians enjoyed peace during the remainder of his reign. "I am quite of opinion that the gods will take care to discover such persons: for it much more concerns them to punish those who refuse to worship them, than you, *if they be able*. But you harass and vex the Christians, and accuse them of atheism and of other crimes which you cannot prove. To them it appears a desirable thing to die; and they gain their point while they throw away their lives rather than comply with your injunctions. As to the earthquakes, I would desire you to compare your despondency with their serene conduct. In such seasons you seem to be ignorant of the gods, and neglect their worship; and whilst you live in ignorance of the Supreme God, you persecute those who do worship him. Concerning these same men, other previous governors wrote to our divine* father, Adrian; and he answered, that they should not be molested unless they appeared to attempt something against the Roman government. Many, also,

* Alluding to the deification of the departed emperor.

have signified to me concerning these men; to whom I have returned an answer agreeable to the maxims of my father. But if any person will persist in accusing the Christians, merely as such, let the accused be acquitted, though he appear to be a Christian, and let the accuser be punished."

From the foregoing letter, it is clear that Antoninus was of the Stoics' belief in one Supreme God; but it is remarkable that, though he is spoken of as inquisitive, even to a fault, he did not inquire further into the nature of that religion, in favour of which Justin had told him many persons were impressed by observing the temperance and sobriety of their Christian neighbours, their unparalleled meekness under cruel treatment, or their uncommon integrity in business.

In the seventy-fifth year of his age, Antoninus was attacked with his last illness; and, in his dying moments, he commended Marcus Aurelius to those around him, and desired that the golden statue of fortune,* which was kept in the imperial chamber, should be removed into the apartment occupied by his successor.

After giving this final proof of being under the darkness of superstition, or, perhaps, of desiring to preserve that influence which he knew the common superstitions had upon the minds of the people, he gently expired, A.D. 160.

Marcus Aurelius took the surname of Antoninus (hence they are commonly called the two Antonines), and tried to imitate the mode of government and behaviour of his father.

He was, however, greatly hindered by being yoked with such a troublesome and vicious partner as the younger Verus, whom he had received according to Adrian's desire: but the conduct of his colleague, who was ignorant, slothful, and extravagant, probably heightened the general esteem for Marcus Antoninus, as a learned, active, and very moderate

* The Romans thought much about this imaginary goddess of fortune, and there were about eight temples to her honour in different parts of the city. She was usually represented with a horn in her hand, filled to overflowing with the fruits of the earth: her eyes were blindfolded, and she had wings on her back, or a wheel in her hand, as emblems of the uncertainty of her favours.

emperor. The first calamity of their reign was an inundation of the Tiber, which carried away numbers of people and cattle, destroyed many buildings in Rome, and laid the surrounding country under water. Earthquakes and conflagrations followed; and these were succeeded by a corrupt state of the air, accompanied with innumerable swarms of insects, which destroyed what the flood had left, and produced a famine. In the meantime the Parthians, under their king Vologesus, overcame the Roman legions in Armenia and Syria, and drove out the governor. Marcus, finding ample employment at home, sent Verus against the enemy; but he proceeded no further than Antioch, and contented himself with employing his lieutenants in the war, whilst he indulged in such riotous excesses as even shocked the pleasure-loving Greeks of that luxurious city.

Four years passed away before the Parthians discontinued the struggle for the provinces in question; and, at the end of that time, half the Roman army was wasted by pestilence and famine. It was in this war that Seleucia was destroyed. This city, once the capital of the Macedonian conquests in Asia, was situated on the west bank of the Tigris, forty-five miles to the north of Babylon; and, after the fall of the Seleucidæ, it preserved its independence as a Greek republic. It contained four hundred thousand inhabitants; and, enclosed within their strong walls, they did not fear the Parthians who dwelt almost at their gates. The Parthian monarchs, who were of Scythian origin, enjoyed the pastoral life of their ancestors; and, at first, only pitched their camp occasionally in the rich plain on the eastern bank of the Tigris. But, by degrees, their encampment grew into the great city of Ctesiphon, only three miles from Seleucia. Now, as the Greeks had no quarrel with the Romans, the gates of Seleucia were opened to receive Cassius, the lieutenant of Verus, in a friendly manner. But he ordered the whole of the inhabitants to be put to the sword, and so far destroyed the city that it never rose from a state of insignificance. This unprovoked cruelty led historians to remark that the sufferings of the Roman army were a righteous punishment; and we have reason to believe, that the violence done to the law of nature written in the hearts of

the Gentiles, was constantly followed by judgment, even as the breaking of the law written on the tables of stone was followed by judgment on the Jews. The remnant of the army that returned from the East brought the plague with them; and it spread through the provinces as they passed, occasioning the greatest terror and misery. The priests of Rome, finding that their numerous sacrifices and religious ceremonies failed to remove the pestilence, charged the general distress upon the impiety of the Christians, who would not unite in their addresses to the gods. This gave fresh vigour to the persecution which was carried on through the whole reign of Marcus Antoninus, a period of nineteen years.

In vain had Justin addressed his second Apology to the philosophic emperor, and placed before him the iniquitous conduct of Rusticus, prefect of the city, in unjustly condemning to death one Christian after another. He was himself scourged and beheaded for the sole crime, as it was called, of being a Christian, A.D. 163.

In the year of the plague, A.D. 167, the venerable Polycarp was seized, as "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes;" and his judges used every art to make him reproach Christ, promising him an immediate release if he would do so. The noble answer of the martyr is worthy to be remembered:—"Eighty-six years have I served Him, and He has never wronged me, and how can I blaspheme my king who has saved me?" He was burnt at Smyrna with eleven brethren from Philadelphia; and thus in the two churches, commended by the Lord, there were still some faithful martyrs who held fast, and did not deny his name.

Such was the enmity of the Jews towards the Christians that, it is said, there were some of them howling with delight around the fires which were lighted to consume the martyrs at Smyrna.

Marcus Antoninus vainly attempted to reform the manners and habits of his associate. Verus often retired from the frugal evening meal of the philosopher, and spent the night in feasting at his own palace with the worst and lowest companions. He exceeded even Domitian in extravagance; for it is said that one of his entertainments, with

only a dozen friends, cost 32,200*l.* It was not only that the wines and viands were the most scarce and costly, but the guests were not allowed to drink twice out of the same cup; and whatever vessels they had touched were presented to them when they left the palace. Verus also had a favourite horse, which was kept in a splendid hall, clothed in purple, and fed with almonds and raisins by his own hand. Of this animal he had a statue of gold, and at its death he raised a magnificent monument on Mount Vatican. In A.D. 168, Verus was called to accompany Marcus in a warlike expedition against the Marcomanni in Germany. In that country he died of apoplexy, and his body was brought back to Rome and buried with great pomp by his colleague.

Even a foreign war did not lessen the zeal of the emperor in persecuting the Church. The history of the sufferings of the Christians in Gaul, especially at Lyons and Vienne, is very affecting. The simple confession, "I am a Christian," was punished by cruel torments which were usually ended by the beasts of the amphitheatre to which the bodies of the saints were thrown. Blandina, a weak and delicate female, was one of the noblest witnesses for Christ during this fiery trial; and the power of God shown forth in her encouraged many to hold fast their profession. Some, however, who came forward rashly, were unable to stand, and fell away in the hour of temptation; but of these, it appears, the greater number were afterwards restored. It has been observed, that the Church suffered as much persecution from the serious and virtuous Marcus Antoninus, as from the foolish and vicious Nero; thus proving that the pride of self-righteousness and the excesses of licentiousness equally harden the heart and increase the natural enmity against God. The philosopher is, however, the most inexcusable; for he knew the Christians and yet hated them. His father had publicly acknowledged their innocence, but he showed them no mercy; and, though just towards the rest of his subjects, he refused every appeal on their behalf, and did not allow them the common rights of Roman citizens.

In the age of Adrian and the Antonines, the love of litera-

ture spread through the empire ; and in the reign of Marcus cultivation of mind had probably reached its height ; as from that time, it has been observed, there was no Roman writer of original genius, and the works that appeared were for the most part commentaries, abridgments, and compilations. Whilst learning was favoured by the emperors, even the Britons began to study oratory ; the works of Virgil and Homer were copied among the German and Dacian provincials ; and at Rome every man of talent and genius found a welcome. The physician Galen (a native of Pergamus) was the intimate friend of Marcus ; and his success in the practice of medicine in the capital, made the people think his healing power supernatural. Ptolemy, the celebrated astronomer and geographer, was also favoured by the emperor : he was the most learned man of the age, but came to a wrong conclusion in supposing the earth was the centre around which the other heavenly bodies moved.

Lucian, a witty Greek writer, also attracted the favour of Marcus ; but his "Dialogues," composed in ridicule of the Christian religion as well as of every other, have been condemned in every age as atheistical and blasphemous. Some of his sharpest arrows against Christianity only served to point out the real beauty of it : for instance, he says, "the Christians are so silly as to despise death, in the full persuasion they shall one day enjoy eternal life ;" and the reason he gives for their readiness to suffer for each other, is that "their first lawgiver, that Great Person who had been crucified in Palestine, had put it into their heads they were all brethren." Again, speaking of their belief, which was in his eyes only worthy of contempt, he mentions the doctrine of the Trinity, as then held : "One, Three ; Three, One ; the Most High God—Son of the Father—Spirit proceeding from the Father." In another dialogue he represents, "a sorrowful beggarly company," and says "that some went the whole day without eating, and spent whole nights in singing hymns." Nor was this all : probably from their non-interference in public affairs, he accuses them of disaffection towards the government, of wishing for bad news, and of being delighted at the occurrence of any public calamity. It is almost needless to observe how con-

trary this would be to the mind of God (see 1 Tim. ii. 2; Titus iii. 1). The Jews and Christians, at this period, were so proverbial for their firmness, that Galen, when he wanted to express the impossibility of persuading certain physicians, observed, it would be easier to convince the disciples of Moses and of Christ.

The philosophic emperor watched the Jews as well as the Christians with some jealousy; and at one time he passed some severe laws against the former, observing, they were as unruly as the wild Germans: but it does not appear that his edicts were carried into effect, and they consequently remained under the mild treatment adopted by Antoninus. In his reign they had been permitted to circumcise their children, on condition they would not attempt to make any proselytes. Numbers of them were comfortably established in Italy; and many obtained the freedom of the city, though they were not allowed to hold any public office. They had, in fact, become peaceable and industrious subjects: but they were distinguished for over-reaching in trade, which it was their custom to excuse as an allowable advantage over idolaters. The poorest of the Jews went about as pedlars, much as they do now; and many of them encamped in the open air in the neighbourhood of Rome like the modern gypsies.

The philosophy of Marcus led him to hate war, and to call it the disgrace and calamity of human nature: but in A.D. 172, when the northern barbarians again crossed the frontier, he thought it right to defend the empire; and during eight winter campaigns he remained with the legions on the frozen banks of the Danube. The hardships which he endured and the severity of the climate, occasioned his death, A.D. 180. His memory was so much respected, that for a century afterwards most of the Romans preserved his image among those of their household gods.

In conclusion, it may be well to make some observations on the celebrated "Meditations" of this emperor; a work in twelve books, chiefly composed in the camp during the last years of his life. Marcus Antoninus, like many other philosophers, supposed that his soul was not only created by God, but a part of God; and in ignorance of his own

fallen nature, and the corruption of the human soul, he said, that to be good was the easiest thing possible; for it was only to obey the divine, all-sufficient principle within. His religion was the same, in fact, however different in name, with that of all amiable moral men, who are under the control of reason and education, and who think themselves quite right because their unenlightened consciences do not condemn them. And yet, even tried by their own measure, they are constantly found wanting; how much more when tried by the searching law of God, and exposed to His word, which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart! How far Marcus Antoninus failed in *love* the foregoing history has shown; and this is the grand mark, whether there is any right knowledge of God. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John iv. 8).

Of his inordinate affection we have two remarkable instances. His wife, who was well-known for her criminal passions and vile excesses, he mentions in his "Meditations" as "faithful and loving;" and after her death he obliged the senate to declare her a goddess, and had temples built to her honour. To his son Commodus, when a rash boy of fifteen, he gave a full share of imperial power; and having thus placed him beyond the reach of control, he vainly surrounded him with philosophers and instructors in morality. During the four years that he survived this unwise choice, he had reason to repent it; yet at his death he sacrificed the happiness of millions to his foolish fondness for this worthless son, and confirmed the authority he had previously given him.

We shall now look again towards the Church, but it does not present the same cheering sight as at first: and we shall have to learn, again and again, that "all flesh is grass, and *all the goodness* thereof as the flower of grass."

CHAP. XXVI.

THE CHURCH ON EARTH.—CAUSES OF DECLINE.—EARLY DEPARTURE FROM CHRISTIAN SIMPLICITY.—CORRUPTION IN DOCTRINE.—CHANGES IN MINISTRY, COMPARING THAT OF THE TWO FIRST CENTURIES.—ASSEMBLIES FOR WORSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCHES.—PUBLIC SERVICES OF THE SECOND CENTURY.—INTRODUCTION OF CEREMONIES.—SACRAMENTS.

AFTER the sun has left us, we are ready to look with delight upon the full moon which, with open face, reflects the brightness that is departed; and so, have we been observing the Church when first set up to be a light during the night of the Lord's absence, not only "walking in brightness," but reflecting the light, upon which it looked with a single eye, even among those who comprehended it not. But as Christians left their "first love" and turned towards each other, or to those that were "without," they began themselves to walk in a kind of twilight: the light waned, as it respected the earth; and we shall mark the clouds that thicken round it, till some anxiously inquire, where is that which the whole world should recognise? And others are contented to have an *invisible* Church. We should indeed be startled at the aspect of the Church a few centuries later, unless we marked its gradual changes during the first ages; and these it is our present object to consider. It has already been remarked that the Church on earth, having a carnal as well as a spiritual nature, is likely to be influenced by outward circumstances, and liable to fall into various errors. None of its members, compassed as they are with infirmity, can plead entire exemption from these things: but those who take the word as a lamp to their feet, and look simply to the Lord for guidance, will surely be kept from wandering in any essential degree. "One and the self-same Spirit" must necessarily teach the same things, and led by him only, believers would be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment;" but want of submission to the Teacher of the Church—human nature being soon weary of an invisible guide—led

to the introduction of a vast variety of novel doctrines and practices.

In the Churches of the New Testament we perceive such a tendency to depart from "the simplicity that is in Christ," and to "corrupt, or deal deceitfully with, the word of God," (2 Cor. xi. 3, and ii. 17) that we ought not to reverence, on account of its antiquity, any doctrine or practice that is not clearly sanctioned by Scripture: but the truth is, that after being long accustomed to think one's own thoughts, or those of others, they often become, almost unconsciously, as imperative as the word of God.

We may sympathise with the early Christians in the reproach cast upon them both by the Jews and Pagans, as having *no visible* religion, and their worse accusation by the latter, as being *atheists*; but we must not justify that impatience of the Lord's way of escape, which made them take unscriptural means to make their religion intelligible and attractive. They who sow to the flesh, will of the flesh reap corruption; and this corruption the faithful historian must not conceal, though anxious to distinguish between the working of disguised enemies, and the misdirected zeal of those friends of the Gospel, who, in their anxiety to win souls to Christ, acted on the Apostle's liberty of becoming all things to all men (1 Cor. ix. 22), without the Apostle's strength or wisdom.

When we see that sound doctrine is gradually corrupted, not only by a mixture of the law with the Gospel, but also by the introduction of Jewish fables and Grecian philosophy, we can boldly declare, "an enemy hath done this;" but we must speak more tenderly concerning some things, the evil tendency of which was never suspected by those who introduced them, whilst at the same time we read in them this important lesson, "Lean not unto thine own understanding." Besides the heresies without, and the erroneous doctrines within the church, already mentioned, we must, so early as the second century, add the semi-Jewish, semi-Pagan fable of a place of purification for departed souls, the introduction of which naturally led to the prayers for the dead, which were soon used at funerals, and then crept into the early liturgies, till in some of them we meet with set

prayers, even for the Apostles and the Virgin Mary. We must also name the approval of the philosophical dogma that it is lawful to deceive, and even to tell a lie, to advance the cause of truth; than which, a more subtle device of Satan can scarcely be conceived. The teaching of baptismal regeneration, which we hear of at the same period, was a fit accompaniment for such notions as these. With the changes in doctrine, we must notice the changes in the ministry of the Church; and here we shall recognise more purity of intention and appearance of wisdom. It was the practice of the apostles, and their companions in labour, to ordain* elders in every church (Acts xiv. 23) or city (Titus i. 5); for, be it remembered, there was but one church recognised in a city. These elders, indifferently called presbyters (Greek, elders), or bishops (Greek, overseers), had to "take care of the Church of God," and were a recognised, collective, ministry, in all the early churches, as far as we can learn. Such labourers were worthy of reward (1 Tim. v. 17, 18), though, in many cases, they might rather, after the example of Paul, labour to support the weak (Acts xx. 28—35), feeling it more blessed to give than receive. The danger of coveting the place for the sake of the honour and lucre connected with it, is however pointed out again and again in the Apostles' writings (1 Pet. v. 2; 1 Tim. iii. 3, &c.); and at an early period in the history of the Church we find many a record of the existence of this much dreaded evil. Besides the elders, who were the rulers or guides of the flock of God, there were other ministers, such as the deacons (Greek, servants), who probably attended to their temporal necessities, in the first place (Acts vi.); and were employed in the churches, immediately succeeding the apostolical age, in apportioning the voluntary offerings of such among them as could give. Without mentioning the evangelists, God's

* Ten distinct terms in the Greek are all rendered by this same word in our English version. It does not stand connected, in Scripture, with the laying on of hands, though it is probable that ceremony was in very early use for the setting apart of ministers, as well as for other church purposes, such as baptism, receiving back excommunicated persons, &c.

willing missionaries, who went everywhere preaching the gospel, either known (2 Tim. iv. 5), or unknown (Acts xi. 19—22; 3 John 5—8), to the Apostles; there was another class, whose irregular ministry gave them no claim on the support of the church. These are distinguished in the apostolical churches by the name of prophets (Acts xiii. 1). From the importance attached to this kind of ministry in Scripture (see 1 Cor. xiv. 3; Acts xv. 32), and from the direction to covet it (1 Cor. xiv. 39), it might appear as though it could never be healthfully dispensed with during the Church's existence on earth; and we should wonder at the early check put to it, if we could not infer from the precept to the Thessalonians that it was a mode of instruction peculiarly liable to contempt (1 Thess. v. 19, 20). The prophetic ministry, under the direction of the Holy Ghost, would be eminently useful for the edifying of the church, as thereby *all* might learn, and *all* be comforted (1 Cor. xiv.); but insubjection of spirit often led to disorder in the exercise of it, and the entire dependance on God which it involved, made it less acceptable than the ministry of the known and stated teacher. When each was waited upon in its right place (Rom. xii. 6, 7), they sustained each other; but as, in the times of the apostles, there were "vain and unruly talkers" whose mouths needed to be stopped; and some who occasioned great confusion in the churches of the saints (1 Cor. xiv.); it is not surprising that when apostolical power ceased, and the churches declined, human wisdom devised a way for securing an outward appearance of order. The laying on of hands gave certain defined limits to the ministry; and, in process of time, none but teachers ordained in this manner, had liberty to speak in the churches.

However good the intention might be in establishing boundaries, and laying down fixed rules for that which was originally left to God's free Spirit, it is melancholy to trace, as we proceed, the endless assumptions of that which was for the most part a fleshly ministry, the exchange of divine instruction for that which is human, and the substitution of empty forms for departed power. But the Lord corrects the mistakes of his true-hearted people, bears with their wanderings, and whilst He chastens in faithful love, He

honours the upright wherever they are, and continually oversteps every barrier ignorantly set up against his sovereignty. He who called Elisha from the plough, took Ezekiel and Jeremiah from among the priests. He who chose Amos out of the midst of the herdsmen, used Daniel with all his Babylonian learning. So also David from the sheepfolds, and Moses learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, were equally fitted by the same Lord for guiding and feeding his flock of old. In like manner, under the present dispensation, neither learning, nor the want of it, can incline or hinder the Lord in the choice of His ministers; and, to establish this principle, we need only turn to Paul and Apollos on the one hand, and to the fishermen of Galilee on the other.

Our next consideration is the perceptible change in the ordering of the assemblies for Christian worship which we cannot help seeing, in passing from the first century to the second. There was nothing in the early Churches of the saints to gratify the natural mind, or attract the eye of the mere spectator. Both the preaching and the worship must have been foolishness to those who found not the power of God in either. If one that believed not went into the assembly he would see far more of the foolish, weak, base, despised things of the world, than of its wise, noble or mighty men (1 Cor. i.); he would see them, if obedient to the Lord's will, meeting as brethren, without respect of persons (James ii. 1, 5); and he would be astonished to observe some, who had once gone to the vilest excesses (1 Cor. vi. 9—11; 1 Pet. iv. 3), enjoying the happy communion of saints. If everything were done decently and in order, they came together on the first day of the week, to break bread and drink wine, in remembrance of their Lord, and in token of their communion with each other (1 Cor. x. 16, 17; xi. 24, 25); freely exercising that which the Spirit divided to every man, severally as He would; they who prayed (Rom. viii. 26, 27; Jude 20; 1 Cor. xiv. 15), they who sang (*ibid.*; Eph. v. 18, 19), they who blessed or gave thanks (1 Cor. xiv. 16), they who spoke to the edifying of the Church, being equally directed and assisted by the same unseen leader. The power that accompanied such a simple gathering together in the name

of the Lord Jesus Christ, was nothing less than the power of the Lord himself (Matt. xviii. 20; 1 Cor. v. 4), so that the convinced hearer was often constrained to fall on his face and worship, and to report that God was in them of a truth (1 Cor. xiv. 25). It need only be added that the *test* of any kind of ministry, as of the Spirit, was its *profitable* result (xii. 7; 1 Thess. i. 5; 1 Pet. i. 12; Acts xi. 23, 24; xviii. 27; xix. 18, 20).

Worship lost its Scriptural character when synagogue forms were engrafted upon it; and the prayers and adorations of saints—the free-will offerings of a saved people filled with the Spirit—were exchanged for the performance of certain acts, and the repetition of stated services arranged according to human wisdom. In the second century liturgies, differing in different places, came into general use, and the prayers were usually repeated, after the bishop, turning eastward,* according to the Jewish custom.

At the commencement of the public service, some select portions of Scripture were read, and the appointed preacher gave a short exhortation, sitting down, according to the synagogue custom, whilst the hearers stood. The unbaptised hearers and those under discipline on account of any offence, were desired to withdraw before the prayers began. After the prayers, the congregation presented their oblations, or offerings of money, bread, wine, etc. to the deacons: part of the bread and wine was separated and consecrated by the prayers of the bishop, to which the people only said, Amen. The wine was mixed with water and divided into several portions, some of which were carried by the deacons to the sick or absent, and the rest distributed to the whole congregation, from the eldest to the youngest. Hymns were sung during the supper by persons appointed for that purpose.

The common meal, called "the feast of charity,"

* As this practice has been recently defended as having the warrant of Old Testament Scripture, it may be remarked that whilst there was a "worldly sanctuary" in which the Lord visibly manifested his glory, his people would gladly recognise it; but that being at an end, they know of no holy place, but the presence of God in heaven (Heb. x. 19, 20).

anciently concluded this weekly meeting, and to this all who were able, contributed; and any might partake of it who chose to do so. The first Christians met in private houses; and, in times of persecution, they were even obliged to retreat to caves or cellars, and sometimes they assembled secretly in vaults where the dead were buried: their seasons for meeting were at sunrise, or in the evening, when they could best escape public observation. But, in intervals of peace, they had their oratories, or places of prayer, and the martyria (slight buildings over the tombs of the martyrs) in which they met on particular days. These buildings became, by degrees, more and more ornamental, and the sanctity of the Temple of old was quickly attached to them.

The pompous ceremonialists, whether Jews or Pagans, to whom the Christians were opposed, might at length perceive among them that which visibly corresponded with their schools of rabbins and colleges of priests; and soon after the destruction of Jerusalem it was declared there were three divisions among Christian ministers viz: bishops, presbyters, and deacons, who stood in the place of the high-priests, priests, and Levites, of the past dispensation. This idea speedily gained ground and led to as complete a division of the Church into priests and people (or, as it was said, clergy* and laity), as there had been among the Israelites of old. And if such a distinction were established, it necessarily followed there must be an official† holiness, apart from that which is the common possession of the redeemed family of God, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Heathen and Jewish ceremonies were rapidly added to Christian worship, and the simple institutions of baptism and the Lord's supper, from their external nature, seemed

* This word is only used once in the New Testament (1 Pet. v. 3.) and is then applied to the flock not to the elders. The present use of this term is supposed to be derived from the word rendered "lot" Acts i. 26.

† Such an idea has not the authority of New Testament Scripture. All believers are alike spoken of as saints: and we read of the "holy brethren" (1 Thess. v. 27), as well as of "the holy apostles" (Eph. iii. 5).

peculiarly to lie open to the "many inventions" of those who wished to render them more venerable and attractive to the Jews and Pagans. Many teachers thought it might be helpful to persons of dull understanding to see the truths of the Gospel exhibited by actions, images and signs. Thus the ceremony of setting a slave free was adopted to express the deliverance of the newly baptized from the power of Satan, and certain military rites were observed to signify that he took Christ for his leader; honey and milk were also given after baptism, as typical of the sweetness and gentleness of conduct, becoming the Christian convert. The great evil of these novelties was, that they transformed the simple institutions of Christ into *mysteries** which rivalled those of the pagans, and caused virtues to be ascribed to them for which there was no Scriptural warrant. The simple practice of baptising those who confessed their faith in Christ, and of meeting to break bread, attracted only the scorn and suspicion of the enemies of the Church; and so opposed was its early simplicity to pomp or display that it was loudly proclaimed, the Christians concealed observances which were of too criminal a nature to disclose. But, in the second century, we find that baptism, with its new forms, was observed at two set times during the year; and the same writer who describes the pouring of holy oil into the water, the administration of salt, the triple immersion, the signing with the cross, and the subsequent administration of a little bread and wine, etc., boldly declares that baptism is "the remission of sins, the illumination, the salvation, the water of life, the divine fountain," etc.†

The writer of these pages has been led, in searching the Scriptures, to consider baptism and the Lord's supper as the commemorative types‡ of the regeneration which is wrought in—and the redemption which is wrought for—

* *Mystery* (Greek, secret). Such was the word that now came into use, significant enough to the Pagans, to whose mysteries we have already had occasion to allude.

† Tertullian, as quoted in a valuable pamphlet entitled "The Early Fathers no Safe Guides." B. W. NOEL.

‡ Those who desire to see this, and other subjects, simply traced out from Scripture, may examine the "Scripture Tracts." WRIGHT, Bristol.

the whole Church of God ; and thus to believe them literally to be "the outward visible signs of an inward spiritual grace," and not rightly applicable to any who have not received that grace.

But the practice of administering these sacraments* to infants was of early, yet uncertain date ; and such a use of the Lord's supper was only discontinued in the eighth century. The doctrine of the saving nature of these Sacraments was also broached at an early period ; it was maintained on the one hand, by those who desired to be considered the keepers of salvation, and contended that the Christian mysteries were of no value, save as administered by themselves ; and, on the other hand, by such as willingly cherished the expectation of obtaining salvation at any time upon such easy terms. We have many examples of persons of this class who delayed their baptism till their dying hours, believing that all their sins might then be washed away by its administration.

There cannot be a doubt that notwithstanding the decay of spiritual religion and the influx of error, over which we have had to lament, the Lord secretly sustained his own people ; and the conduct of such, in the world, plainly proved there was a power put forth and experienced among Christians, which was unknown elsewhere—even the power of the living God.

CHAP. XXVII.

**COMMODUS, EMPEROR.—HIS CHARACTER AND AMUSEMENTS.—
DEATH OF COMMODUS —PERTINAX, EMPEROR.—MURDER OF
PERTINAX.—SALE OF THE EMPIRE.—HISTORY OF SEPTIMUS
SEVERUS.**

As there was no imperial interference with the Christians, from the time of Marcus Antoninus till the close of the century, we may pursue the history of the succeeding emperors without interruption.

Commodus, at the death of his father (A. D. 180), had no

* Sacrament (Latin, *Sacramentum*, the military oath of fidelity among the Romans), seems to be a modification of the word mystery, and is the Vulgate rendering of that word. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

inclination to continue a war which kept him from the luxuries and pleasures of the capital : he therefore made a hasty peace with the barbarians, and returned to Rome in triumph. For the first three years of his reign, he left the care of the state to his father's counsellors, and all went on smoothly ; but, at the age of twenty-two, he put to death some of his wisest ministers, and placed his own wicked favourites in their stead. Under their management the people were cruelly oppressed, and they were at last sacrificed to the public rage ; for it was still hoped the son of Marcus might prove a wise ruler when left to himself. But the Romans were disappointed in their expectations ; and the riotous way of living and excesses of Commodus appeared in most striking contrast with the temperate habits of his father.

Among the wicked women who filled his palace, one Marcia, his favourite concubine, had taken a liking to the Christians from some unknown cause. Through her influence Commodus stopped the persecution ; and, in this extraordinary manner, by the good providence of God, the Church had peace, though thousands were unjustly condemned by the tyrant.

While Commodus despised the instructions of his father's philosophers, he eagerly practised with the bow and the javelin : and having attained great skill, he proclaimed his intention of exhibiting at the amphitheatre, and commanded the attendance of the citizens. Curiosity or fear drew together a great multitude ; and the feats of the emperor excited general astonishment. It is said, he cut asunder the neck of the ostrich in its rapid course ; and, again, his javelin killed a panther before he could touch the malefactor on which it was let loose : he slew a hundred lions in succession ; and the elephant, rhinoceros, and other strange animals, brought from Ethiopia and India for the first time, were alike overcome by his darts. The triumph of the imperial bowman was unbounded : he required divine honours, and ordered medals to be struck, representing him as the Roman Hercules.* These rare and costly sports

* Hercules is the Samson of the Pagans ; but the fables concerning him describe him as far stronger than Samson, and the destroyer of monsters. He was probably a famous hunter, and worshipped after his death.

were tolerated by the people ; but when the emperor took up the profession of a gladiator, which commonly belonged to none but malefactors and foreigners, nothing could exceed the indignation of the Romans, the meanest of whom would have been ashamed to appear in such a character. In the Roman amphitheatre, the most admired kind of combat was carried on in the following manner. One gladiator, called the *Secutor* (pursuer), had a helmet, a sword, and a shield ; another, the *Retiarius* (one with a net), was naked, and had a large net in his hand wherewith to entangle his adversary, and a three-pronged instrument whereby to kill him, if he succeeded. But, if he missed in the first throw, he was obliged to fly from the *Secutor*, who had thus an opportunity of killing him while he prepared to cast the net a second time.

Commodus fought as a *Secutor* seven hundred and thirty-five times, and caused his deeds to be recorded in the public acts. As no one dared to use any skill against him, he always appeared the conqueror, and in public his victories were usually bloodless : but, in the private school of gladiators, numbers of lives were sacrificed for his amusement. At length the emperor went to such a shameless extreme, that he required an immense yearly salary to be paid him, as a gladiator, out of the fund raised by the people in support of the entertainments of the amphitheatre.

He became more ferocious in spirit the more he knew of the hatred and contempt of the people, till even his own household were afraid of him. His favourite, Marcia, fearing her own life was in danger, one evening presented him with a poisoned draught of wine when he came in weary with the day's sport : and, after he had retired to sleep, a wrestler went into his chamber and strangled him. Thus was the same horrid scene acted again and again in the imperial palace. This event took place in the middle of the night of the first of January, A.D. 193 ; and Pertinax, prefect of the city, almost the only remaining friend of Marcus, was immediately awakened out of sleep, and offered the empire, when he expected nothing but death. The conspirators took him to the Prætorian camp in order to buy the consent of the guards to his election, and then spread a

report through the city that Commodus had died suddenly of apoplexy, and that Pertinax was emperor. Pertinax had governed most of the provinces with wisdom, and was as acceptable to the people as to the senators; but the Prætorians never liked one who made any attempt to curb their lawless spirit. He had time to repair some of the evils occasioned by the misconduct of Commodus, and did every thing he could to relieve the distresses of the people; but, on the twenty-eighth of March, the restless guards broke out into open rebellion, murdered Pertinax in his palace, and carried his head to their camp in the sight of the mourning people.

The scene that followed is, perhaps, the most singular in the history of this, or of any other empire. Sulpicianus, father-in-law to Pertinax, and prefect of the city, was sent by the senate to try to calm the furious soldiers; but took the opportunity of offering them large rewards if they would secure the empire to him. Emboldened by such a proposal from the man who had authority to rebuke them, the leader of the shameless Prætorians mounted the ramparts, and loudly proclaimed that the empire was put up to sale, and might be purchased by the highest bidder. The report quickly spread through the city; and Didius Julianus, a wealthy old senator, but a weak-minded, vain person, soon hastened to the camp to secure the prize. As he had power to give more than Sulpicianus, his offers were soon accepted; and the Prætorians, after obliging the senate to consent to his election, conducted him to the palace. The headless corpse of Pertinax, and the frugal supper prepared for him, at once met the eyes of the new emperor; but he disdained the lessons he might have learned from both, and ordering a sumptuous feast for himself and his guests, amused himself to a late hour with the performance of a public dancer.

The proud citizens, however, soon began to murmur loudly at such an unheard-of insult to the majesty of Rome: the guards began to be ashamed of their avarice, and of the weakness of the nominal emperor; and the legions on the frontiers arose with one accord to avenge the murdered

Pertinax, and to restore, as they said, the honour of the empire.

Septimus Severus, the general of the legions in Pannonia and Dalmatia, gladly embraced this long-wished-for opportunity to obtain the imperial power for himself. Scarcely allowing time for sleep or food, he marched into Italy, using every effort, by the way, to win the love and confidence of his troops. Didius Julianus heard of his approach with the greatest terror; and, not knowing how to act, he sent both ambassadors to make terms with Severus, and assassins to destroy him. But all his efforts failed; and he was beheaded after a miserable reign of sixty-six days.

Severus was accepted at Rome; but he had two formidable rivals elsewhere,—Niger, the general of the legions in the East, and Albinus, general of those in Britain. Both of these had the favour of their respective provinces, and the warm support of armies equal to those of Severus: but the latter made up in subtlety what he wanted in strength. In order to keep Albinus quiet, he sent him the title of Cæsar, whilst he fought with Niger: and, when he had overthrown the general of the East, and secured the provinces, he set off for the West, sending forward messengers to salute the Cæsar as “the brother of his soul and empire,” but giving them secret directions to plunge their daggers in his breast.

Albinus, however, had discovered the character of Severus, and prepared to meet him as his enemy. But, in a single battle fought near Lyons, where one hundred and fifty thousand Romans were assembled, Severus was the conqueror. Not satisfied with his victories, he resolved, as soon as he was acknowledged emperor, to punish all who had supported his rivals; and forty-one senators and their families, with some of the noblest of the provincials, were put to death. In the end he obtained such absolute power that the historians and lawyers of his time agreed that the imperial authority was no longer held from the senate; and that the emperor could dispose of his subjects, or their lands, as his own property. To confirm his despotism, Severus increased the guards four-fold, and introduced among them soldiers from the frontier legions, who were

distinguished for their strength or courage, so that the citizens were affrighted by the strange faces and manners of a host of barbarians. But the emperor contrived to win the favour of the multitude by public shows, and by adorning the city with fine buildings. He also provided liberally for their wants, and, as a judge, favoured the poor rather than the rich, in order to keep down the higher classes whose influence he dreaded.

In the early part of his reign, Severus protected the Christians, because one of them had cured him of some disease by the use of a certain oil: and it is even supposed that his eldest son, Caracalla, had a Christian nurse. But in the tenth year of his reign, when his pride was increased by great success in a war with the Parthians, he wished to have himself and his gods universally honoured, and tried to prevent the spread of the gospel. This was in A.D. 202.

The province of Africa, of which the emperor was a native, was particularly exposed to his wrath, because the Christians abounded there; and we have a particular account of the persecution of the African churches from the pen of Tertullian of Carthage, the first Latin writer among the Christians.

His written Apology gives a lively account of the principles and manners of the Christians, and proves the grace that remained among them. He said they were in the habit of praying for the emperor with outstretched hands and uncovered heads; and that they were numerous enough to resist the injuries done to them if their principles would permit them to do so, but the government had received abundant proofs of their peaceable disposition. "Are there not," he asks, "multitudes of us, in every part of the world? It is true we are but of yesterday; and yet we have filled all your towns, cities, islands, castles, boroughs, councils, camps, courts, palaces, senate, forum! We leave you only your temples! If we were to retire, you would be astonished at your solitude!" This is probably an exaggerated account, and seems rather inconsistent with another passage which runs thus:—"We are *dead* to all ideas of worldly honour and dignity, *nothing is more foreign* to us than political concerns." He speaks afterwards of their

readiness to pay the taxes, and of the regulations of the Church; and notices that their charity to each other was so conspicuous, that it was commonly said, "See how these Christians love one another!"

A glance into the imperial family at this period affords the most striking contrast to this picture; for hatred between brethren was never more fearfully exhibited than in Caracalla and Geta, the two sons of Severus. Their mother, Julia Domna, was a Syrian lady of rank and of extraordinary abilities; and Severus expected great domestic happiness. But he was bitterly disappointed: his children were of the most opposite dispositions, and seemed to hate each other from their childhood. As they grew up, their father tried to unite them together by declaring them joint heirs of the empire, with the title of Augustus, so that for the first time there were three emperors of the Roman world. But this had not the desired effect: Caracalla asserted his birth-right; and Geta had the advantage as the best beloved by the people and army.

In A.D. 208, Severus resolved to take his sons into Britain, as that province had been invaded by the Caledonians; and he hoped they would forget their private quarrels amidst the fatigues of war. No regular battle was fought in Caledonia; but the natives continually harassed the Romans by coming upon them unexpectedly from their mountain retreats; and thousands perished through the severity of a winter campaign. At length the Caledonians offered to give up a portion of their lands for the sake of peace; and Severus consented to retire to Eboracum (York). But he soon found they had no intention of keeping their promises; and, in a rage, he prepared to attack them again. He was then eighty-one years of age, and had long been suffering from gout; and, though apparently in the height of worldly glory, his body was full of disease, and his mind overwhelmed with anxiety about his sons. At this period the wretched emperor found Caracalla had more than once tried to hasten his death; and this, perhaps, drew from him the memorable exclamation, "I have been all things that man could wish, but I am now nothing." He did not, however, attend to the advice of his counsellors to

sentence his unnatural son to death, but expired soon after, recommending his children to live in peace, and desiring the army to secure to them the joint possession of the empire.

It may be a relief to the mind to turn aside for a little while from this painful history, to inquire what Rome was like in the days of imperial grandeur, and what were the manners and customs of its inhabitants.

CHAP. XXVIII.

ROME.—THE CAPITOL.—THE AMPHITHEATRE OF TITUS.
 —TEMPLES.—BATHS.—AQUEDUCTS.—SEWERS.—DRESS
 OF THE ROMANS.—MEALS.—MARRIAGES.—FUNERALS.
 —MODE OF ADMINISTERING JUSTICE.—THE PUBLIC
 WAYS.

THE ruins that still remain confirm the historical accounts of the grandeur of Rome : but all this greatness bears the same stamp ; and, with a silent yet powerful voice, speaks to a Christian's heart that the glory of men is in their shame.

The city, as we have before observed, had gradually covered seven hills ; and, in the time of Nero, it contained three millions of people, one thousand seven hundred and eighty palaces, and four hundred idol temples.

Perhaps the first object that would have struck the eye on entering the city was the Capitol, or temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, as it stood on rising ground, and occupied four square acres. It was several times destroyed by fire, and as frequently rebuilt : that erected in the reign of Domitian, to which the Jewish offerings largely contributed, was the grandest of all ; and, it is said, the gilding alone cost a million of money. The front was adorned by three rows of pillars, and the sides by two of the same description ; the ascent to it was by a hundred steps. Probably there was a desire to equal the magnificence of the Temple at Jerusalem ; the destruction of which was a source of so much regret to Titus.

The Amphitheatre of Titus was an oval building, five

hundred and sixty-four feet long, and four hundred and sixty-seven broad, founded on eighty arches, and rising in four different styles of architecture to the height of one hundred and forty feet. The seats were of marble, handsomely cushioned, and could easily accommodate eighty thousand persons. To avoid any confusion in the assembling of such a multitude, all ranks of people had their ordered places, and came out at sixty-four doors, aptly called vomitories. The centre of the building was an open space, called the arena (Lat. *sand*), and around it were the dens of the wild beasts, and other arrangements for public amusement. The whole building was ornamented in the most costly manner; the defence against the wild animals was, in the period of greatest luxury, a net of gold wire; and the belt, which divided the different ranks of spectators, was studded with precious stones. Subterraneous pipes conveyed such an immense supply of water to the amphitheatre, that the arena might be turned into a lake for the exhibition of sea-fights, or finny monsters. Sometimes, to vary the entertainment, it was laid out as a pleasure garden, but more usually wore the appearance of a desert full of rocks and caverns suited to wild beasts. In looking through our history, let us notice what torrents of blood streamed in this magnificent place,—what cries of agony were heard there,—what savage passions were cherished,—what barbarous tastes cultivated, and how the Christian martyrs and the Jews were sacrificed for the pleasure of their fellow-men,—the heart will then sicken at these wonders of human art; and may the lust of the eyes be thereby deadened!

The distinguishing monument of Roman polytheism was the Pantheon (Greek, *all-gods*), a temple dedicated to all the gods, and filled with their statues. It was a building of a circular form, covered with a dome, which was sheeted with silver in the days of its greatest magnificence. The temple of Saturn, the strongest building in the city, was used as the treasury and place of general registry; and thus every thing was connected with the reigning idolatry. The temple of Janus, which has been frequently mentioned, was built wholly of brass. It was only shut nine times in a thousand years, so few were the intervals of peace enjoyed

by the Romans. The descriptions we have of the vast extent and costly fitting up of the public Baths, which the meanest citizen had a right to use, almost exceed belief. We are told that many of the seats were of solid silver, and the floors inlaid with precious stones. The ruins of the baths of Caracalla, which still remain, surprise the modern visitor, by their vast extent and architectural beauty.

The twenty Aqueducts which supplied the city with water were the most useful, and not the least wonderful, specimens of Roman art. Some of these stone water-courses were supported by arches one hundred feet high, and even rocks were cut through with immense labour to afford them a passage. The common Sewers were not less important, as, by their means, a rapid current of water ran underground throughout the city, carrying away every impurity and securing general cleanliness. When swelled by rains, the streams in these subterranean channels might be heard beating violently against the pavement without power to injure it; and even earthquakes, which shook the foundations of the city, did not move the strong workmanship of the sewers.

The multitudes that thronged the streets of Rome were a very different appearance to the people of our own country. Within doors all the Romans wore a close coat, called the *Tunic*, and the poor had no other; but in the streets the upper classes wore the *Toga*, a loose dress of a circular form without sleeves, and the head being put through a circular hole in the centre, this garment hung in elegant folds round the wearer. Its common colour was the natural whiteness of the wool; but when bleached by artificial means it was more admired, and called the *toga candida* (white); and for a mourning habit the *toga* was dyed black. The senators' *toga* had a broad purple border; that of other patricians was rather narrower. The emperor alone wore a *toga* wholly of purple; hence "wearing the purple," was only another expression for being emperor. The ancient Romans went bare-headed, only using the lappet of their gowns to protect them from rain or cold. The coverings for the feet were commonly sandals, only protecting the sole of the foot, and bound with red straps half way up the leg; but the plebeians wore a kind of half-boots, made of raw hides. The common dress of the Roman women was

the *stola*, a garment reaching to the ankles; and when they went out, the *pallium*, a long open dress, was thrown over it, which concealed the shape of the wearer by its loose and elegant folds. Their heads were adorned with ribbons, or simply with a fillet bound round the hair; and their sandals were fastened by straps and buckles. The Roman soldiers, when fully equipped, wore a coat of mail, which was made either of leather or of several folds of linen thickly quilted together, and covered with scales of iron, silver, or gold, according to the rank of the wearer. The rest of their armour consisted of a sword, shaped something like the scymetar used by the modern Turks; a shield, about four feet long, made of wood, strengthened with iron, and covered with bull's hide; a javelin, which was a staff with an iron head barbed and jagged at the end; and a helmet, or head-piece of brass or iron, on the top of which was the crest, composed of feathers or horse hair. The helmets of the officers were often very splendid, being gold or silver of curious workmanship.

The occasional refreshment of the Romans consisted of a little bread and honey, or dried fruits; their only regular meal being at the ninth hour of the day, which, as they reckoned their day to commence at six in the morning, answered to our three o'clock in the afternoon. The eating-room either contained a number of couches and tables, or one large semi-circular couch with a table of the same shape. In the houses of the rich these couches were decorated with ivory, silver, and gold; and the cushions were of the most costly materials. When luxury was at its height in Rome, we read of a single supper for a few friends costing £250, and of a man who killed himself because he had only £250,000 left, or but just sufficient for a year's expences! The preparations for receiving guests became very expensive, as it was the custom to collect the sumptuous delicacies of all countries at the tables of Rome. When the company arrived, they bathed with the master of the house, or at least had their feet washed; their usual dress was exchanged for a kind of light frock, and they put off their shoes that they might not soil the fine carpets, or furniture of the couches. In taking their places, the first lay at the head of the couch, resting on his left elbow; the second reclined with his head in front of the feet

of the first, from which he was separated by a bolster ; and the rest lay in the same manner. The most honourable place was the middle of the couch, in the centre of the room. The guests were usually crowned with garlands and presented with expensive perfumes. The several courses were brought in, arranged on tables, and not by single dishes. Musicians or dancers were hired to amuse the company, during the entertainment.

The remembrance of Roman influence in Judea, will explain the many allusions to these customs in the Gospels.

The foolish superstitions of Paganism were blended with every event in the life of the Romans. When a marriage was to be celebrated, the first care was to choose a day that was considered fortunate, and to consult the omens. The bride, probably on account of the warlike character of her people, had her long hair parted with a spear, before she was crowned with the wreath of flowers, and covered with the veil, provided for the occasion. If she were a noble lady, she was led to the bridegroom's house in the evening by three youths wearing the patrician toga : torch-bearers went before her, and a distaff and spindle were carried in the procession, as emblems of the duties of her new situation. After many foolish ceremonies at the door, to preserve the house from witchcraft and sorcery, the bride was lifted over the threshold and presented with the keys. The bridegroom came forwards with two vessels, one containing fire, the other filled with water, signifying the domestic cares that properly belonged to the wife. At the wedding-feast it was usual for the bridegroom to scatter about nuts, to be scrambled for by boys ; to show, it was said, that he himself had done with all childish amusements.

As we have had frequent occasion to refer to funeral honours, and the importance attached to them, a short account of the ceremonies used on such occasions may be added here.

When a person was dying, it was usual for the nearest relatives or friends to embrace him ; and as soon as he expired the same persons did the last offices. The body was washed and anointed, and dressed in the most valuable

garments that belonged to the deceased ; and if he had obtained any crowns of honour* they were placed on the head. The corpse was laid at the entrance of the house on a couch ; exclamations of grief were uttered at intervals, by persons stationed there on purpose, and cypress branches were placed in front of the house as emblems of mourning.

The funeral procession was headed by musicians playing flutes and trumpets, mourning women singing the praises of the deceased, and dancers. At the funerals of distinguished persons couches were carried, bearing the images of their ancestors, or the statues of other celebrated men : it is said, a thousand of these were borne before the corpse of Sylla. The funeral couch, on which the body of the deceased was laid, was carried by the nearest relations, and followed by a train of mourners, who beat their breasts or tore their hair as signs of excessive grief. When the procession reached the appointed place, an orator usually made a speech in praise of the deceased ; but in some cases his faults and follies were rehearsed in comic songs, or described by actors. The body, laid on its couch, was then placed upon the funeral pile—a large heap of wood—to which the nearest relation set fire. Slaughtered beasts, rich garments, and perfumes, were thrown on the pile, according to the rank or wealth of the deceased ; and when the whole was consumed, the last embers were quenched with wine, and the remaining ashes placed in the funeral urn and carried to the sepulchre. At imperial funerals, an eagle was let fly from the top of the pile, to carry, as it was said, the emperor's soul to heaven.

The manner of administering justice among the Romans was similar to that in use in this country, as our customs were mostly borrowed from theirs. It was usual, however, with them, for the accused person to wear a mourning robe during his trial, and to exhibit every mark of sorrow ; and when the jury were writing their opinions on small tablets, which they threw into a box kept for the purpose, he was

* A crown of oak-leaves, given to a soldier who had saved the life of any Roman citizen in battle, was considered the most honourable : but there were other crowns of laurel, and of gold, given as rewards for different acts of service.

permitted to cast himself at their feet in order to move them to compassion.

The punishments allowed by law were of several degrees, according to the nature of the offence : 1. Fine. 2. Imprisonment and fetters. 3. Stripes gently given with rods. 4. Return of the injury done by the criminal. 5. Exposure to public shame. 6. Banishment. 7. Selling into slavery.

Death was inflicted in various ways : 1. Beheading ; considered the easiest and most honourable mode of capital punishment. 2. Strangling, which was usually practised in the prison. 3. Throwing headlong from a precipice. 4. Crucifixion, which was the punishment of slaves, or of the meanest persons. 5. In cases of parricide, the criminal was scourged, and then sown up in a leather sack with a serpent, an ape, a cock, and a dog (probably signifying he was to be counted among the lowest of the brutes), and thus thrown into the water. The modes of death, and horrible tortures invented by men who held power only to abuse it, we have frequent occasion to mention in the course of our history.

In closing this account of imperial Rome, it will be proper to mention the public ways which led from the capital to the other great cities of Italy. The most noble of these, the Via Appia, was carried to a distance of 350 miles. It was made of huge stones, generally a foot and a half square; and though it was constructed more than 1800 years since, many parts of it are as perfect now, as when it was newly made.

CHAP. XXIX.

CARACALLA AND GETA.—MURDER OF GETA.—CRUELTY OF CARACALLA.—MURDER OF CARACALLA.—MACRINUS AND HIS SON.—HELOGABALUS.—HIS FOLLIES AND VIOLENT DEATH.—PROTECTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

THE dying advice of Septimus Severus never touched the hearts of his sons : and during their rapid journey from York to Rome, they would never eat at the same table, or

sleep in the same house. The army, however, proclaimed them joint emperors according to their father's desire ; and the senate received them with equal honours, A. D. 208. Caracalla and Geta showed their discord as decidedly in the capital, as in the provinces : the imperial palace was soon divided into two parts, and the doors and passages between the apartments of the two emperors were fortified, and carefully guarded day and night, as in a besieged place. When they met in public they were surrounded by their respective guards, and ill concealed their hatred even in the presence of their afflicted mother. Some prudent counsellors at length advised the brothers to divide the empire ; and proposed that Geta should make Alexandria or Antioch his capital, and leave Caracalla to reign at Rome. The tears and entreaties of Julia, and the pride of the Romans, prevented this arrangement ; and had it taken place, it would probably have led to a civil war. After a little time Caracalla consented to meet Geta in their mother's apartment : but it was not, as she fondly expected, with any intention of reconciliation. While they were in conversation some armed men rushed into the room ; and Julia was wounded in the hand and covered with blood, in trying to protect her younger son from the assassins who were encouraged and assisted by his brother. As soon as Geta was murdered, the wicked Caracalla hastened to the Prætorian camp, and related, with pretended horror, that he had narrowly escaped the murderous attempts of Geta, having only slain him in self-defence.

Geta was the favourite of the soldiers ; but the gifts of Caracalla silenced their complaints, and the remaining son of Severus was permitted to reign without opposition. But he had no peace in his conscience, and often fancied he saw the angry forms of his father and brother rising up to threaten and upbraid him. His remorse, however, only led him to remove all who could remind him of his murdered brother ; and it is said that above twenty thousand persons of both sexes suffered death merely because they had the reputation of being Geta's friends. His mother, too, would have been destroyed, had she not prudently changed her tears into smiles, to avoid the wrath of her fierce son.

Papinian, the Prætorian prefect, who had justly used, during the last seven years of the reign of Severus, an authority next in degree to that of the emperor's, was put to death for refusing to make an oration to the senate, in palliation of Caracalla's crime. "It is easier," said he, "to commit such a crime than to justify it;" and this reply led to the execution of the wisest statesman of the times.

Until this period, the best emperors, such as Augustus, Adrian, and Trajan, had been the most active; and the worst, such as Tiberius, Nero, and Domitian, had chiefly confined themselves to their luxurious palaces. But Caracalla left Rome the year after the murder of Geta, and never returned there. He obliged the senate to accompany him in his journeyings, and to provide for his entertainment at an immense cost; and, in this manner, the wealthiest families were ruined, and the subjects in general burdened with taxes. Every province in turn was the scene of the emperor's rapine and cruelty, and no act of benevolence marked his travels. When at Alexandria, upon some slight provocation, he ordered a general massacre of the inhabitants; and after viewing the slaughter of thousands, he stopped the work of destruction, and coolly told the senate that all were alike guilty, even those who escaped.

Caracalla's maxim was, that if he secured the affection of his soldiers, he need not care for that of his other subjects, and with this idea he imitated the dress and manners of the common legionaries, treated them as familiar friends, and increased their pay. The death of Caracalla took place under the following singular circumstances. An African astrologer foretold that Macrinus, the Prætorian prefect, would be the next emperor; and one of his enemies, wishing to ruin him, sent a letter to Caracalla informing him of the prediction. But as the letter arrived, with many others, when the emperor was going to a chariot-race, it was given to Macrinus himself, and he determined at once to engage some one to destroy Caracalla, in order to preserve his own life. He found a ready instrument in a soldier who had just been refused the rank of centurion. This man watched for an opportunity, and stabbed the emperor when on his way to the temple of the moon in Syria. The assassin was immediately

killed by the guards; and the army, who had been so much indulged by Caracalla, would not be satisfied till the senate promised to rank him among the gods, A. D. 217.

Macrinus bribed the legions to make him emperor; and they consented to do so, on condition that he would associate in the government, his son, a promising youth then only twelve years of age. But when his concern in the death of Caracalla was discovered, he became very unpopular, and the murmurs of the legionaries, during an idle winter in Syria, increased day by day. Macrinus caused Julia to be put to death because she would not own him as emperor, and banished her sister Mœsa from his court at Antioch. She retired to Emesa, a town in Syria, with an immense fortune, heaped together during twenty years of imperial favour; and, in that place, one of her grandsons, the eldest representative of the family, became high-priest in the temple of the sun. This temple contained a conical black stone called Heliogabalus, supposed to have fallen from heaven; and the young priest, in the heat of his zeal, took this name, and would never use any other.

The Roman soldiers who visited the temple were struck with admiration at the appearance of Heliogabalus in his splendid robes, and began to whisper to each other that he resembled their late emperor. The artful Mœsa readily expended her wealth in purchasing military favour for her grandson, and at last a great part of the army were prepared to proclaim the Syrian priest, emperor of Rome. The success of Heliogabalus in the contest that followed was in part attributed to the sudden appearance of his mother and grandmother on the field of battle, animating the soldiers with their words and looks, when they were ready to give way. Macrinus and his son were slain on this occasion; the whole army submitted to Heliogabalus, and the eastern provinces gladly acknowledged the first emperor of Asiatic birth, A. D. 218.

This young man, raised to absolute power at the age of fifteen, was an example of that sore evil, "folly set in great dignity." He spent the first few months of his reign in slowly journeying towards Italy, being occupied by the way with the most trifling amusements. His picture

however was sent forward to the senate-house, and the graver Romans sighed when the new emperor arrived in his flowing priestly robes of silk embroidered with gold, with an eastern diadem, and loads of ornaments; having his eyebrows painted black, and his cheeks red and white. Heliogabalus entered Rome driving six white horses in a chariot containing his favourite black stone, as he wished to introduce it as a new object of worship. A temple to the sun was soon built, and the chiefs of the state and army gratified the emperor by coming thither, in Phœnician tunics, to assist at his expensive sacrifices. To crown his folly, Heliogabalus sent for the image of the moon, worshipped in Africa under the name of Astarte, and when it was brought to Rome, he ordered the union of these foreign deities to be celebrated, as a marriage festival, throughout the empire. This young emperor's religion was the strangest mixture of foreign ceremonies. He practised circumcision and abstained from swine's flesh, in imitation of the Jews; and, if he could have found any thing to copy from the Christians he would probably have adopted it, in order to annoy his subjects; for with all their tastes and feelings he loved to sport. To this end he associated with him, in the empire, his mother Scœmias, and his grandmother Mœsa, allowing them to assemble a female senate, in which they presided and regulated all the fashions of the day. But he went into the commission not only of extravagant follies, but of shameless cruelties, and abominations which even sank him in the esteem of the vilest among the soldiers.

Mœsa, aware of his unpopularity, yet desirous to keep the imperial dignity in her family, persuaded Heliogabalus to adopt as his successor, Alexander, his cousin, the son of her younger daughter, Mammea. This young man had been differently educated, and was of such a totally opposite disposition that he soon obtained universal esteem.

The jealousy of Heliogabalus was quickly awakened, and, in order to try the disposition of the soldiers, he spread a report that Alexander was murdered. The news occasioned so great a tumult that he was obliged to send for his cousin to restore quietness, and he then proceeded to condemn the

chief of the rioters. But the guards, instead of executing his commands, turned their swords against him, and after dragging his body through the streets, threw it into the Tiber, A. D. 222.

During the reigns of these three violent and vicious emperors, the Church had uninterrupted peace. It has been before observed, that Caracalla is supposed to have had a Christian nurse; and we further learn, that, when he was only seven years old, he was angry at seeing one of his schoolfellows beaten because he was of the Christian religion. It is certain that, during his whole reign, he was the protector of the Christians. Macrinus and Helio-gabalus did not turn their abused power against them; and thus we have a clear proof that the Lord, for his people's sakes, can "turn the hearts of kings as the rivers of water, whithersoever he will."

CHAP. XXX.

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD.—HERESY OF MONTANUS.—THE ECLECTICS.—ORIGEN.—REMARKS ON FASTING.—NEW-MODE OF INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE.

THE Church, as compared with the world, was indeed still as light to darkness, though the bright shining of its first-light had so greatly diminished, and still continued to decrease. If all had with open face turned only to the Lord,—all would, like a mirror, have reflected only His glory; but we have seen there was a partial turning to Judaism and Gentilism, and therefore of course some reflection of both, in the Church.

Towards the close of the second century, a learned writer of the age observes, concerning the Christians, "in truth, wherever they reside they triumph in their practice over the worst of laws and the worst of customs." It is also observed, that the Christians in the half-civilized regions of Persia, Parthia, Bactria, and Gaul, did not practise the crimes so common to their countrymen.

It was however at this period, that two new and distinct evils became very conspicuous, and both must be acknow-

ledged as the consequence of departure from the truth and the chastening for it. The devil, whose very name, Satan, signifies that he is the adversary, is always counter-working wherever God is working. Immediately before and after the time of the first appearing of Christ, he set up many false Christs; and we have to expect such attempts in the present day, when Christians are expecting their Lord's second appearing. So after the Holy Ghost came with his many gifts, Satan was at work with *his* spirits, so that the apostle had to say, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John iv. 1). But it was only when the operations of the Holy Ghost were cramped by formal arrangements, and His real presence practically denied in the adoption of human inventions; it was only then, that the enemy could dare to set up a false comforter. It was Montanus, a native of Mœsia, who pretended to be the comforter promised by Christ; and, in order to make his doctrine more plausible, he said that the Holy Ghost given at Pentecost was not the promised comforter, the latter being simply a divine teacher, such as he professed to be, sent to perfect the moral doctrines of Christ! He and all his followers, male and female, professed to be inspired; and two ladies of rank, amongst others, forsaking their families, began to preach in public: their chief object was to denounce woe to the world, and particularly to the Roman empire. All the arts and sciences, and even the common comforts of life, were forbidden among the Montanists; but, though there was a great show of holiness in their conduct, they were justly condemned by the general Church, like other heretics. That which led to their extravagancies has caused, and now causes, many, even of the Lord's people, to wander—a mistaking of the natural emotions of the mind for the operations of the Holy Ghost. The only way to escape such a serious error must be to examine how far such impulses correspond with the workings of the Spirit, described in the written word, as common to the children of God.

Tertullian, who had before strayed from the truth, was one of the most remarkable of the converts of Montanus;

and his doctrine also perverted the minds of many Christians in Asia, Africa, and Europe.

A new sect arose at Alexandria, about the same time as that of the Montanists in Asia Minor. They were called *Eclectics*, as were a heathen sect of philosophers before them, from a Greek word, signifying *to choose*, because they chose out what they considered to be true in all the different systems of Philosophy, and professed to make them agree with the doctrines of the gospel. They were also called the New Platonists, because they considered the system of Plato to be superior to that of all other philosophers. Ammonius, the first celebrated teacher in the school at Alexandria, introduced a most dangerous and absurd opinion, namely, that the moral doctrines of Christianity might be divided into two parts, precepts and counsels; the former being of universal obligation, and the latter for the guidance of Christians of superior holiness. He, moreover, pretended that all the fables of Paganism might be interpreted so as to make them agree with his system of Christianity. Plotinus, the next teacher, added to the strange inventions of Ammonius; and by his means Platonism extended more widely and rapidly. But his successor, Origen, was perhaps the most injurious, because of his great zeal and apparent devotedness in the propagation of Christianity. Pantænus, also, who had been converted from Stoicism, and preached the Gospel in India, was a strong supporter of the Eclectic philosophy, because it enabled him to retain many of his old notions. Clement, one of his scholars, was still more celebrated as a defender of the same system. He asserted that the writings of the Gentiles served to prepare the soul for the spiritual seed, and to give it a deeper root. He, also, with many others, supposed the moral philosophy of the heathens to be *necessary* learning; thus practically denying the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures "for instruction in righteousness." Clement was a great admirer of such as went through much bodily exercise, frequent washings, and great hardships, in order to make themselves more holy; and to these, according to the ideas of Ammonius, he gave the name of "elect of the elect." Some, like the Pytha-

gorean philosophers, abstained entirely from flesh, and others fasted for two or three days together.

Origen, whose natural disposition was very hardy and courageous, went beyond many of his school. When his father was martyred, in the persecution under Severus, he was quite a boy, but his zeal was so great that his mother only saved his life by confining him to the house. At the age of eighteen, he became master of the school at Alexandria, and was soon distinguished for his extraordinary talents. Throughout the persecution he was remarked for his attention to the martyrs, and often exposed himself to great danger by openly embracing them at the place of execution. He was not less noted for his manner of life, and the voluntary sufferings which he endured, either in the hope of becoming holy, or to increase his own reputation.

It was to persons of this description that the apostle alluded, when he warned the Colossian believers not to submit to the ordinances of men who said, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," such and such perishable things; and he adds, that such ordinances have indeed a *show* of wisdom but nothing more; for worship according to *man's* will, and not according to the Spirit, an exhibition of humility, and the punishing of the body, are but the fruits of the fleshly mind, and only tend to satisfy the flesh (Col. ii. 18—23).

Paul suffered hunger, cold, nakedness, thirst, &c. because he was necessarily exposed to them in the Lord's service; but he did not purposely seek such sufferings, for there were times when he could say, "I have all and abound;" and again, "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." He expresses in few words the power of the new life in himself, the rule of the Spirit over the body, saying, "I keep *under* my body, and bring it into *subjection*." And this seems to be the difference. The body of the believer was to be the servant, and not the master of the Spirit; it was to be yielded to God as a living sacrifice, and all its members as instruments of righteousness—but the voluntary punishing and torturing of the body, now beginning in the Church, hindered the energy of the Spirit, and prevented true service to God.

The children of God, in all ages, have found spiritual blessing in occasional fasting with prayer; and where the Spirit of God leads, it is most happy and profitable to follow. But fasting without prayer, and continued so long as to unfit the body for the Lord's service, would come under the description of a hard yoke and a heavy burden, and therefore could not be according to the mind of Christ.

The *stated* fasts soon adopted in the Church are another instance of the many turnings back to the past dispensation, and these observances, not being dictated or sustained by the Spirit of God, soon sank into worse than Jewish formality and hypocrisy. The most useful fruit of Origen's labours appears to have been the Hexapla, a work containing the Hebrew text of the Scriptures, with the Septuagint and four other Greek versions. The Latin translation of the Scriptures was now, also, known in the churches throughout the Roman world; but the copies of it were very rare and valuable, as the manuscripts were always obtained by great labour. But at the very time that one might have expected an increase of light by the multiplication of the copies of the Old Testament, and the more general extension of the books of the New Testament, the adversary had a new device for obscuring the light. Origen in the course of his Eclectic studies, had obtained great credit by his ingenious interpretation of the Pagan Mythology; and, at length, puffed up by his skill and learning, he dared to apply the same method of interpretation to the Holy Scriptures, and pretended that they were full of allegories, and should be studied in that light. Such an idea was likely to gratify the curious mind; and from that time the strangest fancies were taught, as the *hidden* meaning of the written word, its plain sense being grievously obscured for many ages.

It was probably at this period that the future restoration and blessing of the literal seed of Abraham, with all that concerns their city and their land, were put out of sight; and the Church began to seek and expect establishment and power upon earth, when it was asserted that all the promises to Jerusalem belonged to her alone.

The favour of the reigning emperor, whose history we are about to consider, possibly strengthened these new

opinions ; whilst the hopes of the Jews, whom he favoured as much as the Christians, must also have risen high at the same period.

CHAP. XXXI.

ALEXANDER SEVERUS, EMPEROR.—AN EXAMPLE OF DEVOUT PAGANISM.—PROTECTION OF THE JEWS AND CHRISTIANS.—END OF ALEXANDER AND HIS MOTHER.—SECOND PERSIAN EMPIRE.—THE MANICHEAN HERESY.—TEMPORARY PROSPERITY OF THE JEWS.

ALEXANDER, surnamed Severus, was only fourteen years of age when he succeeded Heliogabalus, A. D. 222, so that his mother, Mammaea, continued to guide him, and surrounded him with counsellors of her own choice. She was wiser, however, than her sister Scemias, who had displeased the haughty Romans by taking her seat in the senate-house, subscribing all the decrees, and voting as a regular member of the assembly. Whilst Mammaea secretly ruled by retaining the strongest influence over her son's mind, she concealed her power by allowing a law to be passed which excluded women from the senate-house, for ever ; devoting to the infernal gods any one who should attempt again to introduce them into the assembly.

Ulpian, a wise and humane minister, was the chief of the counsellors appointed by Mammaea to assist her son in the cares of government ; and with such help the young emperor appeared to rule as wisely as Trajan or Adrian. The daily life of Alexander, during the first seven years of his reign, is described as the perfection of devout Paganism. He rose early, and spent some time in a kind of domestic temple, adjoining his palace, which was filled with the statues of the chief gods, the worthiest emperors, and other great persons ; and amongst these, Abraham, and even Christ, were introduced. From the meditations, or worship, suggested by these images, Alexander went to the councils of the state, as he had been taught that the service of mankind should follow that of the gods. After a slight refreshment, he returned to business, and remained with his secretaries till the

evening, reading and answering the multitudes of letters and papers sent from all parts of the empire. The fatigue of business was occasionally relieved by the pleasures of study, and by gymnastic exercises, in which Alexander, who was tall, strong, and active, excelled all his companions. His table was served in a frugal manner, and his guests were the most learned and virtuous of the heathens, with whom he held serious conversation; and the recital of some admired composition occupied the time usually engaged by singers or dancers. Alexander's dress was simple, and his manners courteous; his palace was open to all his subjects, but a crier, standing at the door, frequently repeated, according to the custom at Athens during the Eleusinian mysteries, "Let none enter these holy walls unless he is conscious of a pure and innocent mind."

Alexander favoured the Jews so much, that he obtained the name of Archisynagogus (head of the synagogue); and, as a proof of his respect for the Christians, it is said, that when a tavern-keeper once came to claim a piece of ground on which they had built a place of meeting, the emperor refused it, saying, it was better God should be served there, in any manner, than that it should be used as a tavern.

He also took up the Christian precept, "Do as you would be done by;" and had it not only inscribed on the walls of his palace and other public buildings, but desired a crier to repeat it aloud when any criminal was about to be punished.

In the appointment of provincial governors, this amiable emperor used to say he should make as strict an inquiry into their characters and qualifications, as the Jews and Christians did into those of their teachers and rulers; for as men's lives and properties were intrusted to them, it was of great importance they should be well known. Alexander is reckoned one of the best moral characters among the heathens; and, from the above facts, it appears he had understanding enough to value that degree of righteousness with which he was acquainted. Some of the more superficial among the Christians were perhaps deceived by his conduct; for it is observed by the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius, that Mammea was "a most godly and religious

woman ;" as if godliness, or the religion of God, consisted in correct morality, without love to God in the heart, or the life of God in the soul.

It does not appear that Alexander, or his mother, ever received the doctrine of Christ, though they might have had many opportunities of hearing of the way of salvation. When they were at Antioch, in A. D. 229, with the army which they had brought there, on account of an invasion of the Persians, Origen, at their request, paid them a visit, as they had heard of his fame as a philosopher. But it is not probable they received from him the simple truths of the gospel, though his mixture of Gentilism with Christianity might have easily been the means of adding them to the number of the nominal converts, who accepted his teaching on account of his talents. The influence of Mammea was for some years useful to her son ; but she sought to carry it too far, by removing from him every one whom she thought likely to be her rival. Alexander had married the daughter of a senator, by her consent ; but when she saw that, by this means, she was losing the first place in his affections, she persuaded him to condemn his father-in-law to death, under the pretence that he was aiming at sovereign power ; and shortly afterwards, on some other ground, she obliged him to banish his wife to Africa.

During Alexander's absence in the East, the Prætorians became angry with Ulpian, as the spy of their proceedings and the reformer of their excesses, and, at the emperor's return, they required the death of this minister. The citizens were attached to him, and defended their beloved prefect : the angry Prætorians threatened a general massacre and set some houses on fire ; and their fury did not abate till they had killed Ulpian at the feet of the emperor, whilst he was vainly trying to cover him with his purple robe and to obtain his pardon.

The inability of Alexander to punish this crime, and his evident weakness after the loss of Ulpian, led to many other tumults. The legions in different parts of the empire rebelled against the discipline of their officers, and slew many of them. Dion Cassius, general in Pannonia, noted as an historian, only escaped destruction by receiving a

timely recall to Rome with an appointment to the consulship. A revolt in Germany at length called Alexander again to lead forth an army; but the continued control of his mother brought upon him the contempt of the soldiers, and this was artfully increased by Maximin, one of his boldest generals, who desired to reign. The folly of Mammaea was therefore ruinous both to herself and her son; for they were both murdered together in the camp stationed on the banks of the Rhine, A.D. 235.

The singular history of the establishment of the Second Persian empire belongs to this period; and the war carried on by Alexander Severus is intimately connected with it. It will be remembered, that Persia fell under the dominion of the Seleucidæ, the Macedonian kings of Syria; but at length their harsh government led their Persian subjects to revolt, and many wars and revolutions followed, till the period when Syria was swallowed up in the Roman empire. At that time Persia had been seized by the Parthians, a people of Scythian origin, whose independence of Rome has often been mentioned, and whose kingdom was thus extended from India to the frontiers of Syria. Artabanus, the last of a long line of Parthian kings, happened to have in his service Ardeshir, or Artaxerxes, a bold Persian soldier; and this man, being sent into exile for some offence, revenged himself by stirring up his countrymen to revolt. He then placed himself at their head, saying he was a descendant of their ancient kings, and that, as such, he had a right to deliver them from the slavery in which they had been held ever since the death of Darius, a period of five hundred years. The Parthians were defeated in three successive battles, in the last of which Artabanus was slain, and the spirit of his nation broken for ever. The Persians, after their long servitude, again rose into power, and the second Persian empire became almost as famous as the first. Artaxerxes and his successors were called the Sassanides, from Sassan, one of his ancestors; and, it is supposed, their kingdom nearly equalled modern Persia in extent, and in the number of its inhabitants. After regulating the government of his new empire, Artaxerxes sought to extend it, under pretence of punishing all who had triumphed

over his countrymen in their degraded condition. He obtained some victories over the rude Scythians and feeble Indians, and then turned towards the Romans, as nobler and more ancient enemies. After the resignation of Trajan's Eastern conquests there had been forty years of peace with Rome, till some provocation led to the dreadful war, already spoken of, in the reign of Marcus Antoninus. Ctesiphon, the capital of the Parthian kings, rose again into greater strength after it had been destroyed by the lieutenants of Verus, and withstood a long siege before it was taken by Alexander Severus. On the latter occasion, it is said, 100,000 of its inhabitants were led into captivity. Even after these calamities, Ctesiphon became the winter residence of the Persian kings, and succeeded Babylon and Seleucia as one of the capitals of the East.

The Roman generals had raised many monuments of victory in Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria; and Macrinus alone, during his short reign, proving unsuccessful, purchased deliverance from a dangerous situation at an immense expense.

Artaxerxes styled himself, according to the Eastern fashion, the great king, and the king of kings; and sent an embassy of four hundred of the finest Persians, well mounted, richly dressed, and with shining arms, requiring the Romans to restore to him all the countries which had belonged to his ancestor Cyrus, and desiring them to keep within the limits of Europe. This proud demand was answered by the Roman legions, whom Alexander Severus led into the East, as already mentioned, in A.D. 229; and though it is supposed that Artaxerxes generally had the advantage, the young emperor, on his return to Rome, made an oration to the senate describing his victories as little inferior to those of Alexander the Great.

Artaxerxes reigned fourteen years, and succeeded in restoring the ancient Persian religion, as well as the government. The Parthian princes had been attached to the Grecian idolatry, and always persecuted the followers of Zoroaster; but the Magi, under the protection of Artaxerxes, became more powerful than ever, and the revival of their doctrines had a poisonous effect upon the infant churches of

the East. The early mixture of Paganism and Judaism with Christianity, we have already noticed : we must now observe its corruption, through the reception of some of the principles of Magianism. Mani, an Eclectic philosopher, who admired some of the doctrines of the Persian priests, hoped to unite the fire-worshippers and the Christians together, by combining their different views. He took up the oriental idea of two principles, light and darkness, and built upon it the most extravagant and anti-scriptural system of religious doctrine. He was at first excommunicated by the Persian Christians as a heretic, and then condemned by the Magi for attempting to reform the religion of Zoroaster ; but his opinions were received by great numbers in Persia, Syria, Greece, Africa, and Spain ; and the Manichean heresy was added to the many others that corrupted the Church. Mani was at last condemned to death by Sapor, the son and successor of Artaxerxes.

It remains for us to consider the state of the Jews during this period. The Eastern Jews reached the height of their temporal power and magnificence, at the close of the Parthian monarchy, and under the mild rule of the first Persian kings. The Prince of the Captivity resided at Babylon, and had a luxurious court there, with attendant officers, councillors and cup-bearers. He had also the power of appointing different rabbins as governors of the communities under his jurisdiction, and occasionally visited the native ruler of Bagdad to talk with him in a friendly manner about any grievances done to his people. When the prince died, the heads of the people and the masters of the learned schools placed his appointed successor on the throne, arrayed in cloth of gold. He was then addressed by one of the wise men, and admonished that he was only the prince of a captive people ; and that he must be careful not to abuse his power, as he was called to slavery rather than to sovereignty. On the first Sabbath that he attended the synagogue, he addressed the assembled Jews ; and prayer was then made, in a low voice, for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, and for the termination of all their troubles under this new prince.

From that day, he lived chiefly in retirement, to prevent the jealousy, or avoid the suspicions, of the native kings.

Whilst all the Eastern Jews acknowledged the Prince of the Captivity as their head, all throughout the Roman empire submitted to the rule of the patriarch of Tiberias ; and, in the reign of Alexander Severus, this rabbi obtained almost kingly authority. He had the power of inflicting corporal punishment, and probably death ; but his chief influence arose from his power to pronounce the dreaded sentence of excommunication, the object of which was considered as an outcast from society—a moral leper whom no one dared to approach except his own wife and children. Though the rabbins in many cases abused this power, and it was, humanly speaking, a barrier against the conversion of the Jews, it had certainly a great moral influence over them, and their general conduct appears to have been far less criminal than that of the Pagans among whom they dwelt. The tribute formerly raised in support of the temple worship was now levied for the maintenance of rabbinism ; and the patriarch of Tiberias sent his legates to all the synagogues, throughout the Roman world, to deliver his commands and to collect this yearly revenue. These messengers were doubtless commissioned to steel the hearts of the Jews against the reception of the Gospel ; for the Christians assert, they were generally anathematized in all the synagogues, and the very name of their blessed Master cursed.

In the meanwhile, never was more apparent honour paid to the books of Moses than by the rabbins of Tiberias ; for every letter was counted, and every dot esteemed of the greatest importance. But these subtle teachers took care to affirm that the Scriptures were dark oracles, not to be understood by common people ; and they did not suffer them to use any thing but their own interpretations and traditions. The dominion of rabbinism was thus as firmly established over the minds of the apostate Jews, as that of the popedom, in later times, over apostate Christians. In giving up the clear revelation of God, both were left in the darkness of ignorance and superstition.

CHAP. XXXII.

MAXIMIN, EMPEROR.—THE GORDIANS.—PUPIENUS, BALBINUS,
AND GORDIAN.—PHILIP THE ARABIAN.—STATE OF THE
CHURCH.—DEATH OF PHILIP.—CAUSES OF THE DECLINE
OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

A. D. 235. MAXIMIN was originally a shepherd, the son of a Thracian peasant; and it is said, he was nearly eight feet high, with strength proportioned to his stature. Severus was attracted by the display of his extraordinary bodily powers, when travelling through Thrace, and gladly engaged such a man in his service. In the succeeding reigns, he had gradually risen till he attained the highest rank in the army; and it was easy for him to take the place of the despised Alexander in the midst of the semi-barbarous legions on the frontiers. Yet, as he was aware that he should appear to great disadvantage at Rome, in contrast with the late refined and educated monarch, he would not even visit Italy; but made his camp, on the banks of the Rhine, or the Danube, the seat of government. From thence he issued the most tyrannical commands, and numbers of the Roman nobles were summoned thither and cruelly put to death, under the false pretence that they were plotting against his life. Four thousand persons were executed during his reign, and most of them in that barbarous manner which showed the utmost contempt for the laws. Some were sown up in the skins of newly-slaughtered animals, and thrown to the wild beasts, and many were actually beaten to death. The cruelties of Maximin were tolerated while they affected only a few of the rich and noble: but when he sent his officers to plunder all the cities throughout the empire of the independent revenues, usually set apart for the provision or entertainment of the people at large, the general indignation was excited. Still more, when the tyrant commanded that the temples should be stripped of their offerings, and that the statues of the gods should be melted down to satisfy the avarice of the soldiers who were his companions in crime. In many places, the superstitious people died in defending their altars;

and in a small town of Africa the messengers of Maximin were effectually resisted. The inhabitants made their rebellion generally acceptable, by choosing as emperors, Gordian, pro-consul of Africa, and his son. Gordian was eighty years of age, fond of study and inclined to peace, so that he accepted the purple with real sorrow. His son was of the same tastes and disposition, and had a library containing many thousand volumes: yet they had both proved themselves able commanders, the younger Gordian having long served with his father. The Gordians held their court at Carthage; and the Africans, who had never enjoyed an emperor's presence since the visit of Adrian, were full of pride and delight. But their rejoicing was of short duration; for after a reign of only thirty-six days, both the emperors were slain in a battle with the Mauritanian barbarians, the latter being assisted by troops in Maximin's interest. The news of their death caused great distress in Italy, as all in that country were preparing to support them; but, in the general confusion, one of the senators observed, though the Gordians had been cut off there were others of their number equally fit to reign. After some tumult, two senators, Pupienus and Balbinus, were actually chosen, and a boy of the Gordian family was appointed Cæsar, in remembrance of the late emperors. Nothing could exceed the fury of Maximin on hearing of these events; he beat his head against the wall, and raged like a wild beast, so that even his son was afraid to approach him. He quickly prepared his armies to enter Italy; and, having crossed the Alps, besieged the strong city of Aquileia, the first that resisted his advance. But his soldiers being discouraged by the obstinacy of its defence, the disease and famine spreading among them, and still more by the fierce temper of Maximin, resolved to make themselves free, by destroying the tyrant and his son.

The strength of Maximin availed him nothing, as it was not even put forth in self-defence: he was killed with his son as they lay asleep at noon-day in their tent, A. D. 238.

Upon the announcement of the death of Maximin, the gates of Aquileia were opened, and the whole army consented to obey Pupienus and Balbinus. But these emperors

were, in the meantime, weakening themselves by disunion. Papienus was a rough soldier, distinguished for his military talents and strict justice ; and Balbinus was an orator and a poet, beloved for his amiable character and generous disposition. The former despised the latter as a studious nobleman, and was, in his turn, held in contempt by Balbinus as an uneducated, low-born soldier. The guards neither liked the severe Papienus, nor feared the gentle Balbinus ; and, taking advantage of their discord, they slew them both in distant parts of the same palace, while the people were celebrating the public games. Under the rule of the young Gordian, who was only sixteen years of age, the Prætorians expected to be without control ; but, at the age of eighteen, he escaped from the evil guidance of worthless ministers, and proved his wisdom by committing the direction of public affairs to Misiheus, a prudent and able counsellor. He studied the people's happiness at Rome, while Gordian was victorious abroad in a war with the Persians. It was on this occasion that the temple of Janus was opened for the last time.

In A.D. 241, Misiheus died, and Philip, an Arab by birth, and in his earlier life a robber, succeeded him as prefect, an officer only second in authority to the emperor himself. But not satisfied with this measure of power, he caused Gordian to be murdered while he was in the East. This young emperor had been generally beloved, and the mourning army raised a funeral monument to his honour, on the banks of the Euphrates, A.D. 244.

The Prætorians were quite willing to raise their prefect to imperial power ; and the senate, overawed by them, were obliged to recognise Philip as the lawful emperor.

The Christians had enjoyed a long season of peace, which was only interrupted by the execution of some of the clergy, by the command of Maximin, simply because they had been favoured by the prince whom he supplanted.

During this stormy period of frequent political changes, religious differences seemed to pass unheeded by the emperors ; but it also appears that the lukewarmness and worldliness of the Christians did not expose them to persecution. Nothing can more clearly prove the low standard

of Christianity than the fact that Philip himself made some profession. At this period, Origen remarks, many Christians came to the assemblies only on solemn festivals, and then more for amusement than instruction. Some would not stay till the end of the lecture, others did not hear a word of it, but entertained themselves in a corner; and the ancient custom of staying to speak to the pastors, or to ask questions, expressive of interest in spiritual things, was quite out of fashion. At the same time, he speaks of the haughty manners and ambition of the bishops, and the wrong steps which they took in order to get into places of honour or profit.

In A.D. 247, a thousand years after the foundation of Rome, the emperor celebrated the grandest idolatrous games that had ever been seen; and, on this occasion of festivity, two thousand gladiators shed their blood in the amphitheatre, for the entertainment of the gazing multitudes: day after day these shocking exhibitions were witnessed with the same delight.

In A.D. 249, a rebellion took place in one of the northern provinces; and Philip sent thither Decius, one of his ablest generals. The unruly legions left him no choice but death or the empire; and in such circumstances it was not surprising that Decius accepted the purple, and led them into Italy. He professed indeed that it was his intention to restore the army to obedience; but Philip was slain in the first battle that took place, and his son and associate in the empire was murdered at Rome by the Prætorians; thus Decius was easily established on the vacant throne.

It has been remarked, that during the first four centuries of their existence, the Romans were learning the arts of war and government in the school of poverty; that in the next three centuries, by the use of these arts, they obtained their vast extent of empire; and in the next three hundred years, which close our present period, there was apparent prosperity but inward decay. The causes of this decay may be thus explained. The small, but warlike people, who originally bore the name of Romans, were now confounded with the millions of provincials who had the name, without preserving the spirit or the interest, of Ro-

man citizens. The people at large, burdened with taxes, were in a state of slavery; and the soldiers, who were the only free men, made the worst use of their independence. They had learned, by frequent experience, they could raise to the empire whomsoever they pleased, whether a Syrian priest, a Thracian shepherd, or an Arab robber; and they had, in the same lawless spirit, destroyed their emperors again and again. The legions that guarded the frontiers were now weakened by insubjection to discipline, and the introduction of luxury; and the barbarians began to discover that the ways into the empire were more numerous and more easily passed.

These foreign enemies, however, were to the Romans, what enemies without were to the Christians—the means of making them vigilant and united; and during the coming period we shall find the decline of the empire and of the Church awhile delayed: the former gaining a little strength by vigorous contests with the barbarians, the latter purged and revived by the fires of persecution.

CHAP. XXXIII.

THE NATIONS BEYOND THE ROMAN WORLD.—INDEPENDENT GERMANY.—THE GOTHs.—GALLUS, EMPEROR.—THE DECIAN PERSECUTION.—THE MARTYRS.—CYPRIAN.—FALLING AWAY FROM THE TRUTH.—FIRST SEPARATION OF CHRISTIANS.—THE CHURCH AT ROME.—FIRST CHRISTIAN HERMIT.—PENANCE.—CONFESSION.

THE Romans had such an idea of their own greatness that they commonly spoke of the empire as “the whole world;” yet the frequency of their foreign wars might have taught them otherwise; and they were now to experience the strength of the nations lying outside their boundaries.

In the course of our history it has been apparent that the barbarians, as they were called, were far more difficult to overcome than the more civilised nations. Multitudes perished by the sword, and still greater numbers were taken captives, before Gaul, Britain, and Germany could be counted among the provinces of the Roman empire:

and even then, the natives who would not submit fled beyond the limits of this new dominion; and in the mountains and wildernesses of the north of Europe they multiplied and grew up in savage independence, and with determined enmity against the Roman name. Independent Germany (for the Romans had only that part west of the Rhine) extended over a third part of modern Europe; for the inhabitants of those countries now known as Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Livonia, Prussia, and great part of Poland, were but different tribes of the same great nation, resembling each other in complexion, manners, and language. They were however quite distinct from the Sarmatians and Scythians of modern Russia and northern Asia, and frequently at war with the tribes that lived on their borders. It appears that the climate of Europe was formerly much colder than it is now; for the Rhine and Danube were frequently frozen over, so that the barbarians could transport over them not only numerous armies and horsemen, but the heavy waggons containing their families and goods. Moreover, the reindeer, which cannot now live south of the Baltic, was common in the forests of Germany when they were entered by Cæsar. The same causes, namely, immense forests and large morasses, now produce the difference which exists between the climate of Canada and that of the kingdoms of Europe in the same latitude. The ancient Germans were a vigorous race, great lovers of liberty, and as bold in attacking foreign enemies, as in resisting the absolute rule of any one man among themselves. Their divisions and their want of arms alone disabled them from taking possession of the tempting provinces of the empire upon which they bordered, and whereon they trespassed whenever an opportunity offered. Their union, in the reign of Marcus Antoninus, enabled them to carry on a long and doubtful conflict with that emperor; and the German soldiers, then taken into Roman service, found opportunities of teaching their countrymen the arts of war, and the use of superior arms. The Goths, Vandals, Allemanni, Lombards, &c., of whom we shall often have occasion to speak, were all Germanic tribes. The Goths came originally from the regions beyond the Baltic, where

a remembrance of them is still preserved in the name of Gothland. Their religion was the invention of Odin, the lawgiver of the north; and by him they were taught to worship an invisible Odin, as the god of war. Probably fearing that his doctrine would be disbelieved, if he died of disease or old age, the false prophet, when he felt his end approaching, called together a large assembly of Swedes and Goths, and having mortally wounded himself in their presence, he assured them he was going to prepare the feast of heroes in the palace of the god of war. Their faith was confirmed in this manner, for it was generally believed that those who fell in battle would be happy for ever; and it is not surprising that those who worshipped a god of war should give themselves up to the practice of war; it was, in fact, part of their religion! By means of large boats, with oars, many colonies of Goths crossed the Baltic, which, at the narrowest part, is a voyage of a hundred miles, and settled along the banks of the Vistula; for the barbarians, who were unacquainted with the arts of tillage, seldom cleared any large space in the forests, but raised their rude huts in any suitable spot, and chiefly by the sides of the rivers.

The Vandals, originally one people with the Goths, spread along the sea-coast, and the banks of the Oder. The Goths, as they increased in numbers, extended southwards till they gained a settlement in the Ukraine. But instead of cultivating that fertile region they still preferred the labours of war; and as the Scythian territory offered no temptation they turned their longing eyes towards the fruitful fields of Dacia, where they hoped to obtain plenty without toil. Their first attempt in the reign of Philip was successful enough to encourage them to try again; and Decius was scarcely settled in the empire when he heard that Cniva, the Gothic king, was ravaging Mœsia, with an army of seventy thousand men.

The emperor made great speed to check his progress, and at one period of the struggle it seemed probable the whole army of Goths would be cut off; but in the end they proved victorious.

It is supposed that Gallus, the general who commanded

one part of the Roman army, betrayed Decius into an unfavourable position, in order to obtain the empire ; but it is possible that he accidentally posted his troops on the edge of a morass, into which they were forced in the heat of battle. The lightly armed barbarians, who were accustomed to the bogs, continued to fight with their long spears ; but the legionaries, encumbered by their heavy armour, sank deeper and deeper ; so that the greatest part of the army perished, and the body of Decius was never found. His son and appointed successor had been killed by an arrow at the beginning of the battle, A. D. 251. Gallus was readily proclaimed emperor by the remnant of the army, who considered themselves saved by his superior skill ; and he freed himself from the victorious Goths by promising to pay them annually a large sum of gold. At his return to Rome the new emperor gave himself up to the indolent enjoyment of the pleasures of the capital, regardless of the conquests of Sapor in the East, and the entrance of fresh swarms of barbarians who were attracted by the report of the riches of the empire. His general Æmilianus, in the meantime, gained such remarkable victories over the Germans that he was proclaimed emperor by the legions in Mœsia. Gallus, aroused by this intelligence, again took up arms and went into that province ; but the civil war was ended by his destruction in battle, A. D. 253.

The triumph of Æmilianus was short, as he was himself defeated by Valerian, a more powerful general, who had been commissioned to bring the legions from Gaul to the aid of Gallus. He arrived too late to save his master ; but he revenged his death, and was at once acknowledged as emperor both by the army and senate, A. D. 253.

The heart sickens at the constant recurrence of such acts of violence, and the continual retrospect of scenes of bloodshed. Let us now turn aside to observe the scourge uplifted against the Church, and the profit of it to the children of God.

Decius was a moralist, like the Antonines, and so greatly admired as a just and moderate prince that he obtained the flattering title of *Optimus* (the best). It is therefore worthy of particular remark that, during his short reign of thirty

months, he directed the most furious persecution that the Christians had ever suffered. It is possible the false profession of Philip led many, as well as Decius, to hate the Christian name; but, considering his character for justice and humanity towards his subjects in general, we must view his treatment of the Christians as an extraordinary display of human violence, and as the necessary chastening and purification of the Church.

During thirty years of rest and security, the churches had not used their privileges; and they were multiplied without being edified, because they did not walk in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost (see Acts ix. 31).

An account of these times may be found in the writings of Cyprian, bishop at Carthage. He was a man of wealth and rank, and an orator by profession; but when he was converted, in A. D. 246, he gave up his luxurious mode of life, though he did not choose the opposite extreme of poverty which many considered there was great merit in doing. He appears to have been desirous of serving God, and for thirteen years laboured without ceasing for the benefit of the Church at large. He saw that there was need of chastening; and says that, during the period of outward tranquillity, the Christians in general were bent on increasing their wealth, or improving their estates. Bishops and deacons, for the most part, were such only in name; works of mercy were neglected, discipline in the lowest state, believers married unbelievers, and dress was studied for the sake of making an attractive appearance. Those who ruled well were despised, or railed against; and quarrels, false swearing, and irreverence for the name of God, disgraced the professors of Christianity. Many of the bishops, nominally the overseers of the flock of God, were found travelling to distant places for the sake of pleasure or gain, and were so greedy of filthy lucre, that they used the most dishonourable means for obtaining wealth and increasing it.

False philosophy had been the chief cause of the falling away in the Greek churches: worldly prosperity was as mischievous in the Latin churches. The Decian persecution affected both, and was not only useful in proving the measure

of faithfulness that remained among them, but in clearing them from a great host of false professors. As soon as the edicts of Decius went forth, vast numbers of professing Christians returned to idolatry; and the crowd of apostates, in Africa, was so great, that the magistrates desired to defer their confession till another day; but, in their terror, they besought permission to sacrifice to the gods that very night, that there might be no doubt they were honest Pagans. At Rome, Fabian, the bishop, suffered death; but many retired to places of concealment, and Cyprian, among the rest, was persuaded by the brethren at Carthage to leave his dangerous situation.

His letters, however, addressed to the churches who sent messengers asking his advice, proved that he was not unconcerned in the sufferings and trials of others. He advised the brethren to visit those who had fallen away, and to exhort them to confess Christ the next opportunity; and he also besought them to re-admit into communion all true penitents. With much wisdom he recommended them not to visit the prisoners in great numbers, but to go singly and quietly, that they might give no cause of offence to the ordained magistrates. At the same time he warned them against the danger of vain-glory; for some of the boldest confessors were not always the best imitators of Christ, and mistook natural courage for spiritual power. There were, however, many faithful martyrs who died rejoicing amidst the most cruel sufferings; and the adversary, discomfited by many blessed examples of the constraining love of Christ, brought in a new device to spoil their testimony.

Some of the confessors, before their death, rashly desired that certain of the apostates, whom they named, should be received at the Lord's supper; and, through a mistaken veneration for persons supposed to be so very near Christ, their requests were granted. Cyprian warmly protested against this error, and reminded the brethren that even after far less offences than relapsing into idolatry, time had been allowed to prove the repentance of those who had sinned; that they were not received into communion till there was evidence of their restoration to God; and even then they were obliged to make an open confession, before the bishops

and presbyters could lay their hands on them in token of returning fellowship. Yet Cyprian himself was instrumental in furthering the subtle devices of the enemy by having the names of the martyrs, and the days on which they suffered, carefully registered, and by observing these days on their annual return; for here originated that celebration of saints' days which soon became general. The language of Cyprian, indeed, shows how much darkness was on the mind of the best instructed Christians in these days; and how far they had been beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ. In speaking of Laurentius and Ignatius, he describes them as martyrs who had received from the Lord crowns and palms of victory, but adds, "We offer sacrifice for them when we celebrate the days of the martyrs;" and, again, with respect to another departed saint, "we pray that God would forgive him all the sins he had committed through human infirmity, and bring him into the light and land of the living,—into the bosoms of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—into the place where pain, sorrow, and sighing flee away." The introduction of error is so gradual that it does not startle the mind till it has made considerable progress, and those who are going gradually along with it do not know how far they have strayed. Some of the backward steps of the Church have been already marked, yet a thoughtful person is astonished at the returning idea of *sacrifice*, and little less at finding *priests* and *altars* formally recognised among Christians.*

The subtle adversary knew that it was of no use to tempt the people of God with a direct lie; and therefore deceived them by an appearance of truth. The words of Christ, "Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," were wrested from their simple signification of the living union and incorporation of Christ and his members, and applied to the bread and wine used at the supper.† Scripture and common sense were

* The word *priest*, as used in the Church of England since the Reformation, is derived from the Greek word for *elder*, and ought not to be confounded, as we fear it is now likely to be, with that word in its Jewish or Popish sense of *sacrificer*.

† See the "Scripture Tracts."—No. 4.

alike insulted by the gross idea that simple bread and wine were no longer signs, but the real body and blood of Christ. A question would of course arise how they could become such; and, in process of time, it was boldly asserted, that the hands and prayers of the clergy changed these natural substances in a miraculous manner. This was called the doctrine of *transubstantiation*. He who first said the children of God were not at liberty to come together to break bread in remembrance of their Lord without an appointed minister or bishop (Ignatius), little expected that this first variation from scriptural liberty would be followed by such grievous departures from truth and simplicity. The bread and wine were at first carried round to the different members of the family by the ministers or servants of the Church; the next step was to consecrate these elements; and at length these ministers, under the name of priests, pretended to take them as the sacrifice from the altar, and to administer the real body of Christ to the receivers kneeling around it! The clergy indeed had far greater pretensions than the Jewish priests; for they alone professed to *make* the sacrifice before they offered it; and it was no longer wonderful that persons supposed to be possessed of such amazing powers, should be also considered capable of forgiving the sins of the living or the dead. The Jewish fable of a purgatory, or a place of purification for the dead, had been greedily received; and, the finished work of Christ being put out of sight, it was gladly believed that the priests and their sacrifices could deliver the departed sinner out of torment, or perfect the happiness of the deceased saints. Such an idea as this may, perhaps, explain the language of Cyprian when he says, "We offer sacrifice for them." Forgiven sinners were the class whom the Lord desired to break bread, and to drink wine, in remembrance of Him, and to show forth His death till He should return again; but, in process of time, forgiveness of sins was connected with the bread and wine in a new manner, and they were supposed to be the means of obtaining it.

When Christ is exalted as the only Perfect One, man must be abased: but when man is exalted in any way, the Lord of Glory will be robbed of His pre-eminence, and His

work and name dishonoured. As long as believers were simply looking to Jesus they might think of the cloud of witnesses who died in faith, with gratitude to Him who made them what they were, and take courage; but there was no observance of saints' days, till some peculiar holiness was supposed to exist in certain men, something of their own which might be honoured apart from Christ, and which made them more holy than other saved sinners. The apostles addressed all who believed in Christ Jesus, as saints, because they were united to Him, dwelt in by the Holy Spirit, and sanctified by God the Father; but man, ever wandering from the truth in one way or another, chose to reserve the name of saints for those whom he supposed *deserving* of it, and usually gave them this title only after their death.

This error grew as rapidly as any other; and, in process of time, the bones of noted martyrs and saints were collected, with other relics, and miraculous powers attributed to them. Nor was this all; from their nearness to Christ it was supposed they could grant any request made to them, or at any rate persuade the Lord himself to hear the prayers of the dwellers on earth; and, with these ideas, they were invoked, and their names put in the place of the precious name of Jesus. These grievous and soul-destroying errors were only introduced by degrees: but they may be traced back to that mistaken veneration for the martyrs which was first strikingly shown forth at the time of the Decian persecution.

Up to this period, Christians, notwithstanding their declension, and the many mere professors united with them by baptism, were all of one name: and it was only their numbers and distant abodes that prevented them from meeting together in one place wherever they existed. The sects were composed of heretics, and not of Christians bearing a different name. The Church had not become one with the world; for there were efforts made to shut out those who were "of the world," and persecution helped to diminish persons of that class. The many evils that existed were not tolerated, as it were, by men instructed in the word of God, and with consciences thereby enlightened; but resulted from real ignorance of the written word, and,

consequently, want of light in the mind and conscience. The first separation of Christians *from each other* arose from the disputes concerning the treatment of those who had relapsed into idolatry; some being willing to receive them into fellowship on account of the recommendatory letters of the martyrs, others rightly desiring to wait till it could be ascertained whether their profession of Christianity were true or false. The wiser Christians at Rome censured, without exception, all who had fallen away in time of temptation, and were cautious not to receive them again into communion till they were proved to be on the Lord's side. Many indeed who had fallen away came back to claim their former places as soon as the death of Decius put an end to the persecution, but some of the elders rebuked their forwardness, saying, "Let them knock at the doors, but not break them; let them go to the threshold of the Church, but not leap over it. Let them watch at the gates of the heavenly camp with the modesty that becomes those who have been deserters. Let them be clothed with humility and take up the shield of faith that they dropped through fear of death," etc.

But there were some in the Church at Rome who thought the sin of idolatry so great, that the fallen ones ought not to be received, even upon the sincerest repentance. Novatian was the leader of the party that separated from the body on this account: it appears he was an honest Christian and sound in the faith, but he retained something of the stoical severity that he had gloried in before his conversion; and this was opposed to the tenderness which dictated those gracious words, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Many of the followers of Novatian afterwards returned mourning to the general assembly: but the sect long existed; and it does not appear that they held any doctrines contrary to the Gospel. The separatists at Carthage were of a different character, and, being mostly persons of a loose character, or evil disposition, determined to have communion with the apostates who were not received by the body. Cyprian wrote concerning them, "There is one

God, one Christ, one Church; depart I pray you from these men, and avoid their discourse as a plague." At the same time he desired that the fallen ones should be treated with much tenderness, in order that they might be recovered.

The description of the Church at Rome, at this period, differs greatly from the simple notice of it in the epistle of Paul, "all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints;" for, as it has been before remarked, when man begins to make church arrangements, and additions to the simple rules of the written word, we know not where, or when, the exercise of his inventive powers will stop. That which was considered admirable in the third century would have been intolerable to the first believers: the yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear was now restored in a new form, and the orders and ceremonies introduced into the Church were more in number than those prescribed in the book of Leviticus.

We now read of eight orders of clergy: the three first, bishops, priests, and archdeacons, being termed holy or sacred; the other five ranks were called the unconsecrated: all were ordained according to particular forms, mostly significant of the services required of them. The subdeacons and acolythists waited on the superior clergy during the different services: the exorcists, at their ordination, were furnished by the bishop with a book containing the forms for casting out devils; and these forms, with the laying on of their hands, were considered effectual towards those who were possessed. Besides these, there were the readers, the door-keepers, the psalm-singers, the grave-men, and the parabolani. The office of the latter was to watch over the sick. At Rome there was one bishop, forty-six priests, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two acolythists, fifty-two exorcists, readers, porters, etc., and upwards of fifteen hundred widows and infirm persons supported by the voluntary contributions of the Church.

The work of persecution seems to have been the whole employment of the magistrates in the reign of Decius; and their object was to vary and prolong the torture, so that impatience might effect that which sudden terror of death

could not accomplish. The sword, wild beasts, red-hot chairs, wheels for stretching human bodies, and iron talons to tear them, were all employed in turn ; but the faith of the operation of God triumphs over all outward things. One who was put to the torture exclaimed, "These are not torments which we suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are wholesome anointings!" The presence of the Lord with his suffering people brings them to the same conclusion, whether it is in the burning fiery furnace, or amidst all the torments that the powers of darkness can assist human cruelty to invent, or in the many painful circumstances and severe diseases that are the consequences of the entrance of sin into the world. A general view of universal history does not allow us to dwell on the interesting stories of individual martyrs ; but it may be well to notice that Origen suffered severely in this persecution, though his judges were most careful that the tortures should not destroy his life. He died in the seventieth year of his age, about the time that the emperor Decius perished. Many thousands were put to death in less than two years, and great numbers escaped to mountains and deserts, dreading their fellow creatures more than the savage beasts which they resembled. Amongst these, Paul, a young Christian in Lower Egypt, took refuge in the solitudes of a desert mountain ; and, finding there a retreat suited to his tastes, never returned to the society of his fellow-men, and died in his seclusion at the age of ninety. He was probably the first Christian hermit ; but immense numbers succeeded him. Some retired to gain a reputation for holiness and separation from the world, and, in their retirement, cherished that self-righteous spirit which is an abomination to the Lord ; but others sought a life of solitude, honestly desiring to enjoy communion with God, and to escape the corruptions that thickened around them. The latter class, however, showed great ignorance of the written word, and did not seem to be aware that their course was contrary to the mind of Him "who went about doing good," and who prayed not that his disciples might be taken out of the world, but that they might be kept from the evil. These words from the Lord's lips might have been a sufficient

guide to the wandering feet of these lovers of solitude : "As thou hast sent me into the world, *even so* have I sent them into the world." The great object of the believer's life on earth is that he may shine *as a light* in the world, *holding forth* the word of life (Phil. ii. 15).

It is to be lamented that after the Decian persecution regular forms were introduced, which were to be gone through by all who had sinned, before they could be restored into the bosom of the Church ; because it is quite possible to put on the appearance of humiliation, to "appear unto men to fast," with a heart entirely unhumbled before the Lord. Moreover, it is quite certain, that whom the Lord restores, He restores perfectly, and would have His people forgive and comfort (2 Cor. ii. 6—10 ; Luke xv.). The professed penitents, however, were now obliged to appear in sackcloth, or sackcloth and ashes ; and, in some churches, the men were required to shave their heads, and the women to cut off their hair, or to wear it in a dishevelled manner under a veil. They first prostrated themselves in the avenues of the church, asking permission to perform public penance ; and, in this situation, they were included in the first class of penitents,—the mourners. They were then permitted to enter the church, and received the title of hearers ; being allowed to hear the Scriptures and the sermon. The third order of penitents was that of the kneelers, so called because they were permitted to unite in the prayers offered on their account.

The term of penance was regulated by the bishop, according to the nature of the offence : in some cases years were considered necessary to make sufficient atonement. The last order of penitents were the *Bystanders*, who were allowed to be present at the Lord's supper, but excluded from a participation of the bread and wine ; and this was sometimes delayed till their dying day, when it was supposed to ensure their salvation.

Private confession of sin to the priests was first introduced about this period, as it was said there were many things it was not fit for the Church to hear ; in the Eastern, or Greek churches this practice was soon discontinued, but in the Western churches it became very general, and greatly increased the power and influence of the clergy.

CHAP. XXXIV.

VALERIAN, EMPEROR.—LABOURS OF CYPRIAN.—RENEWED PERSECUTION.—CAPTIVITY OF VALERIAN.—CHARACTER OF GALLIENUS.—THE NEW PLATONISTS.—RAVAGES OF THE FRANKS AND ALLEMANNI.—USURPERS OF THE PROVINCES.—GENERAL CALAMITIES.—STORY OF ODENATHUS AND ZENOBIA.

IN A.D. 253, the accession of Valerian gave a short respite to the suffering Christians; for, during the first three years of his reign, he not only protected them, but had his palace filled with them, and thus had an opportunity of hearing the truth and seeing the light, if they were faithful to their profession.

Valerian's natural character was so highly esteemed by ancient historians, that they said, if mankind had been at liberty to choose a master, he would no doubt have been the person for every one to fix upon. He began indeed with encouraging every appearance of good, and with efforts to reform the wicked; but it was soon found he was more fitted for a private station than for the head of the empire; and his want of judgment was conspicuous in making choice of his son, Gallienus, as joint-emperor. They reigned together seven years, and, during eight more, Gallienus was sole emperor. It was a period of almost uninterrupted calamity. Cyprian was so much alarmed by the state of the Church and the world, that he thought Antichrist was about to be revealed, and that the end was at hand; and, in this expectation, exhorted the brethren to watching, fasting, and prayer, saying, these were the heavenly arms in such times of danger. The troubles of the African Christians were increased by the bursting forth of the Numidian barbarians, by whom many of them were taken captive. Cyprian was very earnest in exhorting the Carthaginian Christians to ransom their brethren; and gave all that he could spare to assist them in this act of love. He also made great exertions to restore a pure communion of saints; and called a council of sixty-six African bishops to help him in his attempted revival of early discipline.

Several bishops, who had fallen away during the persecution, were at this time deprived of all power; and it was proposed that the bishops should be chosen in the presence of the whole church, that they might be publicly approved or rejected, as of old.

In A.D. 254, Cyprian was accused of ruling too absolutely; and a painful contest arose between him and the bishop at Rome, as to whether it was necessary for persons recovered from heresy to be re-baptised. Cyprian thought it *was* needful: but this opinion was warmly opposed by the Roman bishop; and he would not converse with the brethren who held it, or show them any hospitality. Chastening had not as yet yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness; and the scourge was again uplifted, so that Rome and Carthage again flowed with the blood of the martyrs. The sudden change in Valerian's disposition towards the Christians, which took place in the third year of his reign, is attributed to the arts of Macrianus, a favourite magician; however this may be, he continued their bitter enemy to the end of his reign.

During this persecution, the prefect of Rome, having heard a report of the riches of that church, desired that everything should be delivered up. Laurentius, the chief deacon, asked for three days of preparation; and, at the end of that time, invited the prefect to come and see a court full of the golden vessels of God. On his arrival, he was shown the numbers of poor people who were provided for by the bounty of the richer brethren, these being the only vessels for the treasures of the church. The disappointed prefect gave way to his fury, and commanded that Laurentius should be broiled to death before a slow fire. The martyr suffered in silence, and when one side of his body was burned, he desired to have the other side turned towards the fire; and this being done, he prayed earnestly for the conversion of the people of Rome till he died.

Cyprian retired for some time and desired the brethren to keep quiet, and not deliver themselves up rashly to the Pagans, as some had formerly done in the heat of their zeal to obtain the honours of martyrdom. He told them it was for those who were seized to speak. "The Lord who

dwells in us will speak in that hour. Confession rather than profession is our duty." Cyprian was soon after called to the trial, and witnessed a good confession. The multitude who loved him followed him to the place of execution; and, when he was beheaded, some, in the fervency of their respect and affection, pressed forwards to catch his blood in handkerchiefs and napkins. This circumstance, taken in connection with the undue admiration of the martyrs already noticed, shows the growth of that man-exalting disposition, which afterwards led to such deplorable results. It was not the blood of the corruptible man, but the grace of God in him, that ought to have been valued.

The persecution ceased in A. D. 260, when Valerian went into Mesopotamia to try to recover the provinces seized by Sapor, in the reign of Gallus. There, it is supposed, Macrianus, the magician, betrayed him into a disadvantageous position, and thus caused his defeat. Then, being invited to hold a private interview with the king of Persia, he was never suffered to escape from his power, for Sapor not only treacherously seized his person, but carried him in triumph through his empire, exposing him to the insults of his subjects. During seven years of captivity, Valerian suffered greatly; and, it is even said, the Persian king used him as a footstool whenever he mounted his horse, saying, the bowed back of a Roman emperor was the proudest monument of victory that had ever been beheld. Some historians say that Valerian died in the seventy-first year of his age, overwhelmed by the hardships he endured; and the Persian king, unwilling to lose the memorial of his superiority, caused his body to be flayed, and had the skin dressed and dyed red to hang up in one of the temples. Some even say that Valerian was flayed alive, and consider his sufferings as a judgment for the rejection of the truth that he had heard, and the persecution of those whom he knew to be righteous.

It is to be observed that after the captivity of Valerian, the Christians were not only left in peace, but protected by law for the space of forty years, that is, nearly to the close of the third century.

Gallienus was left sole emperor in A. D. 260; and, even

if he were not glad to get rid of his father's control, as some imagined, it is certain he made no attempt to recover the captive emperor. The weakness of his character may account for this : he was as unfit to carry on a foreign war, as to govern his own people ; and, instead of turning his attention to the duties of an emperor, he employed himself in learning arts and sciences utterly useless in his situation. In this manner he became a ready orator, a skilful gardener, and an excellent cook ! He spent his time in conversation with philosophers, or in trifling pursuits and licentious pleasures. It is not surprising that the reign of such an emperor should be marked by the inroads of all the warlike nations on the frontiers of the empire, and by the attempts of a number of usurpers in the different provinces. Yet, amidst the general distress and poverty, Gallienus lived in wasteful magnificence, and celebrated mock triumphs, though his generals were defeated on all sides. He carelessly asked if Rome would be ruined without linen from Egypt, or Arras cloth from Gaul, when he heard of the invasion of the one province, and the rebellion of the other. The following anecdote is also told as illustrative of his fondness for jesting. His wife had been deceived by her jeweller, and the man was condemned as guilty of fraud, and sentenced to be exposed in the amphitheatre. The emperor went thither with a large concourse of people ; and, just as the trembling criminal was expecting some wild beast to be let loose upon him, a harmless fowl appeared. This was the contrivance of Gallienus, who playfully said, it was fit that the man should be deceived, as he had deceived others.

It has been often remarked that, under some of the worst of the emperors, the Christians suffered the least : for the Lord reigneth, as King of kings, and can protect his people from injury under any circumstances. At the beginning of his reign, Gallienus permitted the bishops, who had been exiled by his father, to return to their homes, and restored the burial places that had been taken away from the Christians in different parts. It appears that he looked upon the Christians as a new sect of philosophers, and protected them because he took a pride in supporting every kind of knowledge, and in encouraging liberty of thinking, wishing

to be considered the patron of philosophy. The new Platonists now began to attract still more attention; and their many fancies, especially their pretended communion with unseen spirits, charmed persons of meditative minds. But their powers were wasted in endless disputes about the nature of the human mind, and the secrets of the invisible world.

Plotinus, the head of the Alexandrian school, obtained great respect in the world for his learning and gravity of manners. Persons of the highest rank revered him; and the emperor was on the point of giving him a ruined city in Campania for the establishment of a Platonic republic, when he died. This man pretended, like Socrates, to have a demon or familiar spirit which instructed him how to act; and he was looked upon by his disciples as something heavenly. When he was dying, he said, "I am endeavouring to rejoin that which is divine, in the divine part of the universe." How different to the simple happy confidence of Stephen, when he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Porphyry, the most celebrated scholar of Plotinus, only became acquainted with Christianity to despise and oppose it; and, as he was one of the emperor's most intimate friends, Gallienus had little opportunity for considering the truth. During a dreadful plague, which afflicted the empire for many years at this time, Porphyry tried to persuade the people that the spread of the Christian religion occasioned the general suffering; "Men forget," said he, "that Æsculapius and the other gods no longer dwell among them; for, since Jesus was honoured, no one has received any public benefit from the gods." Even this bitter enemy bore witness to the firmness of those who believed in Jesus, by relating, in the way of satire, that when a man inquired at the oracle of Apollo, how he could make his wife give up Christianity, the reply was, "It is easier, perhaps, to write on water, or to fly in the air, than to reclaim her. Leave her in her folly to hymn, in a faint mournful voice, the dead God who publicly suffered death from judges of singular wisdom." Thus was it common for the Gentiles to account "Christ crucified," foolishness, and to set at nought the doctrine of the resurrection.

It is most plainly set forth in Scripture, that national sins

are visited by national calamities, not only upon the Jews, but upon the Gentiles also; and the Romans were, doubtless, included among the nations to whom that solemn message was sent, "Ye shall not be unpunished." And again, "Thus saith the Lord, Lo, I begin to bring evil on the city that is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished?" (see Jer. xxv. 15—29). The power of Rome had been used to punish the city that was called by the name of the Lord; and the time at length came when other powers were used to humble the pride of Rome.

These new powers come forwards very strikingly in the reign of Gallienus. First, there was the confederation of German tribes, who called themselves the Franks or Freemen; they were distinguished for their love of liberty, fickle disposition, and disregard of the most solemn treaties. They overran Gaul and Spain for the sake of plunder; and, by means of some Spanish vessels, reached Mauritania, to the astonishment of the Africans who had never seen such people before. Another confederation of Germans, who called themselves Allemanni (*all-men*), had frequently annoyed the Romans, and, whenever they were driven back, returned again; but it was not till after the death of Decius that they succeeded in ravaging Gaul, and forcing their way into Italy. Valerian being then in the East, and Gallienus absent in another direction, the senate, on hearing the Allemanni were already at Ravenna, led out the Prætorians with a multitude of armed plebeians, and drove away the invaders. But Gallienus, at his return, jealous of their success, was displeased at the manner in which Italy had been defended, and passed a law forbidding the senators to take up any military employment: from that time they gave themselves up to luxurious ease, and gladly remained in their splendid palaces. The mode, however, in which the emperor sought for security was extremely displeasing to the proud Romans; for he chose to marry Pipa, the beautiful daughter of one of the barbarian kings. His subjects would never call her his wife, but contemptuously gave her the name of his concubine.

While the Franks and the Allemanni attacked the Western provinces, the Goths, in three different invasions, destroyed

many cities in Asia Minor, massacred great numbers of the provincials, and, at last, over-ran Greece. The Athenians vainly tried to retard their progress ; and they were on the borders of Italy before Gallienus was alive to his danger. These powerful barbarians were overcome partly by force, partly by bribery ; and great numbers of them entered into the Roman service for the sake of the pay. One of their chiefs was presented with the consular ornaments ; and having thus formed a kind of friendship with the Romans, the rest of the Goths returned home. It was in this invasion that the famous temple of Diana, at Ephesus, was finally destroyed. It had been regarded as a holy place during the successive empires of Persia, Greece, and Rome ; and, after being destroyed seven times, a new temple had been raised on the same spot, and was considered the most beautiful building in the world.

Nineteen pretenders to the empire arose during the reign of Gallienus ; and, though the name of tyrants was applied to them, it was only because the ancients used the word to express the unlawful possession of absolute power ; for many of them were excellent and humane rulers, and far better qualified to reign than Gallienus. But he alone was supported by Rome and the senate, acknowledged by law, and called emperor in history. Not one of the temporary monarchs lived a peaceful life, or died a natural death, though all received, for a season, every honour their respective armies, or provinces, could bestow. The lieutenants, who had respected Valerian, did not esteem his son, but they were mostly forced into open rebellion by their discontented troops. One of them, on the day he was proclaimed Augustus, said to his soldiers, " You have lost a useful commander, and made a very wretched emperor." Though Gallienus made no personal exertion, he sent forth the severest edicts against the rebels, and desired that his rivals and their supporters should be everywhere destroyed. One of his violent letters, concerning the usurper of Illyria, runs thus : " Remember, that Ingenius was made emperor ! Tear, kill, hew in pieces, etc. I write to you with my own hand, and I would inspire you with my own feelings." The slaughter and misery that followed the attempts of all these

usurpers cannot be described ; for, when they fell, their armies and provinces suffered dreadfully from the emperor's vengeance.

The invasions of the barbarians, and internal rebellions, were not the only miseries of the reign of Gallienus. Great tumults in Sicily caused a scarcity at Rome, as the city was chiefly supplied with corn from that island ; the Isaurians, a people of Asia-Minor who inhabited a tract of land girt with mountains, fought fiercely for an independence which they retained for centuries ; and a civil war raged at Alexandria for nearly twelve years. Some trifling cause provoked its three classes of inhabitants against each other ; and all intercourse was cut off between the several quarters of the city : the strong buildings were converted into fortresses, the streets were stained with blood, and a great part of the city was in ruins before peace was restored. Famine and plague were the natural consequences of such continued war and disorder ; and every province throughout the empire was in turn affected. At one time five thousand died daily at Rome ; and, in Africa, immense numbers perished. In Alexandria, it was calculated that half the inhabitants died, and some towns were entirely depopulated. Whole families were often swept away ; and, in Carthage, the bodies lay in the streets. But whilst the Pagans neglected the attendance of the sick and the burial of the dead, through fear of contagion, the Christians showed their superiority by attending to both. It is to be observed that they necessarily suffered from all the different calamities that befell the empire.

It is supposed that, in the course of these few years, half the human family, throughout the Roman empire, perished, either through war, pestilence, or famine. Some historians have added accounts of inundations, earthquakes, strange meteors, preternatural darkness, etc. but it is probable, in the agitated state of the public mind, there was a tendency to exaggeration.*

* The prophecies of the Revelation have been frequently referred to, as having their accomplishment in these and other past events. The writer of this volume does not feel satisfied thus to link the prophecy with the history of the past—though believing they are in

Gallienus was at last roused from his inactivity by hearing that Aureolus, the emperor of the legions on the Upper Danube, was about to attack Rome; but while besieging the pretender in the city of Milan, to which he had retreated, he was killed before the walls by some unknown hand, A. D. 268.

The singular story of Odenathus, to whom alone Gallienus allowed the title of Augustus, and who was also owned by the senate as the emperor of the East, must be added here.

Amid the barren deserts of Arabia, there are fertile spots, like those in the African deserts, which look like green islands surrounded by an ocean of sand. On the most remarkable of the Arabian oases stood Tadmor or Palmyra; both the Syriac and Latin names signifying a multitude of palm-trees. The air was pure, springs of fresh water abounded, and the soil was capable of producing corn and fruit. This favoured situation, it appears, was first taken advantage of by King Solomon (2 Chron. viii. 4); and being at a convenient distance between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean, it became the resting-place of the caravans from India. Palmyra at length increased into a large city, and was long allowed to remain independent, as both the Romans and Parthians profited by the commerce carried on by its merchants. After the victories of Trajan, however, it came within the limits of the Roman empire; and for a hundred and fifty years it flourished as a colony. It is supposed that the surprising ruins of Grecian architecture, still scattered over an extent of many miles, are the remains of temples and palaces which were raised at Palmyra during this period of prosperity and peace.

At the time that Sapor triumphed over Valerian, his pride rose to such a height that he was ready to trample every thing under his feet; and when Odenathus, the noblest and richest citizen of Palmyra, sent him a respectful letter, with a long train of camels, laden with costly presents, the haughty conqueror desired that the gifts might be thrown

a manner connected—having felt more fully persuaded that the Revelation, in its fullest sense, comes under the head of unfulfilled prophecy.

into the Euphrates ; and sent back the messengers to tell Odenathus, that unless he would come and kneel before his throne with his hands bound, destruction would quickly fall upon himself and his country. On receiving this message, Odenathus quickly gathered a band of courageous men from Palmyra and the neighbouring villages in Syria and Arabia, and so troubled the Persian hosts by hanging about them and spoiling their tents, that Sapor was obliged to retreat. After such an exploit, Odenathus was considered to have a right to reign over the countries he had delivered : and though he always behaved with respect to Gallienus, he was absolute master in his own dominions. At his death he left the empire of the East to his wife Zenobia, who had by her talents and courage assisted him to obtain it. She had been his companion at all times, whether in hunting the wild animals of the desert, or at the head of his troops ; and instead of using a covered carriage, according to the Eastern fashion, she rode on horseback in a military dress, or marched for miles on foot. Twice they had together pursued Sapor as far as Ctesiphon ; and the armies they had commanded, as well as the provinces they had delivered, would own no other sovereigns.

Both the climate and the customs of the East tended to keep the female sex in a state of indolence, retirement, and subjection ; and Zenobia was the only woman since the days of Semiramis that had attempted to reign in Asia. This queen is said to have had all the beauty of Cleopatra, from whom she claimed descent, without any of her vices. A naturally good understanding was strengthened by exercise ; and she devoted much time to study, having the help of Longinus, the most celebrated critic of his age. The Syriac and Coptic languages were not more familiar to her than the Greek tongue : she read Homer and Plato with her tutor, and was not ignorant of Latin ; and it is said she made an abridgment of Oriental history for her own use.

Zenobia governed Palmyra, Syria, and Egypt for more than five years, and defeated the Roman general sent to recover these provinces. The neighbouring states of Arabia, Armenia, and Persia sought her friendship ; and she confidently hoped to leave an independent kingdom to her sons.

With this expectation she gave them a Latin education, and often showed them to her troops clothed in imperial purple : but she alone wore the diadem, and was paid the same adoration as the Persian kings received from their subjects.

It would be wrong to judge on Christian principles, those who are utterly ignorant of the truth of the Gospel ; and it appears that though this fighting queen was not entirely without such knowledge, it was too far corrupted to have any power over her.

It was probably Zenobia's philosophical curiosity that led her to ask for the instructions of Paul, the bishop at Antioch : and she was so delighted by the worldly kind of religion he had invented, that she showed her attachment to it by supporting his authority as long as she continued queen of the East. Paul had been quite a poor man, and grew rich by dishonest practices, making a gain of the profession of godliness. He preferred the title of judge to that of bishop, and entangled the brethren in law-suits that he might get money by deciding between them. His manners were exceedingly haughty : he used a tribunal or lofty throne like a magistrate, and when he went abroad was attended by numerous guards. His doctrine was as bad as his conduct : for he affirmed that Christ was but a mere man like himself, and desired that the psalms should not be sung to the Lord, but in his own honour. He reviled those who would not applaud him in the Church assemblies, and surrounded himself with great pomp and luxury. Paul, with his priests and deacons, lived in gross sin ; but, though many groaned in secret under these abominations, all were afraid of his power.

Two general councils of bishops examined into the case of Paul ; but while he was protected by Zenobia nothing could be done : and he continued in possession of the church at Antioch and the house belonging to it. His heretical doctrines and wicked practices were, however, universally condemned ; and this general indignation proved the remaining soundness and zeal of the Church.

CHAP. XXXV.

CLAUDIUS, EMPEROR.—WAR WITH THE GOTHs.—AURELIAN, EMPEROR.—VICTORY OVER ZENOBIA.—AURELIAN'S TRIUMPH.—DEATH OF AURELIAN.—NO EMPEROR FOR EIGHT MONTHS.

CLAUDIUS, a general who had been high in favour with Decius and his successors, was chosen emperor, A. D. 286, as soon as Gallienus was slain; and succeeded in overcoming Aureolus. He then left the senate the power of punishing the disturbers of the public peace, and reserved to himself the exercise of mercy in order to win the general esteem. While pursuing this course, an old woman threw herself at his feet, complaining that one of the late emperor's generals had taken away all her little property. The guilty person was Claudius himself; and he showed that the poor woman had not trusted his mercy in vain, by owning his fault, and giving her a far larger possession than that of which she had been deprived.

It is a remarkable circumstance that there was a female ruler in the West as well as in the East at this period; Victoria having succeeded many usurpers as the sovereign of the fierce legions and enslaved provincials of Gaul and Spain. She bore the titles of "Augusta" and "Mother of the Camps," and her power lasted as long as her life. Two Roman generals, Marius and Tetricus, were successively made emperors by her means; and the latter was suspected of having some concern in her death. Claudius was obliged to leave the empire of the East to Zenobia, and to allow Tetricus to reign in the West, as the Goths had again appeared in Greece, 320,000 in number. During a severe winter this immense multitude was confined to the mountainous region, by the Roman troops, and greatly lessened by famine, pestilence, and the sword. In these circumstances, a great part of the barbarians submitted, and were received into the army, or sold as slaves; but a small and desperate band overcame all obstacles and returned home. The number of women, and the immense quantity of cattle, brought by the Goths, make it probable that they intended to establish themselves in Greece. Claudius obtained the

surname of Gothicus in honour of his victories; but his triumph was short, as he died of the same plague that had been so fatal to the barbarians, A. D. 270.

Aurelian, a general recommended by the dying Claudius, was at once received as emperor; and his first act was to make a treaty with the Goths, to which they were willing to consent. The Romans, on their part, resigned the province of Dacia to the Goths, on condition that they would supply two thousand soldiers to help them in time of need, and forbear to disturb the peace of the empire. The Gothic chiefs gave up their children as hostages; and Aurelian, to secure the friendship of this formidable nation, gave their daughters in marriage to his chief officers, and trained their sons for his own service.

The new emperor was now called to carry on a dangerous warfare with the Allemanni, who had again entered Italy, and were daily expected at the gates of Rome. On this occasion, every kind of idolatrous ceremony was performed in the hope of saving the city; and the priests, with their sacrifices and processions, had such power over the minds of the terrified Romans that they were strengthened to resist the barbarians, and succeeded in driving them out of the country. But the fear of another attack induced Aurelian to fortify the city with a strong wall twenty-one miles in compass. Such a precaution proved the declining state of the empire; for hitherto the legions had so ably defended the frontiers that an attack upon the capital had never been contemplated.

Tetricus, the nominal monarch of Gaul and Spain, finding himself only the slave of a lawless army, wrote privately to Aurelian, offering to deliver up the provinces to him if he would save him from the fury of the soldiers. The emperor immediately put forth a pretended declaration of war against the usurper of the West; and when their armies met, Tetricus deserted his astonished troops: they continued, however, for some time, to fight without a leader, but were in the end obliged to yield to Aurelian. Delighted with the prospect of restoring unity to the empire, Aurelian now turned his thoughts towards the provinces governed by Zenobia; and sending Probus, one of his bravest generals,

to regain Egypt, he himself led an army against the queen of the East. They met twice in open battle, and it was only after a second defeat that Zenobia retreated within the strong walls of Palmyra. Thither she was pursued by Aurelian; but he suffered much from the Arabs, in crossing the desert, and was soon discouraged by the obstinate defence of the city. He was himself wounded by a dart: and his troops were dreadfully injured by the fire brands and dangerous missiles thrown by engines from the walls of Palmyra. In this situation, he offered the queen an honourable retreat, and the citizens all their former privileges, on condition of an immediate surrender. But Zenobia proudly refused, hoping that famine might compel the Romans to withdraw, and that the king of Persia, her ally, would soon come to her help. She was, however, disappointed: the Roman camp was supplied with provisions from Syria, as that province had already submitted, and Aurelian was joined by the victorious Probus on his return from the recovered province of Egypt. The death of Sapor, and the disturbed state of Persia, had cut off every expectation from that quarter; and Zenobia, mounted on one of her swiftest dromedaries, made her escape from Palmyra. She had reached the banks of the Euphrates, a distance of sixty miles, when she was overtaken by Aurelian's light horsemen, and brought as a captive to the emperor's feet.

The angry soldiers desired that she should be instantly executed; and, to save her own life, she dishonourably threw the blame on her counsellors, falsely affirming that female weakness had yielded to bad advice. Her faithful servant Longinus, and many others, were sacrificed in her stead; and the queen of the East, after appearing at Aurelian's triumph, easily sank into the position of an honourable Roman matron. The emperor gave her a beautiful villa at Tivoli, twenty miles from Rome, where she lived in ease and luxury till her death.

The citizens of Palmyra were treated with great mildness; and Aurelian, having taken possession of their arms and treasures, withdrew from the city, leaving in it a garrison of only six hundred men. He had already crossed the straits between Europe and Asia, when he heard that the

Palmyreans had revolted and massacred the Roman garrison. Aurelian immediately turned back; and, by a letter of his own, it is proved that old men, women, children, and peasants became victims to his wrath, as well as the defenders of Palmyra. From this period, A.D. 273, that stately city gradually sunk into a miserable village; and now only a few families are dwelling there, in mud huts which are raised in the spacious court of a magnificent temple.

In little more than three years Aurelian had re-united all the dissevered provinces to the empire, and restored general tranquillity; and the pomp of his triumph, at his return to Rome, could scarcely be exceeded. Twenty elephants and four tigers, with many curious foreign animals, and a body of sixteen hundred gladiators, preceded the long train of captives. Tetricus and his son, the joint emperors of the West, appeared in their purple robes, and Zenobia walked in golden fetters, almost fainting beneath the weight of jewels about her person. Goths, Vandals, Sarmatians, Allemanni, Franks, Gauls, Syrians, and Egyptians followed in the procession; and ten Gothic heroines, taken in arms, added to the novelty of this singular exhibition. The rich spoils of the Asiatic nations, and the costly wardrobe of the queen of the East, were spread before the gazing multitude: and ambassadors from Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, Bactriana, India, and, it is added, China, attracted attention by their rich and singular dresses. Aurelian himself, in a chariot that had belonged to a Gothic king, accompanied by the chief magistrates, officers, and senators, closed the procession. The emperor treated Tetricus and his son as generously as Zenobia; he restored to them their senatorial rank and fortune, and gave to Tetricus the government of a district in Italy. It is related that he afterwards built a magnificent palace near Rome, and when it was finished invited his benefactor to supper. Aurelian was flattered and surprised by seeing, at his entrance, a picture representing the singular history of his host. Tetricus and his son being painted in the act of offering to Aurelian the sceptre of Gaul, while he gave them in return their senatorial robes.

The rest of Aurelian's reign was marked by cruelty, for he governed with severity the people whom he had ap-

parently saved from ruin. It is said, the prisons were crowded and the executioners fatigued with their work; but, it is certain, crime and iniquity of every kind abounded, and it was no easy thing to execute judgment and to do justly, in such times. The great object of Aurelian's adoration was the sun: his mother had been an inferior priestess in the temple of the sun, and he believed that he owed his success to the favour of this imaginary god. Thus, when all the temples in Rome shone with his offerings, that of the sun received fifteen thousand pounds of gold as a proof of his devotion. His passionate idolatry would have led him to persecute the Christians; but his death prevented the execution of his designs.* In October, A.D. 274, Aurelian led his armies into the East, with the intention of renewing the war with Persia; but, while he was in the neighbourhood of Byzantium, he was killed, under the following circumstances. He had threatened one of his secretaries with death as the punishment of his extortion; and this officer, knowing that his master rarely threatened in vain, determined to save his own life at the expense of the emperor's. Counterfeiting Aurelian's hand-writing, he drew out a long list of persons devoted to death, including the chief officers of the army; and this paper he presented to them, pretending he had accidentally discovered it. According to his expectation, they immediately plotted together to destroy Aurelian, and he fell by the hand of a general whom he had loved and trusted. This was in January, A. D. 275.

The artifice of the secretary was soon discovered. The deceived officers caused him to be executed, and showed their sorrow in bitter lamentations over the murdered emperor. His funeral honours were celebrated with extraordinary pomp; and it was agreed to send a letter to Rome, to the following effect:—

“The brave and fortunate armies, to the senate and people of Rome. The crime of one man and the error of many

* Aurelian had so far favoured the Christians at the time of his conquests in the East, that, when they referred to him the case of Paul of Samosata, he desired the bishops to settle the matter as they thought right; and the heretic was consequently expelled.

have deprived us of the late emperor. May it please you, venerable lords and fathers, to place him in the number of the gods, and to appoint a successor whom your judgment shall declare worthy of the purple. None of those whose guilt or misfortune have contributed to our loss shall ever reign over us."

This letter was written in February; and during eight months the senate refused to appoint, and the army to elect, a successor to the empire. Such a singular contest had never taken place before. An historian has remarked, it seemed as if all parties were tired of contest, and afraid to excite fresh disturbances. Though the Roman world was without a master, the generals and magistrates went on with their usual duties as if they had been under the control of Aurelian, and no one attempted to obtain the sovereign power.

It seemed as if no mind towered above the rest; or, it may be, the violent deaths of so many emperors, kept down the desires of the most aspiring.

CHAP. XXXVI.

ROMAN ROADS.—PROGRESS OF CIVILISATION.—COMMERCE.—
CITIES OF ASIA MINOR.—ROMAN SLAVES.—REMARKS ON
SLAVERY.—MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL DECAY.—ANCIENT
ITALY, SPAIN, SWITZERLAND, AND BRITAIN.—MORAL
STATE OF THE ROMANS.

DURING this singular interval of tranquillity we can take a general survey of the empire, as we have already had a slight view of the capital. The public highways issuing from the Forum—the great place of public business in the centre of Rome—were carried through Italy and the provinces, even to the frontiers of the empire; and no country was considered thoroughly subdued till this means of communication was established, and the passage of the legions made easy. The Roman roads generally ran in a straight line from city to city, with little regard to public or private property, or any obstacle that lay in the way. The middle part of the road was raised by several layers of sand and

gravel, and paved with large stones strongly cemented together; indeed, so solid was the structure of these highways, that they may now be traced, even in our own country, after a lapse of fifteen centuries. It is calculated that the line of communication through the empire, from the north-western point, the wall of Antoninus, to the south-eastern point, Jerusalem, extended four thousand and eighty Roman miles. The road was marked by mile-stones; and post-houses were built at regular intervals of five or six miles: at these, horses were always kept in readiness; and, by means of such relays, the emperor's messengers could easily travel a hundred miles a day. Private persons were sometimes permitted to use these helps in making a journey. The imperial mandates were almost as easily conveyed by sea. Vessels were in waiting at the port of Ostia, only sixteen miles from Rome; and, with a favourable wind, they might reach Alexandria in nine or ten days.

The light of civilisation, as subsequently that of Christianity, appears to have passed, like the light of the natural sun, from the east to the west. For when Britain was in a state of barbarism and heathen darkness, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt were highly civilised, and in the bright light of the morning of Christianity: and now, whilst we are enjoying all the benefits of civilisation, and catching the brightest of the evening rays of the Gospel, these countries are in comparative barbarism and midnight gloom. Even the ruins of Roman architecture, which are seen in Turkey, Arabia, and Africa, appear like super-human works to the present indolent inhabitants who see them scattered over their fields and plains.

The arts and luxuries of life had been known for ages before their introduction into Europe; and it was commerce with Asia and Egypt that gave to the Romans the productions of warmer climates, and the fruits of the industry of more ingenious nations. Eastern commerce was chiefly carried on by means of an Egyptian fleet sent yearly to Ceylon, to which island the Asiatic merchants brought their goods: but as the Arabians and Indians were contented with the produce and manufactures of their own countries, the Romans were obliged to give them gold and silver for their merchandise.

A pound of silk was valued at a pound of gold, and immense sums were spent in the purchase of precious stones, and also in obtaining the great variety of aromatic drugs consumed in heathen worship, or at funerals. Babylonian carpets, and other costly manufactures, were also brought from the East to adorn the Roman palaces. Almost all our flowers, herbs, and fruits, came from the eastern regions; and as the apple was the familiar fruit of Italy, the Romans gave the common name of apple (*poma*) to the apricot, peach, pomegranate, citron, and orange, distinguishing them by the names of the country from which they came. Homer mentions the vine as growing wild in Sicily in his days; and the art of making wine was so perfected a thousand years after, that Pliny remarks two-thirds of the best wines were from the vineyards of Italy. The vine was introduced into Gaul by the Romans; and it is supposed the vineyards of Burgundy were first planted in the days of the Antonines.

The olive was not known in Italy till two hundred years after the foundation of Rome; but after being naturalised there, it was carried, by the conquering Romans, into Spain and Gaul.

In the time of the Cæsars, Asia Minor contained five hundred populous cities, enriched by the good providence of God, and adorned by the arts of man. Eleven of these cities disputed with each other the honour of building a temple to Tiberius, for all of them had independent revenues. The senate decided that four of them, including Laodicea, were unequal to the burden: yet the wealth of Laodicea is proved by the ruins that remain, and by the fact that a private citizen left to the treasury £400,000 shortly before the contest. The prosperity of this city may have been a circumstance prejudicial to the church planted there, and it declined sooner than any of the churches of Asia. Pergamus, Smyrna, and Ephesus, each pretended to the title of the capital of Asia; but these cities were very inferior to Antioch and Alexandria: in fact, the capitals of Syria and Egypt almost equalled Rome itself.

The wealth of the Romans was often calculated by the number of slaves they could employ; and in a single palace,

in Rome, four hundred such servants were often to be found. These slaves consisted originally of the captives taken in war; and while the supply was great, by reason of foreign conquests, their lives were considered of little value, and they were often treated with great cruelty. But if a slave made himself useful or agreeable to his master he might be rewarded with freedom in a few years, though the disgrace of servitude was not forgotten till the third or fourth generation. The laws of Adrian and the Antonines greatly improved the condition of slaves; and the decrease of the supply from abroad made them more valuable property. The freed slave might obtain the rights of a private citizen, but was shut out by law from any civil or military office; and his sons, however great their wealth or talents, could not obtain a seat in the senate. As an instance of the riches of this class, it is said that a freed-man, in the reign of Augustus, after he had lost a good part of his fortune in the civil wars, left behind him 3600 yoke of oxen, 250,000 head of smaller cattle, and 4116 slaves.

Slavery is one among the multitude of proofs that it is not in man to love his neighbour as himself: for there is nothing perhaps that the human mind so naturally rebels against as servitude. Man was originally given dominion over every living thing, but not over his fellow. After the fall, the husband was to rule over the wife (Gen. iii. 16), and the elder over the younger (iv. 7). The intention of this kind of rule was blessing, the stronger being more fitted to rule the weaker. . But in the first mention of slavery, we find it to be the consequence of a curse, on account of sin (ix. 25). Canaan had sinned, and was to be the servant, or slave of his brethren. Israel, as the peculiar people of God, the holy nation, were permitted to buy bondmen and bondmaids of the heathen (probably the descendants of Canaan) round about them. And if they were faithfully walking as God's people, their service was a privilege and not a hardship; and their slaves were brought into circumstances of peculiar blessing. The permission, therefore, given to Israel, to buy slaves of the heathen, can no more be taken as a general authority for man to enslave his fellow, than the wars of Israel, as God's

righteous executioners, can be taken as an argument for the lawfulness of war. Yet as God, in his good providence, loves to bring good out of evil, so it appears that the great evil of slavery, prevented the greater evil of the careless destruction of human life: for in ancient times war would have been far more bloody if men had not spared their enemies for the sake of their services.

It is to be remembered that when the Epistles were written, all servants were slaves—their master's property, and not free to serve them only so long as they pleased. But this, which to the natural mind appears so great an evil, and which was considered among the Romans such a disgrace that the first object of the slave was to get free—this state of bondage might become a matter of indifference to one who was called in the Lord. The Christian slave was exhorted not to care for his earthly calling, but rather to use it to the glory of God, considering his heavenly calling as the Lord's free-man. He was also to be subject to his master (Greek, *despot*) with all fear, whether he were good and gentle, or the reverse. The Spirit of God never leads those in whom he dwells to assert that *right* to freedom, or any other blessing, which the natural spirit so strongly maintains: he rather leads them to abide in their place, though it be a place of suffering, and makes them prefer the lowest position, even the state of subjection, as that in which there are the fewest spiritual dangers and temptations.

It is very needful to remember this, in the present day, when so much is said about "the rights of man," "the blessings of independence," "equality," etc. This is the working of Satan, who would lift men up with pride that they may fall into his condemnation; and not the working of the Holy Spirit, who humbles and breaks down *now*, those who shall be hereafter exalted with Jesus at the right hand of God.

It must here be added that the bondmen and the free are all one in Jesus Christ: therefore Paul could say to Philemon, when he asked him to receive back his former slave, Onesimus, "not now as a servant; but above a servant, a brother beloved." And yet, in the wisdom of the Spirit, lest there should be any mistake with regard to this new

relationship between the believing servant and the believing master, the apostle again writes, "they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, *because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are believing and beloved, partakers of the benefit*" (1 Tim. vi. 2).

Having digressed, in order to refer to the Scriptures on a subject which seemed to call for such illumination, we will finish our slight survey of the state of the Roman empire.

As outward magnificence, with the ease and adorning of the body, became the principal matters of thought and interest to the civilised Romans, there was much less of intellectual beauty displayed among them; and their moral character sank lower and lower. Vice walked hand in hand with luxury; and, under their joint influence, the minds and bodies of the Romans evidently declined in strength. The Roman soldiers were originally free-men, who chose a military life and fought for their own pleasure and honour; but the numerous armies of the empire were now composed of hired provincials and barbarians; the latter being more capable of enduring the fatigues of war, and more fitted to meet their fellow-barbarians than the enfeebled Romans. Italy is said to have contained eleven hundred and ninety-seven towns and cities in the days of the Antonines; and the immense population was chiefly supported by the harvests of Sicily and the provinces. The wealthy and luxurious Italians furnished but a small proportion of soldiers, and their fields, vineyards, and pleasure gardens were cultivated by slaves. Spain seems to have been greater as a Roman province, than it is now as a kingdom. Pliny numbered three hundred and sixty cities there during his government; and the elegance of Italy was soon imitated in this wealthy country. There were twelve hundred towns in Gaul; but most of them, not excepting Paris, were in a state of semi-barbarism. Switzerland (Helvetia) had many cities and fortresses; and, in Germany, civilisation had chiefly extended along the banks of the great rivers on which the cities were built, while the immense forests were scarcely penetrated. The woods of Britain had been gradually cleared to make room for towns

and cultivated fields : the southern part of the island was traversed by straight military roads which communicated with all the chief towns and connected them together ; and these roads may be distinctly traced at this day. York (*Eboracum*) was the seat of government, and chosen as such probably for the defence of that part of the country which was most exposed to danger from the incursion of the unsubdued people of the north ; but London (*Londinum*) was a place of commerce, and Bath (*Aquæ Calidæ*) was in repute on account of its salutary waters.

As early as the reign of Decius, the Gospel was extensively preached in Gaul as far as Lyons and Vienne, which were in those days considered out-of-the-way places. At Toulouse, Tours, Arles, Narbonne, and Paris, churches had been gathered ; and those of Lyons and Vienne were distinguished for their faithfulness. The Gospel soon spread into those parts of Germany nearest to France. Cologne, Metz, and Treves were first favoured by the light. Some have supposed that the British isles were evangelised at the same time : but this opinion is only grounded on the circumstance of their nearness to France. Some Asiatic teachers, during the confusions of this century, went to preach the Gospel among the Goths who had settled in the province of Thrace ; and many received the glad tidings with great joy. Except where the light of the Gospel had dawned, the inhabitants of the Roman empire were living in the indulgence of excesses, and unnatural vices which were unknown to the ferocious barbarians beyond their limits. So true is it that high civilisation, science, and education, do not in themselves produce the moral results which are expected from them. The Roman nobles either lived as atheists, or had their minds filled with gross superstitions. The common people were sunk in the deepest ignorance, and the learned men were occupied in fruitless studies. The philosophers, who were always teaching their scholars the nature of virtue, neither understood nor practised it. They only addressed themselves to the higher classes, and seemed to forget that the poor and the slaves, who were trampled under foot, belonged to the same species. They did not teach the duty of kindness to inferiors ; and

an almshouse or a hospital was a provision unknown throughout the Pagan world. The common places of amusement were the theatres, where the vices and passions were fed and inflamed, and the amphitheatres, where nothing could be gained but increased hardness of heart.

The Christians, with their new and heavenly principles, and modes of acting, must have been the wonders of the Roman world! The Pagans were, as we have seen, sometimes constrained to admire their integrity, and to exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another!" But they knew not God, and therefore could not know the children of God (1 John iii. 1).

CHAP. XXXVII.

TACITUS, EMPEROR.—PROBUS, EMPEROR.—HIS LABOURS IN WAR AND PEACE.—CARUS, EMPEROR.—WAR WITH PERSIA.—HISTORY OF NUMERIAN.—DIOCLETIAN, EMPEROR.—NEW SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT.—TWO EMPERORS AND TWO CÆSARS.

IN September, A. D. 275, the danger of the empire from the Germans on one side, and the Persians on the other, obliged the senate to find an emperor, and their choice fell upon Tacitus, a descendant of the historian of that name, and one of their own body. He attempted to decline the honour, saying, at the age of seventy-five it was time to rest; but he was assured a mind not a body was needed, and that his wise counsellors would be sufficient to direct the legions how to act. The character of Tacitus made him acceptable to the people; and the senate, in his appointment, thought they had recovered their ancient authority: but at the end of six months, the death of the emperor put an end to their hopes. A tent, amidst the tumultuous camp at the foot of Mount Caucasus, was ill-suited to one who had been accustomed to pursue his quiet studies in a luxurious villa in Italy; and his bodily decay was hastened by the trial of mind caused by the unruly passions of the soldiers. Tacitus was scarcely dead when his brother, Florian, put on the purple; but Probus, the first general of the East,

opposed him as a usurper who had no authority from the senate ; and that body, pleased with such an able defender of their rights, proclaimed him as the lawful emperor.

In A. D. 276, at the end of three months, Florian's party sacrificed him in order to put an end to the civil war, and Probus was universally acknowledged. He was originally an Illyrian peasant ; but having entered the army, he rose by degrees till he became commander-in-chief, and, finally, emperor. By his extraordinary military talents, every foreign enemy was again subdued, and the empire preserved entire. Among the lieutenants who learned experience in war under his command, Carus, Diocletian, Maximinian, Constantius, and Galerius, were all afterwards emperors. Probus introduced sixteen thousand of the strongest German warriors into the legions, scattering them through the empire in small bands, as he said such help ought to be felt rather than seen. It was in this way the barbarians increasingly learned their own strength and Roman weakness ; and they were not slow in communicating the secret to their independent tribes.

Probus attempted to colonise the wasted or uncultivated lands throughout the empire with families of captive barbarians ; and to this end supplied them with cattle and instruments of husbandry. But, in many cases, the unconquered love of freedom induced the colonists to forego every advantage, and to take the first opportunity of returning to their wild and savage independence. The triumph of Probus, at the close of his victories, was little less splendid than that of Aurelian ; but it was marked by an unexpected occurrence. Several gladiators in the train determined not to shed their blood for the public amusement ; and, escaping from their keepers, filled the streets with tumult and death, till they were overpowered by the Prætorians.

Peace being restored to the empire, Probus employed his troops in labour, in order to prevent the disorders usually attendant on a state of idleness ; but they bore this new kind of toil very impatiently, probably thinking the dangers of a military life were only to be compensated by ease and indulgence in time of peace. For some time, however, they submitted to their tasks ; and by means of their labour, the

navigation of the Nile was improved, temples, bridges, porticoes, and palaces constructed, and many hills in Greece and Pannonia covered with vineyards. But as the emperor was one day urging a body of legionaries in the unwholesome work of draining a marsh in the heat of summer, they suddenly threw down their tools, and some taking up their swords buried them in his bosom. When, however, they saw the victim of their rage lying dead at their feet, their fury was exchanged for useless lamentation; and they hastened to raise a monument to the memory of their murdered emperor. Thus died Probus, after a reign of six years, A. D. 281.

Carus, the Prætorian prefect, was at once chosen emperor; but the senate, who thus lost the power allowed them by Probus, were displeased by the election, and readily numbered him among the tyrants. Carus gave to his sons, Carinus and Numerian, the rank of Cæsars, and left the elder to settle the affairs of the West, while he took the younger with him in his foreign wars. The Sarmatians, and not the Germans, were, at this time, disturbing the northern frontier. The distinction between these two races was marked by a difference of language and habits. The Germans dwelt in fixed huts, wore a close dress, only married one wife, and had none but foot soldiers. The Sarmatians lived in moveable tents, dressed in loose garments, had many wives, and fought on horseback. The former used the Teutonic, the latter the Slavonian language.* It is said, sixteen thousand Sarmatians were killed in their war with Carus, and twenty thousand taken captive.

The emperor was so encouraged by his military success, that he led on his armies at once towards the Persian frontier, and bade them look upon this rich and beautiful country as likely soon to be their own.

Varanés, the successor of Sapor, had subdued the Segestans, the most warlike nation of Upper Asia; but was so much alarmed by the approach of the Romans, that he sent ambassadors to offer renewed conditions of peace. Carus

* The Teutonic, enriched with foreign words, forms the modern German. The Russian language probably differs little from the ancient Slavonian.

was more like the ancient Roman warriors than any of his imperial predecessors ; and, by his contempt for luxury, and his stern discipline, he hoped to revive the decaying vigour of the legions. The stately Persian ambassadors were greatly surprised to find the Roman emperor seated on the grass, dressed in a coarse woollen *toga* of purple, with some bacon and a few hard peas for his supper. The purple seemed alone to distinguish him from the rest of the soldiers, who were also taking their usual evening meal. Carus received the proposals of Varanes in silence ; and then taking off the cap which covered his bald head, he told the pompous ambassadors that, unless their master would acknowledge the superiority of Rome, he would speedily make Persia as bare of trees as his own head was of hair. The required submission being refused, the Romans began to waste Mesopotamia, and to destroy all that opposed their progress ; and, from the farther side of the Tigris, Carus wrote to the senate, describing his conquests, and bidding them confidently look for the downfall of the Persian monarchy, and the addition of Arabia to the empire. But the next report that reached Rome was of a very different character. It described the sudden and mysterious death of Carus, during a violent thunder-storm ; but it ever remained uncertain whether it was from the effects of the lightning, or from previous disease, A. D. 283. It was, at any rate, a striking instance of the vanity of boasting concerning a future which was not his own.

The army obliged Numerian to lead them away from the spot where his father had perished, as they considered the storm was occasioned by the wrath of the gods, who would not permit the power of Rome to extend beyond its ordinary boundary, the Tigris. Numerian was glad to retreat, as his own health was failing ; and a weakness in his eyes obliged him to have his tent darkened, and to travel in a close litter. The people at Rome were, moreover, longing for his return, as he was of a very amiable character ; and his elder brother had wearied them by displaying the extravagance of Helio-gabalus and the cruelty of Domitian. Even Carus had been so displeased by the reports of his conduct that he threatened to adopt Constantius, then governor of Dalmatia, in his

stead ; but, at this emperor's sudden death, both his sons were immediately accepted as his successors. During the long retreat from Persia, Numerian never showed himself to the army ; but Aper, his father-in-law, the Prætorian prefect, who guarded his tent and litter, constantly delivered the commands of the invisible emperor. Eight months after the death of Carus, while the returning troops were resting at Chalcedon, a town in Asia Minor, a suspicion arose that Numerian was no more, and that Aper had usurped the sovereignty in his name. The guarded tent was immediately forced open, and found to contain only the body of the deceased prince. It is possible, Numerian died of disease ; but the concealment of his death was the cause of Aper's condemnation. Diocletian, the commander of the body guards, was immediately proclaimed emperor ; and a military tribunal being raised on the spot, Aper was brought before him as a criminal. Without any examination into the circumstances of the case, Diocletian, turning towards the sun as if it were a divine witness, declared his own innocence, and then plunged his sword in Aper's bosom, exclaiming, "This man is the murderer of Numerian !"

Carinus in the meantime had made himself so hateful by his vices, that the senate and the people of Rome were disposed to prefer Diocletian. The Eastern army, and the legions headed by Carinus, met in combat near the Danube ; and the latter might have overcome the sickly and exhausted troops of Diocletian, but a tribune, whose wife had been injured by him, gratified his own revenge, and ended the civil war, by the murder of Carinus, A. D. 285. Thus we see man, after the example of Cain, continually stained with his fellow's blood, either with, or without provocation (Rom. iii. 15). If such deeds are passed by without comment, let them not be passed by without horror.

Diocletian's parents were Dalmatian peasants, and had been slaves to a Roman senator ; but, after they obtained their freedom, their son contrived to enter the army ; and, having gained much experience under the command of Probus, he rapidly rose to the rank he held when he was made emperor. No one except Augustus displayed such extraordinary talents for government as Diocletian ; but

he had a very different people to rule from those of the first emperor, and therefore acted in a very different manner. It had been the constant effort of Augustus to conceal his absolute power; for he was aware that humble familiarity was the best means of securing the head of a nation of republicans such as the Romans then were: but Diocletian's absolute power was secured by the display of it; and his safety as the head of a nation of slavish habits, was ensured by the adoption of the oriental custom of pompous concealment. The first act of Diocletian was to associate with himself Maximinian, a well-known general; by birth a peasant, and by disposition the ready instrument of cruelties which his artful colleague did not wish to have charged upon himself. The friendship of these two emperors, being founded on interest and fellowship in crime, was never broken; and their flatterers bestowed on them the titles of Jupiter and Hercules; saying, that Diocletian, like Jupiter, governed the world by his wisdom, and Maximinian, like Hercules, destroyed the monsters that disturbed it. They freed themselves from the control of the senate and the Prætorians by keeping away from Rome. In time of peace, Diocletian held his court at Nicomedia, and Maximinian resided at Milan; and these imperial cities, being enriched by their respective monarchs, began to rival the capital in magnificence. It appears that Diocletian fixed on Nicomedia as the most favourable situation for overlooking his subjects in Europe and Asia, as it was just on the borders of the latter continent; and it was also in a convenient position to overawe both the northern barbarians and the hostile Persians, being placed at an equal distance from the Danube and the Euphrates.

In the reign of Diocletian, the title of lord (*dominus*) was added to that of emperor (*imperator*); and he only refused the title of king (*rex*), because old associations made it so hateful to the Romans; his Asiatic subjects, however, always addressed him as king* (Greek *basileus*). With a higher title, the Roman emperors henceforward,

* This title was also given to their provincial governors, which may account for the expression in 1 Pet. ii. 17, even if the emperor be not there signified.

after the example of Diocletian, adopted a different style of dress and manners. They wore robes of purple silk embroidered with gold, a diadem of pearls, and even their shoes studded with gems. The emperors had been originally saluted with no more respect than the magistrates or senators; and their palace, if they were not suspicious tyrants, was open to every one; but now all the forms and ceremonies of the Persian court were adopted,—all the avenues of the palace guarded by different ranks of domestic officers; the interior apartments filled with eunuchs, and the access to the emperor's person made as difficult as possible. And when any subject at length reached the presence-chamber, whatever his rank might be, he was required to fall prostrate at the feet of the emperor, as his lord and master. The system of Diocletian appeared to be admirably adapted for the end he had in view, namely, personal security; and from this time the emperors were more commonly suffered to die a natural death. The people at large, however, suffered from the establishment of despotism; and the increased magnificence of the imperial courts added to their oppressive taxes. The united reign of Diocletian and Maximinian was marked by the revolt of the peasantry of Gaul, who were driven to despair by the ill-treatment of the nobles who held them in slavery; they were, however, defeated, and reduced to a worse condition than before. About the same period, Carausius, commander of the Roman fleet in the British Channel, took possession of the valuable province of Britain, and held it for seven years in spite of every attempt to recover it. It appears he was a very able monarch; and, under his government, the advantageous position of this island, as commanding the sea, was first perceived. The convenient harbours, the climate, the soil, the mines, the numerous flocks in the rich pastures, the woods free from wild beasts and venomous serpents; all these advantages, and especially the revenue arising from this valuable island, were summed up by the Roman statesmen as sufficient causes for lamenting its separation from the empire. But Carausius vigorously defended his kingdom from the Caledonians on the North; and, as he had possession of Boulogne and the neighbouring country, and

his fleet rode securely in the Channel, even Diocletian dared not approach his dominions, but left him to reign in peace. The friendship of the Franks was also an assistance to the sovereign of Britain; and he cultivated it, by imitating their dress and manners, and by instructing some of their bravest youths both in naval and military arts. Coins issued by Carausius are still in being; and he reigned prosperously for seven years, when he was murdered by Allectus his chief minister.

In A. D. 291, Diocletian, perceiving that the empire was threatened on all sides by the barbarians, determined to appoint two new sovereigns with the inferior title of Cæsars, but with almost imperial power. The two generals whom he chose, have been already mentioned as serving under Probus; namely Galerius, originally a herdsman, who in character resembled Maximinian; and Constantius, surnamed Chlorus, who was a nobleman, and of a far more amiable disposition than either of the other sovereigns. We shall find he was inclined even to favour Christianity on account of its beneficial influence. In order to strengthen their political union, Diocletian adopted Galerius and gave him his daughter in marriage: and Maximinian acted in the same way towards Constantius. For the sake of this imperial alliance both the Cæsars divorced their former wives: and Helena, the wife of Constantius, with her son Constantine, were deprived of their natural rights, and put aside for a time, as too ignoble to share in his elevation.

The empire was divided and subdivided in the following manner. Gaul and Spain were entrusted to Constantius, with a commission to recover Britain. Galerius reigned over the Illyrian provinces. Italy and Africa were the portion of Maximinian; and Diocletian kept for himself Thrace, Egypt, and the rich provinces of Asia. Each of them was absolute sovereign within his own dominions, and their united authority extended over the whole empire, every public act being done in the names of all: but Diocletian always preserved the superiority by means of his remarkable abilities, and his influence over the minds of the rest, as their common benefactor (Luke xxii. 25). Their mutual interest kept up an uninterrupted harmony for many years; and it

was only broken when the guidance of Diocletian's master-hand ceased.

Our history will now be rather more difficult to pursue, as we have the movements of different leaders to notice, and their connection with each other, instead of a narrative of a solitary emperor. Before, however, we proceed farther in the history of the world, it is necessary to inquire into the state of the Church during its long period of outward tranquillity.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF A CHRISTIAN UNDER A HEATHEN GOVERNMENT.—THE POWER OF THE EXPECTATION OF THE LORD'S COMING.—THE LOSS OF THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH.—THE INCREASING WORLDLINESS OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS.—GENERAL COUNCILS.—METROPOLITANS.

THE Christian's path must always be contrary to the course of the world that lieth in wickedness; and if he be walking in the steps of his Master, he will find himself in a narrow way with few companions. It is, however, a path of peace, and a way of pleasantness to his spirit; and the remembrance that it "leadeth unto life" cheers him amidst every discouragement and difficulty. The particular difficulties, however, of the Christian, at any period, can only be understood by knowing the circumstances in which he is placed, and the temptations to which he is liable. A very little consideration of our previous history will convince us how exceedingly difficult it must have been for Christians to be "undefiled in the way," and to preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and man, amidst the vice, idolatry, and carnal indulgence which reigned through the whole empire. We have seen that every public and private relationship, and all the common acts of life, were accompanied by superstitious or idolatrous observances. The arts of music and painting, of eloquence and poetry, were all corrupted in the same manner; and many of the common trades had to do with the making or adorning of idols and their temples.

The Roman senate was always held in a temple or consecrated place; and, before the senators began business, it was customary for each of them to drop some wine and frankincense on the altar. The public games, the theatres, and the private entertainments, must have been alike avoided by the faithful Christian. No feast was concluded without a libation or drink-offering to the gods: marriages and funerals, it was impossible for the believer to attend, without countenancing idolatry: and even the common salutations he might often be obliged to protest against; for it was unlikely a true Christian could hear his Pagan friend exclaim, "Jupiter bless you!" without telling him of the only true God.

If the religion of the heathens had been merely the fancy of the human mind, it might have been treated as pitiable folly, and overcome by reason and philosophy. But we have the clear warrant of Scripture that the directors of it were the devil and his principalities, who are "the rulers of the darkness of this world," in whatever shape that darkness appears. And, therefore, the apostle says, though we know that an idol is nothing in the world, yet, "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they *sacrifice to devils*, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Cor. x. 20). He does not say they sacrifice to creatures of their own imagination, but "to devils;" and we are therefore sure that the institutions and doctrines of Paganism were the institutions and doctrines of devils, and that only the mighty weapons furnished by God that could ever pull down their strongholds.

The early trials of Christians, in preserving their position as "a peculiar people," must have been very great. A man's foes were commonly those of his own household; and the "division" which Christ had sent upon earth was very apparent. There were snares to the right hand and to the left; but much glory was brought to the Lord by the consistent and straightforward conduct of his people. One temptation, doubtless, to the believers who saw the dangers and pollutions around them, was that of idleness; there was so much to which they could not conscientiously put their hands, that many would be likely to refrain from working

at all. But it was written, "Let ours also learn to profess honest trades *for necessary uses*, that they be not unfruitful" (*marg.* Tit. iii. 14). And, again, "We command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. iii. 12).

There were certainly many things a converted person could not do—for instance, no Christian workman at Ephesus could make "silver shrines for Diana"—but there were many things he could do; and often by choosing a lower grade, or a meaner employment, he might labour with a clear conscience.

As long as the coming of the Lord was the lively and constant hope of the Church, Christians were living in practical separation from the world, and shining as lights in it, with their affections set upon the Lord himself. *Looking for that blessed hope*, even the glorious appearing of the great God and their Saviour Jesus Christ, they were enabled to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. The expectation of the dissolution of present things kept them from attaching themselves to them, and made them despise the pomps and vanities around them (see Titus ii. 13; 2 Peter iii.).

The assurance that they should be glorified with Christ (Rom. viii. 17), and reign with Him (Rev. v. 10, and xx. 4), that they should judge the world (1 Cor. vi. 2), and that they should soon be with the Lord of lords and King of kings in his glory, made the civil and military honours of the Roman empire appear of no value: and those who were engaged in the civil administration or military defence of their country, before their conversion, hesitated as to the continuance of their offices, and knew not how to discharge the duties of them. They could not even reconcile the defence of their persons and properties with the precepts which enjoined unlimited forgiveness of injuries, and the uncomplaining sufferance of wrong. If the Pagans contemptuously asked what would be the fate of the empire, attacked as it was on all sides by barbarians, if all mankind should adopt the cowardly opinions of this new sect, the Christians could make no answer intelligible to them, but

held fast their secret expectation that the kingdoms of the world would in due time become the kingdoms of their Lord, and that His reign would put an end to war for ever. Tertullian suggested to the Christian soldiers the propriety of leaving the army; and there is one instance of this on record, even of a later date. Marcellus, a centurion, who was serving in Africa in the reign of Diocletian, threw away his belt and his arms on the day of a public festival, and exclaimed with a loud voice that he would obey none but Jesus Christ, the Eternal King, and that he renounced for ever the use of carnal weapons, and the service of an idolatrous master. For this conduct, he was condemned and beheaded as a deserter. A sentence of death was also executed on Maximilianus, an African youth, who had been produced by his own father before the magistrate as a legal and sufficient recruit, but who steadfastly persisted in declaring that his conscience would not permit him to embrace the profession of a soldier. There were, probably, many such instances, though not deemed worthy of remark by historians, who generally commend such opposite feelings and procedure. Even those Christians who were not sufficiently acquainted with the spirit of their Master's teaching in the written word, to have their consciences exercised as to the consistency of military service with their profession, were alarmed at the intimate connection with idolatry into which they were necessarily brought as soldiers; and the use of the oaths, which were required in the army, was a further difficulty. There is, indeed, a tradition that the whole army of Marcus Antoninus was saved from perishing by thirst, in answer to the prayers of the Christians of the Thundering legion; but, even if there were Christians in his army, they were not noticed as such by this persecuting emperor; and monuments of brass and marble, medals struck at their return to Rome, and a column raised by Antoninus, all prove that prince and people attributed this timely shower of rain to the providence of Jupiter, and to the interposition of Mercury, and overlooked the unknown Christians altogether. Among the Christians, the wise, mighty, and noble were always few, and the meanness of the condition of the body at large was, for some time, their protection

from the ensnaring honours of the world ; and among the rich, and noble, and wise, who were called, there were some blessed instances of the renunciation of all that in which the natural heart delights. But it was the general expectation of the Lord's coming that kept his people really separate from the world, and unmindful of its smiles and frowns ; and it was only when they grew tired of waiting, that they ceased to walk as the children of the day. They had not the *long patience* which the Lord requires,—they began to think he was slack concerning his promise ; and the thought, “ My Lord delayeth his coming,” completely altered the testimony of the Church.

It seems to have been the Lord's intention to leave his people in uncertainty respecting the time of his return, in order that they might be always expecting him ; because nothing leads to such heavenly-mindedness and detachment from the world as the full expectation of *the Lord himself* from heaven, which is so constantly presented in the New Testament. “ Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ;” and those who walk by faith, walk as if He, whose appearing they love, were *on the very point of appearing*, though, in His own wisdom and grace, they know He may suffer them to fall asleep before His return.

The desire for the Lord's coming should have been tempered by the knowledge of the reason for its being deferred, namely, the salvation of souls : and the natural feeling of impatience would be always relieved by employing the interval in serving the Lord and declaring his grace ; for the expectant Bride is represented as saying, “ Let him that is athirst come : and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rev. xxii. 17). But whilst many of the early Christians found the belief of their Lord's speedy return to earth the great spur to missionary exertion, there were others who, under the pressure of Pagan power, abused this doctrine by triumphing in the expectation of the speedy destruction of their enemies. The misinterpretation of revelation, moreover, and the additions made to it, combined to bring the faith of the Lord's coming, and the expectation of the Millennial (thousand years') reign, into

suspicion and contempt, till at last it was utterly forgotten, or considered the absurd invention of some visionary persons. It was in the interval of peace, to which our history of the Church has extended, that this subject became a matter of especial controversy in Egypt. Some, in their Scriptural studies, supposed that the city described in the Revelation was shortly to be erected on earth; and added fancies of their own as to the nature of the enjoyments of its inhabitants. Dionysius, bishop at Alexandria, reprov'd Nepos, an inferior bishop, for his teaching concerning the Millennium, and condemned his opinions as unsafe: but at the same time he commended him for studying the Scriptures, and confessed that he himself did not understand the Revelation. It is supposed that the rashness of the one and its condemnation by the other caused the doctrine to be put out of sight or lightly esteemed for many centuries: but we must rather trace the disregard of it, to the natural earthliness and impatience of the human heart—the common desire to have a present portion, to enjoy one's good things in this life—and to the malice of Satan, who was glad to envelop in darkness the certain termination of his power, and the period when he should deceive the nations no more.

After the Lord's coming ceased to be the hope of the Church, the hope of worldly honour and establishment naturally came in its place; and the whole state of things was gradually, but entirely changed. The ministers of the Church were no longer the willing overseers or servants of their brethren; but were exactly such as the Apostle said they *ought not* to be, greedy of filthy lucre, brawlers, covetous, lords over God's heritage, etc. There were some happy exceptions; but the mass of them were not looking forward to a crown of glory to be received from the Chief Shepherd at His appearing: but seeking, and finding, the empty, fading honours that could be obtained from their fellow-men.

Towards the end of the second century, the bishops of the churches in Greece and Asia agreed to meet together, to make arrangements for church-order and government. It was afterwards agreed that the bishops of the independent

churches should meet in the capitals of their respective provinces every spring and autumn. It would of course have been desirable for any godly men, who had a real care for the Lord's glory in the church, and who watched over his people as those that must give account, to meet together to ascertain the Lord's mind on any subject in which there was difficulty, or difference of judgment. But in these general councils there was much of worldly policy and human wisdom; and it was soon imagined the Scriptures did not contain sufficient directions for the ordering of the Church. Hence, new laws were made at these times, under the name of canons; and in such of these multiplied canons as remain, there is, of course, a great mixture of truth and error: some of them agreeing with the word of God, others being entirely opposed to it. The only example of a general council in Scripture is very instructive (Acts xv.). The grace and meekness of the speakers, and the reception of their united judgment, as agreeing with that which "seemed good to *the Holy Ghost*," plainly prove that the Lord was guiding the assembly. But the tone of subsequent councils was very different; and their language was rather, it seems good to *us*, than "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost *and to us*." And on these occasions it was forgotten that, according to the mind of Christ, whosoever would be chief must be the servant of the rest, and that the least among them was actually the greatest. Each strove for the pre-eminence; and the man of greatest vigour and talent succeeded in taking the lead. The bishops who resided at the capitals, being the first in rank, wealth and influence, were soon distinguished from their brethren by the titles of metropolitans and primates. This distinction probably arose towards the close of the third century: and, if once allowed, it was but natural that the Roman metropolitan should expect to be the greatest among them, Rome being the metropolis of the empire, and the Church in that city larger and more wealthy than any where else. But monarchical power in the Church was long resisted with abhorrence: not, it seems, from the happy remembrance that One was their Master and Head, even Christ, and they only brethren and fellow-members of the same body;

but from the ambition of those bishops, who would not own the superiority of the primate at Rome. The struggle between the bishops at Carthage and Rome has already been mentioned; and from that period such contests became more frequent and more violent. The season of outward peace only seemed to leave free course for internal war: and during the period of tranquillity which closes the third century, we are informed that the bishops and people were living in malice with each other, and that endless quarrels, ambition, and covetousness reigned in the Church.

Notwithstanding this, the outward order and magnificence had never been so great: the first officers of state, with their families, professed Christianity; the wife and daughter of Diocletian, and the mother of Galerius, were supposed to be Christians, and had Christian servants: the palace of Constantius was filled with them: and such crowds attended the Christian assemblies that the old buildings were insufficient, and larger or handsomer edifices were raised in all the great cities.

Just as the World and the Church seemed to be preparing to walk hand in hand, the open enmity of the former was once more excited, and one more fiery persecution delayed the contemplated union. The history of these dying efforts of Paganism belongs to the reign of Diocletian and his associates, upon which we had just entered in the preceding chapter.

CHAP. XXXIX.

RECOVERY OF BRITAIN.—THE PERSIAN WAR.—RECOMMENCEMENT OF PERSECUTION.—EDICTS AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS.—THE TRIUMPH OF DIOCLETIAN.—HIS RESIGNATION OF THE EMPIRE.

THE new mode of government by two emperors and two Cæsars appeared to prosper; and by their means tranquillity was again restored, and the provinces re-united. Constantius recovered Britain, and the inhabitants were glad to receive such a mild ruler in the place of Allectus, under whose tyranny they had groaned for three years.

Both the Cæsars defended their provinces with such boldness that the repulsed barbarians often turned their arms against each other in despair; and the emperors succeeded in the overthrow of five Moorish nations who had joined together to attack the African provinces.

Alexandria, having declared independence, was taken by Diocletian after a siege of eight months. Many thousands of the Alexandrians were destroyed, and some of the cities of Egypt were entirely ruined, as the emperor supposed nothing but terror could subdue the rebellious spirit of the nation. In A. D. 296, Diocletian declared war against Narses, king of Persia, under pretence of restoring Tiridates, the rightful heir of the throne of Armenia, to the kingdom of his father. Armenia had been under Roman protection from the reign of Nero till the time when it was seized by Artaxerxes; and the Armenians were then oppressed by the Persian rulers during twenty-six years. Tiridates, who had been saved when an infant from the destruction which fell on all his father's house, was gladly welcomed by the Armenians when, in the strength of manhood, he appeared among them; but by the superior power of Narses he was expelled, and again took refuge with the Roman emperor. Diocletian took up arms in his behalf and sent for Galerius to assist him in the Persian war: but, in the first three battles, the Romans were defeated through his rashness, and Tiridates himself scarcely escaped destruction. The emperor went to meet the defeated Cæsar with great displeasure, and obliged him to follow his chariot on foot for the space of a mile. The pride of Galerius made him resolve to recover this disgrace; and, having obtained permission again to lead the army against the Persians, he was completely victorious, and Narses was obliged to fly. His richly furnished tents, with several of his female relations, fell into the hands of the conqueror; and Galerius behaved on this occasion as well as Alexander had formerly done towards the wife and mother of Darius. Diocletian now went to meet the victorious Cæsar with every mark of honour and affection, and both returned to Antioch in the same chariot. In that city, they were visited by the Persian ambassadors, with a letter from their king, in which he

observed, in the eastern style of metaphor, that the Roman and Persian monarchies were "the two eyes of the world," and that it would be imperfect if either of them were put out. He expressed his desire to ransom his relations, and to make conditions of peace. Galerius was little disposed to listen to any such proposals; and angrily asked the ambassadors, what mercy could be expected by their sovereign after the treatment Valerian had received. But the prudent Diocletian at length persuaded him to yield, saying that an advantageous peace was to be preferred to the continuance of an uncertain war.

A treaty was concluded, by which it was agreed that the Araxes should be the boundary of the Persian empire; and thus the Persians gave up the five disputed provinces beyond the Tigris. Tiridates was restored to his kingdom, under Roman protection, and the emperor was also allowed the right of nominating the kings of Iberia. By the observance of this treaty, peace was preserved till the death of Tiridates, a period of forty years.

During the winter of A.D. 302, at the close of the Persian war, Galerius remained with Diocletian in the palace of Nicomedia; and the Cæsar continually urged upon his father-in-law the necessity of taking some severe measures against the Christians. Galerius had always disliked them, and had dismissed a great number of Christian officers from their employments; probably considering that it was dangerous to leave any part of the empire to the defence of men of such principles as they professed to hold. Diocletian readily consented to exclude the Christians from holding any office in his household or army; but it was long before he was willing that their blood should be shed. The arguments of Galerius and his other counsellors at length prevailed; and on the 23rd of February, A.D. 303, the first act of violence was committed in the destruction of the church* at Nicomedia. Early in the morning the Prætorian præfect, with a strong body of guards, provided with the instruments used in destroying fortified cities, began the work; and in a few hours a building which had towered above the imperial

* We now find this word in common use to express the building in which the Christians assembled, and not the assembly itself.

palace was levelled with the ground. The Pagans searched for some visible object of worship, but in vain; and were obliged to content themselves with burning the volumes of the Scriptures. The next day a general edict, framed against the Christians, was put up in a conspicuous part of the city; but it was soon rashly torn down by one of them. He was roasted alive before a slow fire; but he smiled through all his agonies, and continued to express the greatest abhorrence for the wicked tyranny which dictated the edict. The spirit of this man was, it appears, very contrary to the becoming meekness of a Christian; but excessive commendation of his zeal was expressed by others, and he was exalted as a noble martyr.

Within fifteen days the palace of Nicomedia, and even the bed-chamber of Diocletian, was twice in flames, and the emperor narrowly escaped. Galerius at once attributed the fire to the vengeance of the Christians, and hastily left Nicomedia, saying his life was in danger. Ecclesiastical historians, on the other hand, suppose it to have been the contrivance of Galerius, in order to excite the emperor's terror and hatred of the Christians. If it were so, he was entirely successful; for every mode of torture was now practised upon such as would not sacrifice, and many were executed in the court and in the city. The wife and daughter of Diocletian were of the number who consented to sacrifice in order to save their lives: but the sufferings which they afterwards underwent were probably far worse than those of martyrdom.

By the edict of Diocletian it was commanded that all the churches throughout the empire should be thrown down; and that all who dared to hold any secret assemblies for worship should be put to death. The magistrates were desired to search for the sacred books and to burn them publicly. All the lands that had been left to the churches in different places were to be taken away; and the Christians were to be excluded from the benefits of public justice and from the protection of the law. The faithful among the Christians continued to meet after their churches were destroyed, and refused to deliver up the Scriptures; but a great mass of persons again went with the stream, and

many of the bishops and presbyters betrayed the copies of the Bible, which they ought to have preserved, and were long after distinguished by the disgraceful epithet of *Traditors*. In some provinces the magistrates only shut up the places of worship: but for the most part they were burnt down, and the vessels of gold and silver, which in some churches were very abundant, were seized as public property. In a small town of Phrygia, it is related that the Christians, with their wives and families, took possession of the church; and when they found themselves unable to defend it, would not retire, but willingly perished in the building which was set on fire by their enemies.

Some slight disturbances in Syria, and on the frontiers of Armenia, being supposed, by the persecuting party, to arise from the efforts of the bishops, Diocletian was so much irritated, that he declared in several cruel edicts his intention of abolishing Christianity altogether. The first of these edicts was directed against the clergy; and the prisons were soon filled with a multitude of all orders. By the second edict the magistrates were commanded to employ every means to reclaim the deluded Christians, and to oblige them to return to the worship of the gods.

Gaul seems to have been the only part of the Roman empire in which the Christians were safe; and many took refuge there. The amiable Constantius only carried out the imperial edicts for the destruction of the churches, and still kept the Christians about his person and would not suffer them to be injured. Spain was, probably, beyond his immediate control or protection; for, in that country, an inscription is said to have been found to the following effect: "Diocletian Jovian; Maximinian Hercules; Cæsares Augusti, for having extended the Roman empire in the East and West, and for having extinguished the name of Christians." And another, which ran thus: "Diocletian and Maximinian, for having adopted Galerius in the East,—for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ,—for having extended the worship of the gods." A medal was also struck, bearing the name of Diocletian, with this inscription: "The name of Christians being extinguished"

Thus did the kings of the earth set themselves, and the

rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Christ, not knowing that the very gates of hell could not prevail against his Church, and that they must finally bow before the name that they despised. Persecution is, in fact, but as the knife in the hand of the husbandman cutting off the fruitless branches, and pruning those that bear fruit.

In the twentieth year of his reign, A.D. 305, Diocletian went to Rome for two months, and celebrated the last triumph that was ever beheld in that city. Maximinian alone shared in his honours, the victories of the Cæsars being attributed to their respective fathers. Africa, Britain, the Rhine, the Danube, and the Nile, all furnished suitable memorials of their restoration and subjection to the dominion of Rome; and the Persian victory was set forth by an ingenious representation of the country, and by the exhibition of the images of the princesses who had been taken captives, but were restored to liberty at the conclusion of the treaty.

Diocletian was displeased by the rude familiarity of the Roman citizens, who had not learned the obsequious manners of his own courtiers; and he was glad to retire to Nicomedia. In that city he passed a winter of much suffering from ill health, and it was at one time reported he was dead; but on the first of March, he appeared once more in public, evidently worn by sickness; and, before a large concourse of people assembled in a spacious plain near the city, he declared his determination to resign the empire. On the same day, Maximinian went through the same form at Milan, Diocletian having required him to follow his example: but he did not resign his dignity with good-will, and was never contented with a life of retirement.

Diocletian, on the contrary, enjoyed a beautiful retreat which he had prepared in his native province of Dalmatia, and amused himself in building, planting, and gardening; often declaring to the few friends in whose company he delighted, that there was no art so difficult as that of reigning. When the restless Maximinian entreated him to take up the power he had laid down, he replied that, if he could show him the cabbages he had planted, he would not wish

him to sacrifice health and happiness for the sake of imperial honours. It is probable Diocletian had long intended to retire, as he had built a magnificent palace at Salona, which is said to have covered nine or ten English acres; and some suppose that the modern town of Spalatro was built from its ruins.

Diocletian's edicts against the Christians, and his weakness in yielding to the suspicious cruelty of an inferior mind, throw a deep shade over the close of a reign which was for the most part beneficial to his subjects. No one seemed so fitted to govern this great people as himself; and the events that followed during the nine years that he survived his abdication, must have caused him sorrow and regret, if he had any thought beyond his own gratification. The great sources of disorder, both in the Church and in the world, seem to be that those who have ability to rule are prevented from using it either by their own slothfulness or by others; and those who have no ability given them by God, occupy and abuse the place of power.

CHAP. XL.

THE EMPERORS AND CÆSARS.—CONSTANTINE SUCCEEDS TO HIS FATHER'S DOMINIONS.—MAXENTIUS AND HIS FATHER.—CIVIL WARS.—PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.—TERRIBLE DEATH OF GALERIUS.

IN A. D. 306, by the abdication of Diocletian and Maximilian, Constantius and Galerius were raised to the rank of emperors. The adoption of Maximin and Severus as Cæsar, who both resembled Galerius, and were entirely under his influence, gave the latter real possession of three-fourths of the empire; and he anxiously expected the death of Constantius, whose declining state of health gave him the prospect of becoming sole emperor. The sons of Constantius by his second wife were at that time quite young, but Constantine was more than thirty years of age; and his attractive appearance and manners, with his military talents, made him the favourite of the army of Galerius in which

he served. They were very indignant that he had not been made Cæsar; but Galerius had purposely kept him back, and would gladly have got rid of such a dangerous rival. Constantius, suspecting that his son was in perilous circumstances, hastily called him out of the power of his associate, by desiring his assistance in an expedition into Britain. The young prince escaped with difficulty, and was joyfully welcomed by his father and the Western army, and it was the general desire of the provincials that he should succeed to the dominions of Constantius. This beloved emperor died at York, only fifteen months after the abdication of Diocletian. He left three sons and three daughters by his second wife; and, on his death-bed, commended them to the brotherly affection of Constantine. He did not fail to protect them, and gave them not only a princely education, but high honours in the state; and they in their turn proved their gratitude by making no effort to overturn their brother's authority.

Galerius was exceedingly angry when a messenger reached him with a letter from Constantine, announcing his father's death and his own appointment as successor. The enraged emperor threatened to throw the messenger and the letter into the flames; but when he had duly considered the character and strength of the son of Constantius, he felt it was wiser not to resist his claims. He therefore contented himself with sending him his permission to reign as Cæsar, in the Gallic provinces, telling him at the same time that Severus was emperor in the room of his deceased father. The ambitious Galerius was, however, but little reconciled to the loss of the fine provinces of Britain, Spain, and Gaul, when he was more deeply wounded by the intelligence of a revolt in Italy. The people of Rome had proudly determined that a sovereign, who chose to reside in Asia, should no longer look upon them as the inhabitants of a tributary city; and they called upon Maxentius, the son of Maximilian, to assist them in recovering their freedom and independence. Maxentius, animated by Constantine's success, and aided by his father, declared himself the protector of Rome; and Severus, as the servant of Galerius, was put to death. Maximilian immediately set out for Gaul to seek

the friendship of Constantine; and secured his alliance by giving him his daughter, Fausta, in marriage.

Maximinian and Maxentius then declared themselves emperors of Rome; and Galerius, finding every effort to regain Italy in vain, still refused to acknowledge them, and declared Licinius, one of his favourites, emperor in the place of the murdered Severus. The Cæsar, Maximin, was displeased that another should be preferred to himself; and, being determined not to remain in the lower rank, caused himself to be proclaimed emperor of Egypt and Syria; provinces which had already suffered from his oppressive government. There were now, for the first and last time, six emperors, of a professedly united empire: namely, Galerius and Licinius, Maximinian and his son, Constantine and Maximin. For a little time they seemed obliged to tolerate each other; and Maximinian was acknowledged as a father and senior emperor by Constantine and Maxentius, while Galerius was honoured in the same manner by Licinius and Maximin.

The next disturbance was occasioned by the unpopularity of Maximinian; and the old emperor was driven away from Rome through the jealousy of his son, and the hatred of the guards, towards whom he had shown some severity. He took refuge with his son-in-law, pretending he was at last convinced of the vanity of ambition, and had no more desire for empire; but the temporary absence of Constantine, in an engagement with the Franks, proved the falsehood of this profession, for Maximinian took this opportunity of usurping the imperial authority. Upon the return of his son-in-law, he took refuge in Marseilles, a town so strongly fortified that he might long have defended himself in it, had not the inhabitants, through fear, given him up to Constantine. Maximinian was allowed to choose his own mode of death, and it is supposed that he was strangled in prison; but Constantine pretended that he destroyed himself in remorse for his past crimes.

Constantine imitated his father's conduct, with regard to the Christians; and the tyrants of Italy seemed too much engaged in general acts of cruelty and oppression to care about them; but Galerius and Maximin carried out the edicts of Diocletian with the utmost fury.

Africa was again distinguished for the number of its martyrs; and, in Egypt, the immediate residence of Maximin, their tortures were most horrible. Fire, boiling water, wild beasts, starvation, and crucifixion, were all resorted to, by turns: and, it is said, even the executioners were fatigued, and their weapons blunted, while the faith and patience of the Christians still held out. If we cannot even read without horror of the various tortures that were used at this time, we may form some idea of the greatness of His power, who kept his people steadfast, when these things touched not merely their imaginations, but their bodily frames.

Some of the African martyrs were torn asunder by the bent boughs of trees; some were crushed; even women were hung up by one foot till they died: others had their flesh torn with scourges or iron nails; others had their limbs dislocated or cut off; and, in many cases, those who had been dreadfully wounded were carefully healed and again tempted to sacrifice; but, for the most part, they still preferred death. In different provinces, different modes of torture were used; and every plan was devised to make the suffering as great as possible without destroying life. In some places the accused were scorched with boiling lead, or had sharp reeds thrust under their nails: great numbers were deprived of an eye, or a leg, and sent to work in the mines.

In Palestine, which was under the immediate control of Galerius, all were compelled to sacrifice: and, whilst many apostatised to save their lives; others rashly offered themselves for martyrdom, and irritated their judges; giving examples of the two extremes of natural feeling uncontrolled by the Spirit of Christ. We can hardly suppose that all who suffered tortures and death were prepared for the crown of life; for many proud and bold spirits are ashamed to deny a profession that they have once made, uniting their opinions with themselves, and not holding fast for the Lord's sake. Eusebius of Cæsarea, the historian, upon whose authority the accounts of this persecution chiefly rest, remarks that the heavy scourge was needful; and speaks of the fitness of particular chastisements to the nature of the case; curiously remarking that the pastors who had so

long neglected their charges, were condemned to take care of camels, or to feed the emperor's horses.

In A. D. 310, Galerius was attacked with a disease of the most dreadful nature; his body, bloated with intemperance, was covered with ulcers which bred worms; and, it is said, the palace at Sardis, where he resided, was intolerable on account of his state of corruption. When the wretched emperor found that his physicians and idols could do him no good, he sent forth an edict, permitting the Christian prisoners to go free, and releasing the confessors from the mines: he also allowed the Christians to rebuild their places of worship, and entreated that they would pray for his health. But he only survived his proclamation a few days; and died in torments far worse than any he had himself inflicted, for his mind was tortured as well as his body.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, after vainly striving to fight against him. These are the words of the Lord Jesus, "I say unto you *my friends*, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have *no more* that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke xii. 4, 5).

CHAP. XLI.

CONSTANTINE AND LICINIUS.—MAXIMIN'S ATTEMPTS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY.—STORY OF CONSTANTINE'S VISION.—REAL POWER OF THE CROSS.—CONSTANTINE'S VICTORY.—THE VICTORY OF LICINIUS.—RENEWAL OF CIVIL WAR.—DEATH OF LICINIUS.

IN A. D. 311, after the death of the elder emperors, Constantine formed an alliance with Licinius, who reigned in the Illyrian provinces; and Maximin made an agreement with Maxentius which only increased the misery of their respective subjects.

The pride of the tyrant of Italy was only equalled by his vices; and he often declared that he alone was emperor, and the three others, only his lieutenants in the frontier

provinces. The people of Rome, who had before mourned on account of the neglect and absence of the emperors, had now reason during six years to lament the presence of the sovereign they had chosen. The soldiers were the only class Maxentius desired to please; and he would even dare to give them the villa, or the wife, of a Roman senator, as the reward of obedience to his commands.

After the death of Maximinian, Constantine had caused his statues to be thrown down; and the emperor of Rome, who had cared so little for his father during his life, affected great zeal in revenging this insult after his death; and desired that the statues of Constantine in Italy and Africa should be treated in the same contemptuous manner. This war with images prepared their minds for war with each other; and Constantine gladly received a secret embassy from the Senate and people of Rome, begging him to come and deliver them from the tyranny of Maxentius.

After the death of Galerius, Maximin so far respected his edicts as to refrain from open persecution: but he injured the Christians yet more deeply by the plans that he adopted. It seemed as if the adversary had learned, by long experience, that the Church could not be destroyed by violence, and was determined to try other means. Taking example from the established order and discipline of the Church, he tried to strengthen the national religion by making a more regular and united priesthood, and requiring them to be of moral habits. The new high priests were chosen from the highest ranks, and permitted to wear the white mantle which had hitherto distinguished the officers of the palace. At the same time writings, full of blasphemy, were circulated by Maximin's authority, called, "The Acts of Pilate and of Christ;" and these were taught in all the schools in order to bring up the rising generation with hatred or contempt for the name of Jesus. Some wicked women at Damascus were bribed to make a false report of the nature of the Christian assemblies; and this was copied and circulated by the emperor's command. At Tyre, an appeal in his own hand-writing was posted up, calling on the inhabitants to bear witness to the prosperity they had enjoyed since the worship of Jupiter had been restored: the good harvests,

freedom from sickness, etc. It is said that Maximin was about to circulate appeals of the same nature throughout his dominions, when he was prevented by a general drought which was followed by a famine: and these evils were succeeded by a plague of inflamed ulcers, which spread over the bodies of many of the people; but chiefly affected the sight and occasioned blindness.

We are informed that the Christians, during these calamities, busied themselves in visiting the diseased, and in distributing food to their famishing countrymen.

Constantine, in the meantime, was assembling an army for the invasion of Italy; and, in order to keep up his friendship with Licinius, during the approaching contest with Maxentius, he offered him his sister Constantia in marriage. Still, however, doubtful of success, and hesitating as to which of the gods would be most likely to favour his undertaking, it is related that he saw a light more brilliant than the noontide sun appearing in the sky in the form of a cross, with an inscription, signifying "*In this overcome.*" And he afterwards declared that Christ himself appeared to him in a vision the following night, and explained the vision by desiring him to take the cross as his standard, instead of the images usually borne before the army. If Constantine were really deceived by some dream, or extraordinary appearance, instead of being a wilful deceiver of others, as some have supposed, it was surely by the power of Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light: and it is not impossible that the adversary, being weary of fruitless opposition, as suggested above, took other methods of deceiving the nations, and was now appearing as the fellow-worker and supporter of the Church. It is certain that, if the vision of Constantine had been of God, as was that of Paul, it would have had the same humbling effect: and he could never have made the cross the means of obtaining worldly glory and dominion. For when the apostle said, "God forbid that I should glory, *save in the cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ," he does not fail to add, "*whereby* the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The cross of Christ teaches separation from the world: for the powers of the world crucified the Lord of glory. The cross of

Christ teaches the desperate wickedness and deep degradation of man; and was never intended to be the instrument of exalting the men of this world. The cross of Christ proves that his servants must not fight, because his kingdom is not from hence. The cross of Christ shews the rejection of the service of twelve legions of angels. Then who but the arch-enemy, the father of lies, could have given Constantine the idea of the ensign of the cross, or have suggested, "In this overcome"?

It is only those who have themselves been overcome, humbled, and subdued, by a spiritual understanding of the meaning of the cross of Christ, that can, in any sense, overcome by its means. And the enemies they overcome are not flesh and blood, not armed hosts, but *the world*, whose vanity and wickedness they have learned by the cross (Gal. vi. 14); *the principalities and powers of darkness*, whom they have seen triumphed over there (Col. ii. 15); *the flesh*, which they have seen crucified there (Rom. vi. 6).

It was impossible for Constantine to overcome *by this power*; for, as one of those who glory in their shame and mind earthly things, he was, in fact, among "the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. iii. 18, 19).

The victory of Constantine over Maxentius does not appear miraculous, when it is considered that the Italian forces were weakened by long repose and luxury, while the legions of Gaul had been constantly exercised against hardy barbarians. Moreover, Constantine had not only the hearts of his own soldiers, but the goodwill of all Italy: for Maxentius was thoroughly hated. The passage across the Alps was no longer the perilous undertaking it had been in the days of Hannibal: but, in their march along a good military road, the Gallic troops were supplied with provisions by a civilised and submissive peasantry. Constantine vanquished the first army sent to oppose him, in the plains of Turin, and from thence advanced to Milan, and took possession of the imperial palace. Many of the cities of Italy then openly declared in his favour; and a march of four hundred miles brought the conquering army within sight of Rome. At Verona, another battle was fought, in which thousands were left dead on the field; and, within a few miles of the capital, a

terrible slaughter was made of the troops which Maxentius commanded in person. The Prætorians fought in despair, believing Constantine would show them no mercy; and the greatest part of them died where they stood. When the Moorish and Numidian cavalry who supported them were defeated, the feeble Italians fled at once: and Maxentius, in trying to escape over the bridge into the city, was forced into the water by the crowds that were hurrying by him, and sank under the weight of his heavy armour. The body was found the next day; and the severed head, exhibited to the people, convinced them of their deliverance from the tyrant, and enabled them to receive Constantine with every expression of delight, A. D. 312.

The grateful senate immediately proclaimed him the first in rank of the three remaining emperors; and Constantine, in return, professed to restore them to their ancient dignity: though it soon became evident that he intended to exercise absolute power. Not satisfied with the death of Maxentius alone, he caused his two sons to be executed. At the same time he put an end to the Prætorian guards for ever: their camp was destroyed, and the few, who survived the final battle, were dispersed through the legions in different parts of the empire. Thus Rome was left defenceless; and its citizens again fell under the taxation from which they had hoped to escape by setting up Maxentius.

Constantine commemorated his victory by placing a spear in the form of a cross in the hand of his own statue at Rome; and by the erection of a triumphal arch, which was called by his name. It is a singular proof of the decline of the arts that Trajan's pillar was on this occasion robbed of some of its most beautiful figures, as there was no sculptor who could produce any decorations equal to them for the ornament of the arch of Constantine. After remaining at Rome two or three months, Constantine went to Milan to celebrate his sister's marriage with Licinius. On this occasion, the two emperors, by a joint edict, annulled all former laws against the Christians; but gave perfect liberty to their subjects to profess whatever religion they thought best. Ere the close of their pompous wedding festivity, the emperors were called away by the attacks of their enemies in

opposite directions : the dominions of Constantine had been again invaded by the Franks, and those of Licinius were threatened by Maximin.

The bravery of the Illyrian troops, and the superior talents of their leader, prevailed over the large numbers brought into the field by Maximin : and the latter fled with such speed that, it is related, he arrived at Nicomedia, a hundred miles distant from the scene of action, only twenty-four hours after his defeat. The particulars of his death are differently related : some say that it was as dreadful as that of Galerius ; and that, in reference to his persecution of the Christians, he cried out in his agony, " It was not I, but others that did it." Some have added that, before he expired, he owned his guilt and asked for the compassion of Christ (A. D. 313). All his associates in cruelty, and the enchanters whom he had employed to exercise their wicked arts for the promotion of his designs, perished miserably by the command of Licinius : and the conqueror neither spared the young children of Maximin, nor the son of his friend Galerius. Valeria, the widow of Galerius and daughter of Diocletian, and her mother Prisca, were not treated with greater mercy ; and their singularly unfortunate circumstances excited general interest and compassion. After the death of Galerius, Maximin asked his rich and beautiful widow in marriage ; but Valeria refused, telling him she could not so soon forget her late husband, and that it was a wicked thing for him to divorce his own wife in order to marry her, although it was permitted by Roman law. Her behaviour changed the tyrant's love into fury ; and, upon a false accusation of treason, he banished Valeria and her mother, seized upon their estates, and caused many of their friends to be executed. In vain did Diocletian entreat that his wife and daughter might be permitted to share his retreat at Salona : Maximin never made any reply to the emperor's request.

Upon the death of Maximin, the exiled princesses set out for Nicomedia, with large expectations from the mercy of Licinius : but the executions, which they witnessed in that city, alarmed them ; and, escaping in haste, they wandered about through the provinces during fifteen months, disguised

as peasants. But Licinius at length discovered them at Thessalonica, and ordered them to be immediately beheaded and their bodies thrown into the sea.

The Roman world was now divided between Constantine and Licinius; and the former issued a decree which still farther protected the Christians, and another which freed the clergy from taxation, as a privileged class. Licinius, however, either out of opposition to Constantine, or in the indulgence of his own prejudices, banished all Christians from his court, and dismissed from his armies all that would not sacrifice to the gods. He put to death some of the bishops, and destroyed several churches: he also forbade the women to attend the public assemblies with the men, and desired that they should find female teachers in their own private meetings.

In A. D. 314, on the ground of the renewal of the persecution, Constantine made war with Licinius; but the immediate cause of their dissension appears to have been another circumstance. Constantine had married his sister Anastasia to Bassianus, a man of high rank, to whom he promised the title of Cæsar with a portion of the empire; but the performance of this engagement was so long delayed, that Bassianus sought help from Licinius in obtaining the appointed provinces. Several battles were fought, in which Constantine was always successful; and Licinius only obtained peace by the resignation of several of his own provinces to the emperor of the West. At the same time, Bassianus was not elevated to the promised rank but Crispus and Constantius (the latter only an infant), the sons of Constantine, were declared the Cæsars in the West; and the younger Licinius, son of the emperor, Cæsar in the East. These arrangements restored apparent tranquillity for eight years.

During this period of freedom from the civil wars that had so long distressed the empire, the Cæsar Crispus defended the Rhine and gained several battles against the Franks and Allemanni. Constantine himself headed the legions stationed on the banks of the Danube, and humbled the Goths by defeating a vast army of one hundred thousand men. The barbarians were glad to obtain peace by promising a supply

of forty thousand auxiliaries, whenever the Roman emperor should require their services.

On account of such deeds as these, Constantine, like Alexander, was honoured with the appellation of *the Great*: and he became so great in his own eyes, that he could no longer endure a partner in the empire. Some historians say that he covered his ambitious designs with the pretence of furthering the interests of the Christians, and that Licinius put the truth or falsehood of the Christian religion on the event of a battle. But it appears certain that the old age and vices of Licinius made him an unpopular ruler, whilst Constantine was the universal favourite. Still bearing the figure of a cross in shining jewels for his labarum or standard, he now put forth the whole powers of his mind and body in conducting his forces against the more numerous army of Licinius. A great battle was fought both by sea and land, near Adrianople. Constantine was wounded in the thigh during the engagement; but, in the end, was entirely victorious. Licinius took refuge in the fortified town of Byzantium; and it was probably in besieging him there, that Constantine was first struck with the beauty and advantages of the position, and formed a design of making it the capital of his empire. Licinius escaped to Bithynia, before Byzantium was taken, and raised a second army in the East, which was defeated by Constantine. The vanquished emperor then retreated to Nicomedia, and sent his wife, Constantia, to entreat her brother to spare his life, and to permit him to retire into a private situation. She obtained her request; and Licinius, after prostrating himself at the feet of Constantine, and owning him as his lord and master, was allowed a residence at Thessalonica, with a solemn assurance of safety. But Constantine, perhaps from his former experience of the conduct of Maximilian, was afraid of keeping an old lion, even though he appeared to be tamed; and Licinius was put to death by his command, shortly afterwards, upon the suspicion that he was in treasonable correspondence with the barbarians. The offence laid to his charge was never proved; but Constantine tried to make his memory as hateful as possible: he caused his statues to be thrown down, and even threatened to erase

his name from all the public inscriptions and edicts; but afterwards concluded it was safest not to do so.

By the execution of Licinius, Constantine obtained his desire of becoming sole head of the Roman empire, A. D. 324. This event caused such an astonishing revolution in the state of the Church on earth, that we turn with deep interest to consider its affairs at this important period.

CHAP. XLII.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.—REMARKS ON THE APOSTASY.—
 THE FATHERS.—BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.—STATE
 OF THE CHURCH IN THE REIGN OF CONSTANTINE.—THE
 EDICTS OF CONSTANTINE.—THE DONATISTS.—ARIUS.—
 THE NICENE COUNCIL.—HELENA.—PROGRESS OF SUPER-
 STITION. — SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL. — DOMINION OF
 RABBINISM.

THE Church of Christ* remains essentially the same, whatever may be done *under that name* on earth, or whatever form it may take in the world. And it is very necessary, while considering the falling away, or apostasy, of that which we are obliged to call the Church, for want of any other intelligible expression, to keep distinctly in view the Scriptures concerning the Church *as it is* in the purpose of God, and as it will be presented to the whole universe at the Lord's glorious appearing.

After the inspired record of the failure of the churches on earth (Rev. ii. and iii.), the believing reader rejoices at the description of the Church in heaven (chap. iv. and v). That the elders and living creatures (lit. Greek) represent the redeemed Church, is clear from the ninth and tenth verses, compared with other parts of Scripture; and however *wretched*, and *miserable*, and *poor*, and *blind*, and *naked*, these redeemed ones might appear on earth, however tempted by their own lusts, by the world, or by the devices of Satan, they are here seen as having overcome and escaped all. They are *on thrones* (seats—Greek, *thronoi*), *clothed in white raiment*, *crowned*, *full of eyes*, having *every one of them*

* See the "Scripture Tracts," No. 7. The Church of God.

harps and golden vials *full of odours*, perpetually giving glory where glory is due, and worshipping, for ever, God and the Lamb. The Church is the body of Christ, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23). And in the end he will "present it unto himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (chap. v. 27). The security for this is in the *unfailing Head* of the Church. It is as impossible for one member of Christ to perish, as it is for death or Satan to touch His glorious body, now at the right hand of God.

We would not then confound the Church, of which we are about to speak, with the Church spoken of in the New Testament; and the term is only used, after its original signification is gone, because there is no other that would be generally understood. It must also be remembered, that it had now become common to speak of churches, not as gatherings of believers, but as stone buildings.

If we were suddenly led out of the broad light of the noontide sun, down several flights of steps, and through subterraneous passages into a cavern of pitchy darkness, and then asked how we should get into the light again, the natural answer would be, "*We must retrace our steps*. We must creep through all those dark passages, led by such glimmerings of light as we can find, and ascend those steps, when we shall find the sun shining as bright as ever." And supposing another person said we might get light, by means of a multitude of lamps in that same dark place, we should smile at the idea of setting up any thing there as preferable to a return to the light of the sun. Now this has been our experience in tracing the history of the Church: we have gradually withdrawn from the light, and descended, as it were, so easily, step after step, winding through so many artfully contrived passages, that we are surprised at the darkness. The departure from the word of God was so gradual that persons seemed scarcely to miss the light to their path, and were soon contented with other guides. We may now be told there are a multitude of writings which will serve as guides through the darkness, or at least explain, or fill up, what is wanting in the written word: but we smile, as we should at the idea of the lamps, either in

the place of the sun, or as helps to make it give a better light. And our smiles are turned into sighs, when we find erring men, who were perhaps less instructed in the truth than many children are now, set up and trusted to, under the venerable name of "The Fathers." The term "Fathers," can only be scripturally applied by converted persons to those who have been the means of their spiritual birth, by instructing them in the Gospel (see 1 Cor. iv. 15): and though an elder should be treated as a father with loving respect (1 Tim. v. 1), the Lord said to his disciples, "Call no man your father upon earth (that is, in the sense of a teacher); for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. xxiii. 9).

By "the Fathers" are commonly understood certain teachers who lived in the first five centuries after the apostles, and whose writings still remain; as if to prove, to the candid and intelligent reader, how vast a difference there is between the laboured compositions of these learned men, and the writings either of the unlearned men who were moved by the Holy Ghost; or of Paul, whose eloquence and learning were not suffered to hinder the full flow of the living waters. But some, who would not generally depend on the Fathers as the depositaries of the truth, say, that we at least owe to them the settlement of our received Scriptures; for they arranged the books of the New Testament as they at present stand, and separated the inspired from the uninspired. To this it may be simply replied, that though we are thus indebted to them, under God, it does not prove their superiority to other Christians; for any spiritually minded person, who had so tasted of the word of God as to find it sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, would not mistake the words which man's wisdom teacheth, for the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. In the present day there is a false revelation (that of Mormon, in America); and at many periods there have been false gospels and false epistles, as well as an attempt to add to the books of the Old Testament such as were not inspired: but the simple, true-hearted children of God know the difference between bread and a stone—in other words, "he that is spiritual discerneth all things" (1 Cor. ii. 15).

There is many a source of fresh springing water, the streams whereof may be very foul by flowing through earthy channels : but by going higher up, even to the source itself, we find the water in its natural purity. It is so with the Scriptures : they may be ever so much perverted by human interpretations ; but the letter having been preserved by the providence of God, as soon as one who is taught of the Spirit goes back to the simple truth, he will find it untainted, and as clear as when first given by the Holy Ghost.

In concluding these prefatory remarks, it may be said, that it is far more easy to point out what is wrong in the condition of the Church at any time, than to show how it may be set right. The rebuilding of a ruined edifice would be comparatively easy, if the whole of it were simply in the dust, and not one stone left upon another : but if the several parts of it were so artfully combined with foreign materials, and built up in such novel and fantastic forms that the fragments of the original could hardly be discovered, it would be impossible.

And this is exactly what has happened at the present period of our history. Some traces of the scriptural ideas and practices of the Church still remain : but they are so strangely mixed up with Jewish and Pagan ideas and practices, that it seems impossible to disentangle them ; and we can only describe things as we find them. But let it be always remembered, " what is impossible with man is possible with God." He will gather his living stones out of mountainous heaps of rubbish, and each will have its right place in His temple. He will find his jewels, hidden as they may be in the deepest obscurity, and bring them forth to the light, in the day of His glorious appearing.

The loss of spiritual power and absence of love amongst those who called themselves Christians, was exposed to the world in a lamentable manner in A. D. 313, when a quarrel which had arisen concerning the election of an African bishop became so violent, that Constantine was requested to interfere. He first appointed the bishop of Rome, and then the pro-consul of Africa, to settle the matter ; but as their decisions did not satisfy the complaining parties, he called together an assembly of bishops at Arles, in A. D. 314,

to give a final judgment. The discontented party, who were called Donatists, from their leader Donatus, caused the greatest tumults in Africa and elsewhere; and this disgraceful war was not entirely at an end for fifty years. In many cities there were two bishops of different parties; and when those of the Donatist faction were at length banished, or put to death, by order of Constantine, their followers became more enraged; and a party of them, under the name of *Circumcelliones*, took up arms, and overran Africa, filling that province with slaughter and rapine. Constantine tried, in vain, every method of accommodation; and at last, by the advice of the governors of Africa, he repealed all the laws against the Donatists; and peace was restored for a time.

In A. D. 314, another controversy arose in Egypt of a far more important nature. Arius, one of the presbyters at Alexandria, opposed Alexander, his bishop, in his scriptural declaration, that the Son was essentially one with the Father; a truth that had been hitherto held, without becoming a matter of question in the Church; for though, as we have observed, there were several heresies concerning the person of the Son, those who held them were looked upon, as entirely "without."

Arius had been twice put out of the church, on account of his unruly spirit, and Alexander, on this occasion, solemnly excommunicated him as an impious person. But Arius was a man of talent; and by his subtle reasoning, attractive manners, and apparent seriousness, many were led to embrace his opinions, especially after his excommunication, when he was regarded as a persecuted man.

Eusebius, bishop at Nicomedia, a man of great influence, took up his cause; and when Constantine came to that city, in A. D. 325, intending to go farther into the East, he laid the whole matter before him. Only the year previous, on becoming sole emperor, he had sent circular letters throughout his dominions, exhorting his subjects to follow his example, by immediately embracing Christianity; and having assumed the title of bishop, or head of the Church, he was most anxious to unite his Christian subjects, especially as he saw that their internal differences must prevent the spreading of his new religion. They were already divided

into two distinct parties : for in the course of seven years the notions of Arius had spread rapidly among the clergy and people ; and practical religion was at such a low ebb, that the Pagans watched the contending Christians with triumphant delight, and even held them up to ridicule in their theatres.

Constantine now determined to call a general assembly of bishops to settle the controversy, and invited them to meet at Nice in Bithynia ; offering to convey them thither, and maintain them there, till the council was over, at the public expense. About six hundred persons assembled on this occasion, of whom three hundred and eighteen were bishops : but only twenty-two of them supporters of Arius. Constantine himself was present at all the meetings, and took the office of president ; not from any understanding of the subject, but with the view of preserving peace and order. Before the conference began, the bishops presented to him a multitude of written complaints against each other ; but he threw them all into the fire, and begged them to attend to the matter in hand, saying, it was better for them to forgive one another, and it was not for him to decide the differences of Christian bishops. Eusebius, bishop at Cæsarea, the writer of the life of Constantine, gives a flattering description of the emperor's appearance and behaviour on this occasion, and compares him to "an angel of God"! He says that he entered the large room in the palace, where all the clergy were assembled, attended by several of his friends, but exceeding them all in size, gracefulness, and strength, and dazzling all eyes with the splendour of his dress. With the greatest humility of manner he did not take his seat on the low chair covered with gold that was provided for him, till "the Fathers" desired it. Eusebius himself was the first to make the emperor a flattering speech ; and Constantine then addressed the assembly in Latin, which was interpreted into Greek for the benefit of those who only understood that language. The opinions of Arius were condemned by this council ; and a confession of faith, the groundwork of that called the Nicene creed, being drawn up by Constantine's order, he declared that every one who would not subscribe to it should be banished. That the

letter of the truth was preserved at this time, we owe to the Providence of God, but we cannot help seeing throughout, how little of the love of the truth remained; and that the faith now supposed to be secured, stood, not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of men. Constantia, the emperor's sister, who favoured the Arian party, induced the greater part of them to yield: but it is said, in repeating the Creed they put in a single letter which altered the signification of the Greek expression "of one substance," and made it only mean "of a like substance." Only two of the Arian bishops refused altogether to conform, and were banished with Arius into Illyricum. There can be no doubt that some of the Nicene council were men of God who had studied the Scriptures; and many of them bore visible marks of their faithfulness through the last persecution, in the loss of a limb or an eye. Yet, it appears, they would, even at this time, have forbidden the clergy to marry, had not such an unscriptural law been opposed by Paphnutius, an African bishop.

The controversy respecting the observance of Easter, and some other points were also settled at the Nicene council. Constantine on one occasion declared it was not for the dignity of the Church to follow "that most hateful of all people," the Jews, in their time of celebrating the Passover. Nevertheless, Jewish customs had been readily adopted, for it was not only usual to fast during the *great week* (as that was called during which Christ died), but afterwards to celebrate a feast, in which they partook of a lamb, in remembrance of the Passover supper.

Constantine allowed the Jews the rights of Roman citizens; and treated the rabbins, in one respect, like the clergy, by freeing them from the obligation to perform any civil or military service: but his laws, in general, favoured the Christians far more than the Jews. In one of his edicts he enacted that all Jews should be burned who endangered the life of a Christian convert; and, in another, that no Christian should be made a proselyte by them, under pain of such punishment as the judge might think right.

Helena, the mother of Constantine, probably retaining her husband's early partiality for the Christians, was most vigorous in her exertions to increase their greatness. To

this end, she travelled into different parts of the empire, and caused a number of magnificent churches to be built. At length she visited Ælia, and induced the emperor to lay out large sums in adorning the city with buildings; and especially in the erection of a church over the supposed sepulchre of Christ. As a reward for her labours, it was asserted she had discovered the wood of the cross, which not only had the power of working miracles, but was itself of such a miraculous nature, that though it yielded pieces of its precious wood almost daily to a great number of persons, it never appeared to diminish! This was but the commencement of "lying wonders" of the same kind. Vast quantities of earth were now carried away from Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine, and sold at great prices throughout the empire, under the name of *holy earth*.

Helena died before her son, at the age of eighty. By their joint efforts, the city of Ælia was rendered so splendid, that it was boldly declared to be the glorious Jerusalem spoken of by the prophets! As all access to it was still forbidden to the Jews, they, in revenge, shut out the Christians from their chief cities, Sepphoris, Nazareth, Capernaum, and Tiberias.

The bones of the martyrs now became of immense value, and were greedily purchased in Italy and other countries which, not having suffered during the last persecution, had no martyrs of their own. Some pretended they had extraordinary revelations from heaven as to the places where the apostles and martyrs, or celebrated saints were buried: and some acted upon the monstrous notion that it was lawful to deceive, so far as even to inter bones in secret places, and then to point them out, saying, that some "friend of God" lay there. But whilst superstition and error rapidly increased in the hot-bed of imperial favour, the little measure of truth that was spread with them doubtless became a blessing to many who were enabled by the Spirit of God to discern good from evil. Yet we have no history of individual conversion to God, whilst we are told of the conversion of nations. By this, we must understand the change of outward profession. For instance, Tiridates, king of Armenia, and all his court, in imitation of Constantine,

professed Christianity, and established the Church in Armenia. The Ethiopians, the Georgians, and a considerable number of Goths and Sarmatians were nominally converted by the preachers sent among them: the latter were persuaded to become Christians after their subjection to Constantine, the history of which remains to be related. But the progress of Christianity cannot be entirely attributed to the dread of Constantine, or to the desire to please him: for there were doubtless many true Christians who were indefatigable in preaching the Gospel; and the consistent lives of some, with the more general knowledge of the Scriptures by means of various translations, all helped forward the work.

Upon the establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire, it was confidently expected the Jews would yield to the new system, as well as the Pagans. But the dominion of rabbinism was by this time thoroughly established. This system of religion was as different from that of the Old Testament, as that of the nominal Christians we have described, from the religion of the New Testament. In the course of thirty years of peace, the Gemara and Mishna were woven together and greatly enlarged by the Babylonian rabbins; and at the end of the second century this extraordinary mixture of human wisdom and folly, of piety and daring blasphemy, was completed, and universally received among the Jews under the name of the Talmud. The rabbins, as the interpreters of the Talmud, and the holders of spiritual power, retained their influence over the minds of the Jews after the dominion of the Patriarch of Tiberias and the Prince of the Captivity came to an end.

The affairs of the Church are henceforward so mixed up with those of the empire, and occupy such a conspicuous place in the history of the world, that we can no longer view them separately. The next chapter will illustrate the manner in which they mingle together, under the influence of the first professing emperor.

CHAP. XLIII.

SEAT OF GOVERNMENT REMOVED TO BYZANTIUM.—CHURCHES.
 —THE NEW CITY CALLED CONSTANTINOPLE.—CRUELTY
 OF CONSTANTINE.—GOTHS AND SARMATIANS.—DEATH OF
 ARIUS.—POLITICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL ARRANGEMENTS.
 —CONSTANTINE'S APPOINTMENT OF HIS SUCCESSORS.—
 CHARACTER OF HIS RELIGION AND LAWS.

CONSTANTINE perceived the wisdom of the course of policy adopted by Diocletian; but felt that the old forms of government could never be entirely abolished while Rome was considered the metropolis of the empire. He therefore determined to make Byzantium the capital; and, as he had millions of people at his command, he resolved to spare neither labour nor expense in his new city. But he soon found that genius and skill were not to be purchased; and the decline of architecture induced him to rob the cities of Greece and Asia of their chief ornaments for the decoration of his capital.

The greatest pains were bestowed upon the erection of twelve churches in different parts of the city; for Constantine, being displeased with the stiffness of the Pagans of Rome, in clinging to their own religion, declared, when he deserted the ancient capital, his city should never be stained by idolatry. The largest and most splendid of the churches was that dedicated to the Twelve Apostles; and a pretended discovery being made of the bodies of Andrew and Luke, the bones were brought out of their sepulchres and carried thither. The churches were richly adorned with pictures and images, and in their form and appearance, resembled the Pagan temples, though some attempts were made to imitate the style of the Jewish temple. The heathens multiplied their temples and adorned them with magnificence, imagining the gods were tempted by these marks of honour to come and reside in them; and many persons unhappily began to think that the favour and protection of Christ would be in proportion to the number of churches.

Constantine's city was at first called Second or New Rome; but afterwards obtained the name of Constantinople

in honour of him. The fortified walls then only enclosed five of the seven hills upon which that city now stands, a space of about two thousand English acres. Thus, it appears, the imperial city did not equal in extent either Babylon, Thebes, or ancient Rome, and was inferior to London and even to Paris. But, in riches and population, it rivalled Rome within a hundred years.

In A. D. 327, while the city was building, Fausta, the emperor's second wife, became jealous of the popularity of Crispus, her husband's son by a former marriage; and fearful that he might interfere with the claims of her own sons, she falsely accused him of entering into a conspiracy with the Cæsar Licinius against the emperor's life. Constantine happened to be at Rome, celebrating the twentieth year of his reign, and without giving the young men any opportunity to clear themselves, he ordered them both to be beheaded. This cruelty and injustice, added to his attempts against Paganism, brought upon him the hatred and insults of the people of Rome: and some one even dared to affix some satirical verses to his palace gate, comparing his reign both in splendour and cruelty to that of Nero. Such behaviour confirmed the emperor in his dislike to Rome; and he was glad to take refuge in his new city, where he could surround himself with fresh pomp and have every security against an attack upon his person.

The workmen made so much speed, that the city was finished and dedicated in A. D. 334; and on every succeeding anniversary the statue of Constantine was carried round the city in a solemn procession, and when presented before the throne of his successors, the reigning monarch rose up and bowed in honour of his memory.

The falsehood of Fausta's charge against the young princes, was at length discovered, in connection with other offences against her husband; and, by his orders, she was suffocated in a hot bath, and all the companions of her crimes either privately poisoned or publicly executed. It appears that Constantine was miserable, even in the height of his worldly glory; for his conscience was sufficiently enlightened to make him dread death and the judgment to come. His mind was also harassed by the threatening

swarms of hungry barbarians in the north, and by fresh disputes in the Church, or rather the continuance of the Arian controversy.

The last fourteen years of the reign of Constantine would however, have been a period of unbroken peace as regarded foreign enemies, had he not interfered in the wars of the Goths and Sarmatians; but it now became a part of Roman policy to encourage the barbarians in fighting with each other that they might have no time for attacking the empire. The Sarmatians differed little from the ancient Scythians; but their shaggy locks and beards, fur dresses, and fierce looks terrified the provincials when they appeared on their borders: and Ovid in times past, when exiled to the banks of the Danube, described them as "the monsters of the desert." They lived in moveable camps or cities, consisting of large waggons covered with tilts in the form of a tent, and drawn by oxen. Their warriors usually rode on horseback, and led two spare horses to enable them to advance or retreat with greater speed. Having but little iron, their shields were formed of horse's hoofs, and their arrows pointed with fish-bones dipped in some poisonous liquor. These Sarmatians were, however, a hospitable people, and had received a large company of Vandals who were flying from the Goths; and then, under the command of a Vandal king, they determined to avenge the wrongs of their guests, and for that purpose requested help from the Romans. It was granted by Constantine, in order to humble the power of the Goths, and these formidable enemies were driven back. But at the end of the war, the Sarmatians, thinking they had not been generously treated by their allies, plundered the Roman territory. As a punishment for this conduct, Constantine refused them any assistance in their next war with the Goths; and they were not only defeated, but turned out of their own country and obliged to take refuge within the borders of the empire. When the emperor was informed that three hundred thousand Sarmatians had entered his dominions, not as enemies, but as fugitive supplicants, he extended his protection to them; and having given them sufficient waste lands for their support, they became peaceable agriculturists, and consented to profess the religion of their protector.

Notwithstanding the decisions of the Council of Nice, the Arians continued to increase in number and power, and their patroness, Constantia, on her death-bed, persuaded her brother to recall Arius. It is even supposed, from the emperor's protection of the heresiarch, and his friendship for Eusebius, who inclined so much to the Arian party, that he was himself attached to the same opinions. Indeed, after Arius was recalled, Constantine would not rest satisfied, because Athanasius,* the new bishop at Alexandria, and one of the chief actors in the Nicene Council, would not receive him into that Church. The refusal of Athanasius brought upon him all the wrath of the Arians; and he was at length brought before Constantine, charged with many crimes, and amongst the rest with the murder of a certain bishop. But his innocence was clearly proved by the appearance of the very man whom he was said to have destroyed, and Athanasius was, for the time, dismissed in peace. A short time afterwards, his enemies demanded another examination, and brought against him a charge that strongly affected the mind of Constantine; namely, that he had attempted to hinder the exportation of corn from Alexandria to Constantinople. On this occasion Athanasius was sent into exile; and Constantine absolutely commanded that Arius should be received into the Constantinopolitan church. Sudden death alone prevented his admission, and occurring, as it did, whilst he was parading the streets of the city in triumph, his friends without any reason reported he was poisoned, whilst his opponents, with more colour of truth, noticed his death as the judgment of God, A. D. 337.

Constantine did not long survive the death of Arius; and we shall now bring his history to a close by considering his political and ecclesiastical arrangements, the appointment of his successors, and the character of his religion.

In fixing the new forms of government, whereby he hoped more firmly to establish his own authority, Constan-

* The Athanasian Creed, though certainly not drawn up by him, contains those precious truths of Scripture which Athanasius seemed to be especially raised up to advocate; and we have reason to be thankful that such a statement of sound doctrine was permitted, by the providence of God, to arise in the heat of controversy.

tine appointed four chief governors, with the title of Prætorian Prefects; and, in the church, the bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria answered to them in rank, and were soon afterwards dignified with the superior title of Patriarchs. In the next rank were the Exarchs, who had the inspection of several provinces; and some of the bishops were placed with equal ecclesiastical authority, and the same title. The Metropolitans were a lower class, answering to the governors of single provinces; the Archbishops corresponded with the officers of certain districts; and the bishops had their cities, or more limited spheres, called by the Greeks *dioceses*, a common term for certain divisions of the state. All the different ranks in the church and state were distinguished by peculiar dresses; and the pall, a magnificent robe, originally a part of the imperial habit, is said to have been conferred on the bishop of Rome by Constantine. The *Lituus* (Lat. a crooked horn or staff), which among the ancient Romans was the chief ensign of the augurs, now became a mark of episcopal dignity; and is still known as the crozier. Mitres and tiaras, answering to royal crowns and diadems, or to the head-dress of the Jewish high-priest, were also adopted at the same time.

In fact, every thing was done to reconcile the pagans to the profession of Christianity. The martyrs and saints, with their images and festivals, were honoured in place of their many gods: and we are told of a whole province renouncing idolatry, in which the converts were *indulged* with a permission to feast, dance, and sport, in their usual manner, on a certain day every year, at the graves of the martyrs, as a means of inducing them to love the Christian religion! The yearly village revel, and the country wake and fair, we find even to this day, occur on the anniversary of some saint's or holy day. But nothing was so likely to attract the wonder and admiration of the new converts as the manner of celebrating "*the mysteries*:" for this, indeed, seems the best term we can use, when speaking of the blessed institutions of baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the extravagant ideas and ceremonies now connected with them.

There were priests in their gorgeous robes, with a multitude of attendants, wax-tapers, gold and silver vases, &c.,

to be seen every Sunday throughout the year; but it was only during the vigils* of Easter and Whitsuntide (feast of Pentecost) that the ceremony of baptism was performed by the bishops and presbyters in their different churches.

None of the pagan converts were called *believers*, in the phraseology of the Church, till after baptism. In the previous state of preparation they were distinguished by the name of *catechumens*, and had to go through a certain course of instruction. In contradiction to the Scripture doctrine of the depravity of human nature, Christians had taken up the philosophical idea that the soul of man is a part of God, and consequently pure; and therefore said the evil passions of men were only to be accounted for by the possession of wicked spirits. They did not understand that it is the evil nature in man upon which Satan works; but ascribed all sin to the agency of demons. Hence, a great part of the preparation for baptism consisted in efforts to drive out the devil, and the distinct order of ministers called the Exorcists were entirely employed in this work. The pagans who desired Christian baptism were admitted to the state of catechumens by the laying on of hands, with the sign of the cross.† They were then allowed to read some portions of Scripture, some of the Apocrypha, and "The Shepherd," a book written by Hermas, full of imaginary conversations between God and the angels. They were then permitted to hear sermons in the church; but were obliged to depart before the prayers began. For twenty days before baptism, they were attended by the exorcists,‡ who, with loud shouts and noises, commanded

* *Vigil* (Latin, *watching*), the evening before a feast, commonly observed during the fourth part of the night; but these vigils lasted many days.

† It is supposed the sign of the cross was first used in times of persecution, that Christians might distinguish each other when they met; but it was soon considered of great importance, and Tertullian thought it should be used in every common act of life.

‡ Much has been said as to the continuance of the pentecostal gifts after the apostolical age, especially that of casting out devils, a power which was often boasted of to the pagans; but it appears that exorcism had sunk into a formal office, for we find the exorcists, at their ordination, were presented with a book of prayers, containing the forms used in the casting out of devils.

the devil to depart from them, and they also used various prayers and ceremonies which were supposed to deliver them from his power. The catechumen himself was directed to make signs, expressive of abhorrence for the prince of darkness, such as stamping, spitting, etc., with his face towards the west, the supposed direction of Satan's abode. Immediately before baptism, but not till then, they were taught the doctrine of the Trinity, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.

All being prepared, the catechumens were conducted into their several baptisteries, which they had never before been allowed to enter, or even to look into, the deacons attending the men, the deaconesses waiting on the women. The bishop then anointed each catechumen, and poured a certain kind of oil, called the sacred chrism, into the water three times, in the form of a cross. "In this manner," it was believed, as says Tertullian, "the waters become the sacrament of sanctification, the Spirit immediately descends from heaven, and resting upon them sanctifies them, and gives them the power of sanctifying," etc.

The catechumens, entirely naked, were immersed in the water three times, a practice, it is said, intended to honour the Trinity, and they were then clothed in white garments, which they were required to wear for seven days afterwards. After baptism they were anointed again, received their honey and milk with the sign of the cross and laying on of hands, and then were required to say the Lord's prayer, standing upright. Infants as well as adults received the chrism, and the imposition of hands, and in all cases the administration of bread and wine followed. This other "mystery" was also rendered as attractive as possible by all kinds of vain ceremonies and outward show : and, at this period, it was the established custom to hold up the consecrated bread and wine to the people that they might fall down in adoration. It was frequently celebrated at funerals, and thus arose the notion of offering sacrifices, as well as prayers, for the dead.

The clergy having become such an important class, every means was devised to increase their wealth ; and Constantine was most generous in his provision for them. It was also

natural to expect that, as they claimed the *place* of the Jewish priests, they should be supported in the same manner ; and it is probable the first proposal of gathering tithes belongs to this period.

The great increase of festivals at this time is to be accounted for by the general desire to accommodate the church to the prejudices of the pagans. The holy days, as they were called, were spent in indolence, animal pleasures, and criminal indulgencies ; and it is well known the vigils were, in particular, seasons of sinfulness. There was also an increase of fasts, or rather of abstinence from flesh and wine on certain days ; and this was considered one of the most effectual means of overcoming evil spirits and obtaining the favour of God.

Constantine greatly contributed to the spread of monkery, treating it as "a *divine* philosophy," and showing the greatest respect to those who willingly retreated from the world, and devoted themselves to a life of solitude, or hardship. It was in Egypt, as we have before remarked, that this practice began. Anthony, one of the admirers of Paul the hermit, was the first who formed a regular community of monks,* and from that time they increased in number. Athanasius, during his exile, visited Anthony, and was exceedingly delighted with his mode of life. "The life of Anthony," written by him, and probably the worst of his productions, greatly increased the prevailing mania. Females as well as men had gone into retirement, where they lived unmarried, and generally, in wild places, without the common necessaries of life. At the close of this century, it is said, twenty-seven thousand monks and nuns were to be found in Egypt. Hermits and monks were likely to be most numerous, where the climate and habits of the country favoured their peculiar mode of life ; and though monkery gradually spread through all the provinces, the Western monks and nuns little resembled those of Syria and Egypt in their manners and customs.

We now turn to the consideration of Constantine's

* Monk. This term was originally derived to us through the Latin *monachus*, from the Greek *monos*, solitary ; as that of Nun, from the Latin *non nupta*, not married.

appointed successors. In the tenth, twentieth, and thirtieth years of his reign, he successively appointed his three sons, Constantine, Constans, and Constantius, Cæsars; and afterwards gave the same dignity to his nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus, favouring the latter with the additional title of king. These young men had been brought up in the luxury of the imperial court; but Constantine was very anxious about their education. Christian bishops, Grecian philosophers, and Roman lawyers were all employed in their instruction, and the emperor himself undertook to teach them the art of reigning. When placed in their respective governments, ministers were appointed to assist and even to control the youthful sovereigns in the exercise of the power entrusted to them; and each of them had a splendid court, with a sufficient proportion of guards, legions, and auxiliaries. Towards the close of his life, Constantine gave up the military defence of the empire to the Cæsars, but he always reserved to himself the supreme guidance, with the title of Augustus. The young princes did not govern wisely; for they had little knowledge of mankind, and no right principles of action. Their mismanagement, and the immense expenses of the emperor in his new city, magnificent court, festivals, and grants to the Church, increased the miseries of the people; and they were weighed down by excessive taxation. Till his latter years, however, Constantine preserved his popularity; but his character was either changed by the increase of power and prosperity; or else he had no motive for concealing his natural disposition after he obtained the end he had in view. We have seen what he was in war; and in peace he had been constantly occupied in reading, writing, thinking, giving audience to ambassadors, or examining into church affairs or the complaints of his subjects. But towards the close of his reign he lost all activity of mind and body, and at last adopted the most indolent and luxurious habits, and exchanged his military dress for loose Asiatic robes of silk curiously wrought with flowers of gold. He also wore false hair of various colours, on the arrangement of which great labour was bestowed; and a costly diadem, collars, bracelets, and other ornaments, completed his attire.

In the thirtieth year of his reign, a period which no emperor, except Augustus, had ever reached, Constantine held a grand festival at Rome : and from thence proceeded to Nicomedia for the benefit of the air, as his health seemed to be in a declining state. In that city he desired the attendance of several bishops, and prepared for baptism, hoping thereby to secure the forgiveness of his sins before his death. After having been baptised by Eusebius, he did not resume his royal apparel, but wore the customary white garments till he died, a circumstance to which his historians seem to attach more importance than it deserves.

His death took place shortly after his baptism, A. D. 337, and none of the princes could reach Nicomedia in time to see him alive. Constantius, whose government happened to be nearest, arrived first, and took upon himself the charge of the funeral honours. The people of Rome, in vain, laid claim to the corpse ; it was immediately carried to the new capital, to be interred, according to Constantine's desire, in the great Church of the Twelve Apostles. The body was laid in robes of state, on a golden bed : and every day, till the interment, the chief officers of the army and household came to bow the knee before it, at their appointed hours of attendance. Thus, it was observed, Constantine, as the first Christian monarch, was granted from heaven the peculiar favour of reigning after his death ! The foregoing history gives us a sufficient idea of the nature of Constantine's religion. But it should be added, he was exact in the performance of the religious duties required of a catechumen. He stood up to hear sermons in the church, observed the fasts and festivals, and watched during the vigils. It is a more curious fact that he even wrote sermons himself ; one of which still remains. He had a short form of prayer drawn up for the army ; and when he was with them, a tent was put up, in the form of a chapel, and daily services performed in it. We are also informed that chaplains were appointed in the palace, and to each legion of the army. The softening influence of Christianity is to be traced in some of the laws made by Constantine. He forbade the exposure of new-born infants, and tried to make provision for such as were too poor to maintain their children.

He abolished many of the evils, and much of the duration, of slavery; softened the severity of punishments; prohibited the ferocious and bloody spectacles; and tried to prevent the licentiousness of divorces, and the excess of usury.

In honour of Christ, Constantine forbade the cross to be used any longer as the punishment of malefactors. He commanded the religious observance of the Lord's day, as also of Friday, being the day of the crucifixion. He recompensed, as far as possible, those who had suffered in the last persecution; recommended the provincial governors to promote Christianity; and, towards the close of his reign, forbade the customary sacrifices; in fact, the Christians now became the leading people, and the pagans, in their turn, the complaining party. In a letter to Sapor II., king of Persia, Constantine begged him to favour the Christians in his dominions: and his request was so far attended to, that the severe persecution in that country did not begin till three years after the emperor's death.

CHAP. XLIV.

TWO-FOLD EFFECT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY.

—THE WISDOM OF CONSTANTINE AS A SOVEREIGN.—ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE.—NATURE OF THE PRESENT DISPENSATION.—EXTENT OF A BELIEVER'S POWER IN ADVANCING THE SPIRITUAL GOOD OF OTHERS.—MEANS OF CONVERSION.—IGNORANCE OF THE PAGANS.—MYSTICS AND MONKS.—GUILT OF THE CHURCH.—GOD OVER ALL, BLESSED FOR EVER.

THE establishment of the profession of Christianity is allowed to be one of the most important eras in the history of the world; and is to be considered in two points of view, first, as it regards the people of God, and secondly, as it affects the world at large.

Constantine, as a wise sovereign, was quite right in establishing such a system of religion as he thought likely to be for the good of his people. Christianity, in its lowest

form, as a mere outward profession, and that was all he knew of it, was incomparably preferable to paganism; and, in every point of view, it was for the benefit of the world. The very shadow of it, as it were, thrown over the face of the earth, had a miraculous effect: humanising those who before were as brutes, civilising the savage, chasing away the gross darkness, and veiling some of the most conspicuous abominations. Yet it must be allowed, the zeal of Constantine was *without knowledge*. If he had been commissioned by Christ to benefit his Church, he would have acted according to the mind of Christ. He could not have continued in sin whilst calling himself by that blessed name which gives the motive and the strength to depart from iniquity. He could not have rested satisfied with any thing short of the power of godliness. He would himself first have taken the place of a little child, counting all the glories of the empire but as loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ: he would have bid his people search the scriptures, and not blindly obey the priests; he would have told the clergy what a wrong position they were in, instead of increasing their pride and self-exaltation; he would have been as busy in unloading the Church of its worldly pomp, as he was in weighing it down; he would have been stripping it of its false trappings and vain ceremonies, instead of adding to them; he would have encouraged the preaching of the simple gospel to his Pagan subjects, and not have enticed them by weaving a net of golden threads; he would have known that the love of Christ, and not the lusts of the eye, could win souls; and, finally, he might have told the men of the world, from such experience as Solomon's, the vanity of the world's greatest pleasures, instead of presenting them with their own idols in a novel form.

Again, if Constantine had been a nursing-father to the Church, as some have said, he would not have united it with its worst enemy, the World. If he had known the mind of God, he would have awaited patiently the progress of the Gospel, instead of cloaking devil-worship, and veiling the abounding iniquity with forms so transparent. He would have been convinced that it was only his part to pro-

vide the best instruction he could, and not *to make Christians*. For, as it has been well said, only He who made the world can make a Christian (2 Cor. iv. 6).

The Church was, at first, gathered by individual conversion, through the power of the Holy Ghost accompanying the preaching of the Gospel: it was increased by the communication of the truth from one to another: and the Lord added to it, daily, such as should be saved. But the Church itself became impatient of this slow process; and, by degrees, *man* added to it multitudes that were not born of God, till it became what it was in the reign of Constantine.

There is no warrant in Scripture for using any other means than *the manifestation of truth to the conscience of every man, both by word and deed*. That which God blesses is the preaching of the truth accompanied by the doing of the truth: and we cannot but observe the anxiety of the apostle, that the faith of those whom he addressed should not stand in the wisdom of men, but *in the power of God*. But, as we have seen, baptism, and the Lord's supper, were now used as the supposed instruments of salvation; and Christianity had degenerated into an outward profession, consisting of many vain ceremonies and human works; whilst the clergy for the most part, by pretending to stand in the place of God to the people, practically denied the power of the Holy Ghost. The Nicene doctors might draw up a creed which was good, as far as it agreed with the word of God; but it was of no value to those who repeated it, except they were taught by the Holy Spirit. For even this, as a mere creed, or formal expression of the belief of the understanding, caused such bitter strife and contention, and hatred, between the two parties, that one of themselves remarked, the kingdom of God was become like a chaos, or like hell itself.

There could be little instruction conveyed to the pagans by many things that they heard; and if they obtained any knowledge of the elements of the Gospel, they must have been puzzled by every thing they saw. There was, it is true, the cross in the forefront of the battle, instead of the eagle: there were new temples almost as glittering as their own: there were new priests and new ceremonies;

but those who could have instructed them in the letter of the Scriptures, were, for the most part, either selfishly enjoying the sunshine of worldly prosperity, or engaged in disputes with each other. And those who were more spiritual, or professed to be so, were so astonished and disturbed by the changes around them, that they retired from the busy scene altogether.

A solitary voice, here and there, was occasionally lifted up against the prevailing corruptions, and there was not a single error that escaped attack at some time or other : but these would-be Reformers either spoiled their testimony by errors peculiar to themselves, or were charged with such by their opponents. The Mystics, of whom we read at different periods, seem to have been originally persons who saw from the Scriptures that there should be a marked difference between the people of God and the world ; and took, as they thought, the best way of representing this to the outward senses. But their self-imposed hardships, and lives of indolent contemplation, were, after all, but a mischievous imitation of real spirituality and holiness : and sin, in new and strange forms, quickly reigned over mystics, hermits, and monks.

It now remains for us to consider the guilt and loss of the Church, that is, of such as were really the Lord's people, in entering into such a close union with the world.

It was carrying out, on a large scale, the sin of union between believers and unbelievers, pointed out by the apostle (2 Cor. vi. 14) as an unequal yoke. It was an effort to produce seeming fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness,—to mingle light with darkness,—to unite Christ and Belial,—and to make the temple of God agree with idols. We can no more justify the Church of Christ in accepting the alliance, than we can excuse the disobedience of the believer in uniting herself with an unbeliever. Such a connection, either on the small or large scale, could not be formed suddenly: the woman is a backslider in heart when she begins to enjoy the society of a worldly man: the Church, as we have seen, was long declining, before it could profess an open friendship with the world.

The improvement of the world does not efface the apostasy

of the Church, even as the disobedience of the believer is not covered by the report that the unbeliever's house is better ordered under her guidance. Whatever the world gains, the Church loses: whatever carnal comfort the husband obtains, loss of spiritual comfort is constantly the portion of the wife: though, by the grace of God, the inner life, both of the Church and of the individual, is beyond destruction, because it is hid in Christ. The Church, however, is in the worst case; for it is possible the husband may be converted by means of his believing wife, whilst it is impossible the world can be converted by its apparent alliance with the Church; and the doom of such as profess the Gospel without obeying it, is as fearful as it is certain.

The apostasy is, however, described in yet stronger terms by the Spirit of God; and this deserves our serious attention.

"God manifest in the flesh" is spoken of as a *great mystery* (1 Tim. iii. 16); and the union between Christ and the Church is a *great mystery* (Eph. v. 32): the oneness of Adam and his wife was not so complete. Compare verse 30 and 1 Cor. vi. 17 with Gen ii. 23. This single truth is sufficient to prove what the Church ought to be, and its entire distinctness from the world (see John xvii. 16).

During this dispensation, the Church is called to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings and rejection (John xv. 18—20; 1 Cor. i. 9); its promised worldly portion is tribulation (John xvi. 33; 2 Tim. iii. 12); its standing is that of an espoused bride expecting the bridegroom's coming (2 Cor. xi. 2; Rev. xxii. 17); its only expectation of glory is at the return of the Lord from heaven (Rom. viii. 17—19; 1 John iii. 2)

But we are now arrived at a period in which the venerated name of the Church is retained, whilst its heavenly calling seems forgotten,—its portion set aside,—its standing abandoned,—and its expectation exchanged for the fading glories of this present evil world.

On examination, it corresponds with the mystery described in Rev. xvii., and not with that in Eph. v.; and we shall find it henceforth connected successively with all the evils there foretold. As the heavenly ornaments were dropped, earthly ornaments were multiplied; and Constantine took

care there should be plenty of "purple and scarlet, gold, and precious stones, and pearls," in order to make his adopted religion generally acceptable. The *persecution* of the powers of darkness is far less dangerous than their *protection*; and it is the latter that now comes into exercise: for Satan, having failed to destroy the religion of Christ, supported the mockery of it with all his might (Rev. xii. 3; xvii. 3). The *mystery* which excited the Apostle John's wonder, *the mystery of iniquity*, of which the Apostle Paul saw the first working, was now unfolded and set up by the adversary, in opposition to God's mystery. It seemed as if Satan had grown weary of fruitless attempts to hinder the progress of vital Christianity by open violence, and now began to work more mightily, by means of that which was rather his assembly, than the Church of Christ.

But He who is "over all, God blessed for ever," will finally destroy the devil and all his works: and, in the meantime, all whom the Father hath given to the Son *have been coming* to Him, and *still come*, in spite of every obstacle. Let us never, then, imagine that God's purposes can be rendered ineffectual by man's sin, or Satan's devices. All the false glitter and outward show of nominal Christianity could not hinder the extension of God's salvation to whom He would, from one end of the earth to the other. In these days also, it is well to remember, the lowly follower of the Lord Jesus, with a right understanding of his Master's mind, ought to have no fellowship with those who would violently overthrow existing establishments. An establishment is among the things that *were*, under the Jewish dispensation, and among the things that *will be* in the Millennial dispensation, according to the will of God. An establishment used simply as a means of securing sound Christian instruction, could not, we believe, at any period, be opposed to the mind of God; but an establishment such as that of Constantine, appears to be entirely contrary to the spirit of the present dispensation.

Nevertheless, such of the children of God as conscientiously refrain from supporting any thing which they believe their Father does not authorise, ought, in the same manner, to shrink from every attempt to overturn, by an arm of flesh,

that which He permits ; always remembering, the Lord Jesus is quickly coming to take to himself his great power and reign, and then all will be set right.

It is an unwelcome task to unfold a roll wherein is written the history of Apostate Christianity. We shall do it with a trembling hand, for there is nothing more affecting to the hearts of those who love God, than the history of nations or individuals, "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Such, however, with some bright exceptions, must be expected in that which is immediately before us ; attempting, as it does, the faithful delineation of Christendom during its darkest ages.

APPENDIX.

THE plan of Mrs. John Slater, published in her little work on Chronology, is very useful for the purpose of fixing dates in the memory. It is as follows:—

The figures are represented by letters.

<i>t.</i> being a single stroke stands for	. . . 1
<i>n.</i> being a double stroke stands for	. . . 2
<i>m.</i> having three strokes stands for	. . . 3
<i>r.</i> the last letter in the word four, for	. . . 4
<i>l.</i> (<i>L.</i> signifying five tens) stands for	. . . 5
<i>d.</i> represents the figure	. . . 6
<i>c. g. k. q.</i> the guttural letters stand for	. . . 7
<i>b. h. v. or w.</i> (the consonants in bee-hive)	. . . 8
<i>p. f.</i> the letters which go above and below the line	9
<i>s. x. z.</i> (the hissing and buzzing letters)	. . . 0

Having learned the above signs, the following sentences will fix the principal dates occurring in the preceding history.

Rule. Take the first letter of every word beginning with a *consonant*, and mark what figure is represented by each. The words beginning with vowels are only used to make up the sense of the sentences.

THE CREATION . . .	Rash Adam sins and souls are ruined.
B. C. 4004 . . .	<i>r. 4, s. 0, s. 0, r. 4.</i>
THE DELUGE . . .	Noah may receive a blessing.
BABEL . . .	Not all now shall speak alike.
ABRAHAM . . .	The pious patriarch's date.
MOSES . . .	The legislator and conductor of the Jews.
THE TEMPLE DEDICATED .	Temple of Solomon, splendid and rich.
LYCURGUS . . .	Black broth, one rule.
ROME BUILT . . .	A city large and martial.
TEN TRIBES CARRIED AWAY	Israel is captive now, to Assyria.
TWO TRIBES CARRIED CAPTIVE	Judah departs, sad and desponding.

CYRUS TAKES BABYLON	. . .	Lofty lord of Persia.
SECOND TEMPLE	. . .	Let Ezra now rebuild.
REGAL POWER ENDS AT ROME	. . .	O let Superbus fly.
BATTLE OF MARATHON	. . .	Run, Persian slaves.
CINCINNATUS	. . .	Rule, and leave digging.
END OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	. . .	Remember each sacred saying.
ALEXANDER'S DEATH	. . .	Alexander's might now terminates.
SEPTUAGINT TRANSLATION	. . .	Now it is given in Greek.
PYRRHUS IN ITALY	. . .	Now king Pyrrhus.
THE FIRST PUNIC WAR BEGINS	. . .	Now do Romans enter Africa.
THE LAST KING OF MACEDON	. . .	They defeated Persius.
JUDAS MACCABEUS	. . .	The devoted Maccabees.
CARTHAGE DESTROYED	. . .	They ruin Carthage.
SYLLA'S DICTATORSHIP	. . .	Horrors under Sylla.
MITHRIDATES DIES	. . .	Death of Mithridates.
CÆSAR IN BRITAIN	. . .	Lately landed.
CATO KILLS HIMSELF	. . .	Republicanism ends at last.
AUGUSTUS EMPEROR	. . .	One monarch is seen.

PART II. A.D.

TIBERIUS	. . .	Tiberius, emperor of Rome.
CALIGULA	. . .	Mad Caligula.
CARACTACUS	. . .	Led in triumph.
PERSECUTION BY NERO	. . .	Die, ye righteous.
JERUSALEM DESTROYED	. . .	City of Jerusalem sacked.
AGRICOLA	. . .	Agricola was sent.
NERVA AND HIS FOUR SUCCESSORS	. . .	} Five delightful Emperors.
DEATH OF PLUTARCH	. . .		} This is Trajan's preceptor.
JUSTIN MARTYR'S APOLOGY	. . .	} The learned Apology of Justin Martyr.
SALE OF THE EMPIRE	. . .		} Julianus obtained the Empire for money.
SEVERUS IN BRITAIN	. . .	Now Severus is in Britain.
HELIOGABALUS	. . .	Now the young Heliogabalus.
DEFEAT OF ZENOBIA	. . .	} Aurelian now overcomes Queen Zenobia.
ATTACK OF THE NORTHERN BARBARIANS IN DIOCLETIAN'S REIGN	. . .		} Now write of Diocletian.
THE NICENE COUNCIL	. . .	} Many assembled at Nice in Lower Asia.



INDEX.

	Page		Page
Abel	6	Anthony the Hermit	501
Abraham	19	Antigonus.....	130
Academics	218	Antioch	131, 249
Achæan League.....	61	Antiochus Soter	138
Acropolis	104	——— Theos.....	ib.
Actium	203	——— Magnus....	139, 145
Acts, Book of the	240	——— Epiphanes	151
Adrian	353	——— Eupator	162
Adrianopolis	355	Antipater I.....	121
Ælia Capitolina.....	359	——— II.....	181
Æneas	44, 206	Antiquities of the Jews....	320
Æschylus	104	Antony, Mark.....	197
Æsculapius	105	Apocrypha	143
Æsop	74	Apollonius	365
Age of the world	1, 4	Apologies	355
Agésilas	107	Apostasy	485, 507
Agis	121	Apotheosis	230
Agrarian law	127	Aqueducts.....	391
Agricola.....	233, 332	Aquila.....	362
Agrippa	368, 286	Arbaces	41
Agrippina.....	278	Arbela.....	119
Ahab	39	Archelaus	226
Ahasuerus	600	Archon	93
Akiba	357	Areopagus	34
Albinus, Governor	287	Aretas	174, 255
——— Emperor	386	Argos	34, 137
Alcibiades.....	106	Aristides	98
Alexander.....	108	Aristobulus	202
——— Balas.....	165	Aristophanes	104
——— Jannæus	172	Aristotelians	218
——— Severus....	399, 405	Aristotle	109
Alexandria	118	Arius	489, 497
Allemani	434	Artaxerxes Longimanus ..	90
Ammonius	402	——— Mnemon.....	102
Amphictyonic Council ...	57	——— the Last	408
Amphitheatre.....	383, 389	Assyria	14
Ananias	247	Athanasius	497
Ananus	302	Athenians.....	95
Ancus Martius	65	Athens	34, 93
Annas.....	233	Augurs	63

	Page		Page
Augustus Cæsar	206	Ceremonies	380, 500
The name	290	Cestius	290
Aurelian	441	Chinese	32
Babel	14	Christians	256, 460
Babylon	68, 95	Chronicles	31
Balbinus	413	Church, Meanings of	347, 486
Baptism	381, 499	of God	243, 485
Barbarians	217, 416	at Jerusalem	247
Barchochab	356	Decline of the 374,	415
Bassianus	483	Churches	282, 347, 375
Baths	391	at Constantinople	494
Belshazzar	71, 80	Cicero	184, 198
Berenice I.	138	Cincinnatus	127
II.	288, 319	Cinna	178
Bessus	120	Cities of Asia	447
Bishops	376	Civil law	93, 128
Boadicea	272	Claudius I.	266
Brennus	128	II.	440
Britain	186, 451	Clement	402
Brutus I.	124	Cleopatra	192, 295
II.	195	Clergy	380, 426
Byzantium	484, 494	Climate of Europe	188
Cadmus	34	Clitus	112, 122
Cæsar	179, 229	Cniva	418
Cæsarea	285	Cocles	125
Caiaphas	254	Coming of the Lord	462
Cain	6	Commerce	446
Caledonians	388	Commodus	372, 382
Caligula	232, 256	Confucius	32
Cambyses	88	Constantia	484, 491
Camillus	128	Constantine	473, 479, 488
Canaan	22	Constantinople	494
Canons	466	Constantius Chlorus	459, 471
Capitol	289, 323	II.	502
Caracalla	388, 396	Consuls	91
Caractacus	270	Coponius	226
Carausius	458	Coriolanus	126
Carinus	455	Cornelia I.	169
Carthage	43, 135, 151	II.	191
Carus	454	Cornelius	263
Cassander	123, 131	Councils	466
Cassibelaunus	188	Crassus	179, 189
Catechumens	499	Crispus	483, 495
Catiline	183	Cræsus	74
Cato	185, 193	Cross, The	479
Cecrops	34	Sign of the	499
Celtea	33	Wood of the	492
		Crozier	498
		Ctesiphon	368, 409

	Page		Page
Cunaxa, Battle of	102	Extent of the earth	1
Cyaxares	47	Roman Empire	343
Cynics	111	Ezra	101
Cyprian	420, 429	Fabricius	134
Cyprus, Jews of	122	Fasting	404
Cyrenius	227	Fasts	499
Cyrus	71	Fathers, The	487
the Younger	102	Feasts of Charity	379
Dacia, Conquest of	343	Felix	284
Dacians	333	Festivals	500
Daniel	81	Festus	285
Darius	103, 112, 118	Florian	452
David	35	Florus	287
Deacons	248, 376	Fortune, Goddess of	367
Decemviri	128	Franks	434
Decius	415	Funerals	393
Delphi	77, 111	Galba	276, 297
Demetrius	131, 133	Galen	371
Demosthenes	108	Galerius	459, 468
Dictator	125	Galileans	292
Dido	43	Gallienus	429
Diocletian	456	Gallus, Emperor	418
Diogenes	111	Gaul	451
Dispensations	4, 6, 9, 27	Gauls	128, 148
Contrasted	324	Gaza	118
Docetæ	337	Gentiles	263
Domitian	331	Germanicus	230
Donatists	489	Germans	417
Dress, Roman	391	Geta	388
Druids	271	Gischala	296
Easter	361, 491	Gnostics	218
Ebionites	337	Gordians, The	413
Eclectics	402	Gordian, The younger	414
Egypt	17	Goths	418, 434, 440, 483
Egyptian Jews	347	Gracchus	169
Elam	32	Granicus	112
Eleazar	289, 304	Gratus	229, 233
Elysiun	55	Greatness, True	20
Enoch	8	Greece	34, 92, 97
Epaminondas	107	Greeks	216
Epicureans	217	Hannibal	148
Epirus	132	Helen	44
Epistles	280, 328, 336	Helena	491
of Ignatius	348	Heliodorus	140
Eseenes	220	Heliogabalus	398
Esther	100	Heliopolis	163
Exorcista	426, 499		

	Page		Page
Hercules	383	Josephus.....	292, 320
Heresies.....	337, 489	Joshua.....	29
Herod	199	Josiah	48
— Agrippa	255, 266	Jotapata	294
— Antipas	235, 254	Judah, Kingdom of.....	38
Herrman	230	Judas Maccabeus	160
Hexapla.....	404	— the Galilean.....	227
Hezekiah	45	Jude.....	330
Hieroglyphics	18	Judges.....	30
High-Priests.....	62, 115	Jugurtha	171
Hillel	201	Julia Domna	388
Hippias	93	Julianus Didius	385
Hippocrates.....	104	Jupiter	56
Homer	44	— Ammon.....	118
Hophra, Pharaoh	50	Justice.....	394
Horace	206	Justin Martyr	363, 369
Horatii	64	Juvenal	272
Hosea	43	Keraunus	131
Hycsos	19	Knights	226
Hyrceanus I.....	166	Lacedæmon	34
— II.....	174, 200	Language	13
Hystaspes.....	90, 94	Laodicea.....	447
Idumeans	167	Laurentius	430
Ignatius.....	346	Legion.....	206
Immortal Band	112	Legislation	57
Imperator.....	221	Leonidas	99
Indians	32	Lepidus	197, 200
Inhabitants of the Earth ..	3	Libraries.....	2, 18, 130
Ipsus, Battle of	131	Licinius.....	475, 482
Isaac.....	27	Literature.....	370
Ishmael	23	Longinus	438
Israel, Kingdom of.....	38, 86	Lucan.....	275
Issus, Battle of	113	Lucian.....	371
Italy.....	450	Lustrum.....	91
Jacob	27	Lycurgus	58
Jaddua	116	Lysander	106
James.....	267, 286	Lysimachus.....	123, 131
Janus, Temple of.....	64, 389	Maccabees.....	156
Jason.....	153	Macedon.....	107, 168
Jerusalem.....	306, 358	Macrinus	398
John Hyrcanus	166	Magi.....	409
— the Baptist	236	Magog.....	33
— the Apostle	341	Malachi	115
— of Gischala	296	Mammea	405
Jonah	40	Manasseh	46
Jonathan Maccabeus	165	Mani.....	410
Joseph.....	24		

	Page		Page
Marathon, Battle of.....	96	Nineveh.....	15, 40
Marcus Aurelius.....	365, 372	Noah.....	8
Mardonius.....	96	Numa.....	62
Mariamne.....	199	Numerian.....	455
Marius.....	171, 175	Nuns.....	500
Marriage.....	393	Ochus.....	103
Martyrs.....	250, 421, 476	Octavius.....	197
Masora, The.....	357	Odenathus.....	437
Massinissa.....	150	Odin.....	418
Mattathias.....	157	Olympias.....	109, 122
Maxentius.....	474	Onias I.....	141
Maximin I.....	412	— II.....	143
— II.....	473	— III.....	145, 153
Maximinian.....	457, 475	Oracles.....	118
Meals, Roman.....	392	Origen.....	402, 427
Mecænas.....	206	Ostorius Scapula.....	270
Medes.....	43, 47	Ostracism.....	98
Medo-Persian Empire.....	111	Otho.....	298
Memphis.....	17	Palmyra.....	437, 443
Menahem.....	290	Pantheon.....	390
Menelaus, High Priest....	153	Parthian empire, End of ..	408
Menes.....	17	Patriarch of Tiberias.....	411
Merodach Baladan.....	45	Paul the Apostle.....	252, 278
Metropolitans.....	466	— of Antioch.....	439
Midian.....	24	— the Hermit.....	427
Millennium.....	465	Penitents.....	428
Miltiades.....	98	Pericles.....	122
Ministry.....	339, 376	Peripatetics.....	363
Mishna, The.....	357	Persecutions:—	
Mithridates.....	176	1. under Nero.....	273
Mizraim.....	17	2. — Domitian....	334
Mœris.....	18	3. — Trajan.....	344
Monks.....	500	4. — M. Antoninus	370
Montanus.....	401	5. — Severus.....	387
Moses.....	25	6. — Decius... 420, 427	
Mutius Scævola.....	125	7. — Diocletian ..	469
Mysteries.....	311, 499	8. — Maximin.. 476, 478	
Narses.....	468	9. — Galerius.....	476
Nazareth.....	228	10. — Licinius.....	483
Nebuchadnezzar.....	47	Persepolis.....	120
Nehemiah.....	101, 115	Persians.....	32, 83, 97, 408
Nero.....	271	Pertinax.....	385
Nerva.....	335	Peter.....	267
Nicene Council.....	490	Petronius.....	260
Nicomedia.....	469	Pharaoh.....	21
Niger.....	386	— Necho.....	47
Nile.....	19	Pharnaces.....	180, 193
Nimrod.....	14		

	Page		Page
Pharsalia, Battle of	191	Rabbinism.....	356, 411, 493
Phidias	104	Regulus	147
Philip of Macedon.....	107	Revelation.....	339, 436
—— the Evangelist	34	Roads.....	395, 445
—— the Tetrarch	236	Rome	389
—— the Arabian.....	414	Romans.....	216, 415
Philippi, Battle of.....	198	—— Moral state of the..	451
Philopœmon	168	Romulus	61
Phœnicians	36	Rufus, T.....	317
Pilate.....	233, 254	—— Turnus	357
Pisistratus.....	93	Sacraments	382
Plague, The .. 105, 143, 205,	436	Saints.....	380, 424
Plato.....	106, 142	Samaria.....	46, 167
Platonists	218	Samaritans	228
—— New	402	Sanhedrin.....	234
Pliny the Elder	322	Sapor	429
—— the Younger	344	Sardanapalus	41
Plutarch.....	342	Sarmatians	496
Polybius.....	2, 163	Saul	35
Polycarp	348, 361, 369	Scipio	149
Pompey.....	171, 189	Scythians	34, 95, 121
Porphyry	433	Sejanus	232
Porsenna	125	Seleucia	368
Prætorians.....	222, 232, 481	Seleucus	123, 130
Prayers for the dead.....	375	Semiramis.....	15
Priest, The word	422	Seneca.....	271, 273
Priests.....	53, 381, 423	Sennacherib.....	45
Prince of the Captivity ...	410	Separatists	425
Probus.....	453	Septuagint	142
Procurators.....	226, 229	Servius Tullius	91
Prophecy.....	137, 141, 436	Sesostris	25
Prophets.....	377	Severus, General	357
Proselytes	167	—— Septimus.....	386
Ptolemy Soter.....	123, 130	Sewers.....	391
—— Philadelphus.....	131, 138, 142	Shalmaneser.....	42
—— Euergetes.....	138	Shammai	201
—— Philopator.....	138, 144	Sicily	125
—— Epiphanes	139	Sicyon.....	34
—— Lathyrus.....	172, 182	Simon the Just	141
—— Auletes	183	—— II.....	144
—— the Last.....	192	—— Maccabeus	166
—— the astronomer ...	371	—— Magus.....	251, 283
Publicans	227	—— Son of Gioras....	303, 317
Punishments	395	Slavery.....	160, 448
Pupienus	413	Smerdis.....	88
Purgatory.....	375, 423	Socrates.....	106
Pyrrhus	132	Solomon.....	36
Pythagoras	363		

	Page		Page
Solon	93, 104	Tyre	36, 65
Spain	450	— New.....	96, 113
Sparta	34	Ulpian	405
Spartans	58, 93	Valeria.....	482
Stephen	249	Valerian	419, 429
Stoics	218	Vandals.....	418, 496
Suetonius Paulinus	271	Varanes I.....	454
Susa	90, 120	Verus	354
Switzerland	450	— Younger.....	367, 369
Sylla.....	175	Vespasian	292, 299
Syracuse.....	136	Vesuvius	322
Syria.....	137	Victoria	440
Tacitus	452	Vigils	500
Talmud	493	Vine.....	447
Tarquin the Proud.....	91, 124	Virgil	206
Tartarus.....	55	Vishnu.....	54
Temple, The.....	224, 314	Vitellius, Prefect	254
— Spiritual	245	— Emperor	299
Tertullian.....	381, 387, 402	Volsci	126
Tetricus.....	441, 443	War	29
Thales	75	Worship.....	378
Theatres.....	104	Xantippus.....	147
Thebes.....	17, 182	Xenophon.....	106
Themistocles	102	Xerxes I.....	97
Thermopylæ.....	99	— II.....	102
Thrasylbulus.....	106	Zealots	302
Tiberius.....	230, 253	Zedekiah.....	50
Tiglath-Pileser.....	42	Zenobia.....	438, 442
Tigranes.....	180	Zopyrus.....	95
Timoleon	136	Zoroaster.....	32, 89
Tiridates.....	468, 492	Zorobabel	86
Titus.....	292, 322		
Trajan	336, 342		
Transubstantiation	423		
Tyrant.....	93		

