THE

EARLY CONFLICTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE

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——*ἐξῆλθε νικῶν καὶ ἵνα νικήσῃ.*

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

GEORGE BURGESS, D. D.

BISHOP OF MAINE,

HIS BROTHER

Inscribes this Volume,

IN TOKEN OF

AFFECTIONATE REGARD.

PREFACE.

We believe that few among those who profess and call themselves Christians have a clear idea of the difficulties to which our faith was subjected in the earliest ages of its existence, or the severity of the conflict through which it was obliged to pass. And yet it was a contest sanctified to us by deeds of heroic daring such as elsewhere the world has never seen. It was no sudden outbreak, exhausting itself in one burst of enthusiasm, but a power of endurance exhibited through long centuries, until at last the victory was won, and the despised faith was throned in the high places of the earth. It was a warfare, too, not against one form of evil alone, but against all that the world could summon to its aid, in the pride of intellect or the opposition of a perverted nature.

It is thus, that, throwing ourselves back into that age, we have endeavored to display the faith, tracing as clearly as possible its successive triumphs over every enemy. There is nothing new in the following pages—no attempt at originality of view—for every thing which is brought forward on these subjects must necessarily be gleaned from the writings of those who have gone before us. It is on the manner only in which these truths are presented, that we must rest our claim to attention. History is generally too much broken up into distinct periods, and the natural course of events interrupted, to mark the end of particular centuries. Of this, Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History is the most glaring example. The consequence often is a confusion in the mind of an ordinary reader, as turning from one subject to another, he is obliged to resume the thread of the narrative where some time ago it was abandoned. It is this we have endeavored to avoid, tracing—as far as is necessary for the general reader—through successive centuries, the gradual waning of a particular form of opposition, until its power was broken,

and it ceased to be numbered among the formidable enemies of the faith.

This narrative leaves the Church indeed in the hour of its triumph, yet still when clouds were beginning to darken the horizon, and the faith was declining from its early purity. But this is only the first chapter in its history. There are two more which should be written to complete the view. The second comprises the period of the Middle Ages, when a feudal tyranny overspread Europe, and nothing but the influence of the Church—though she was forced to prophesy in sackcloth—prevented the elements of society from rushing into ruinous conflict. The third embraces the narrative of that awakening of intellect which is known by the name of the Reformation—a fearful convulsion, when the human mind on the Continent, throwing off its ancient chains, ran wild in the enjoyment of its liberty, emancipating itself indeed from the fetters of superstition, yet deserting every old landmark, and in the course of three centuries passing into the coldness of neology or the utter dreariness of infidelity. We are left to look to England

alone for the picture of a true Catholic Church, freed from Romish errors, yet retaining all that is taught by Scripture and primitive antiquity.

Whether the present writer—even if life and health are spared—shall be enabled to complete the task thus marked out, is doubtful. It depends somewhat upon the reception with which this volume shall meet from those for whom it is intended; and also, whether as the shadows lengthen in his path of life, and the claims upon his time are each year increasing, he will be able to turn aside from his professional duties long enough to make those investigations which the importance of these subjects demands.

ALBANY, *Dec.*, 1849.

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JUDAISM.

Our Lord "came not to send peace but a sword on the earth." The notes which angels sang at His birth, proclaiming as the effect of His advent, "on earth peace, goodwill toward men," seemed to die away over the hills of Judea, and the lesson which they taught to be utterly forgotten. The New Dispensation was welcomed only by the shout of scorn or the defiance of open hostility. Its earliest Herald ended His short and troubled life upon the Cross. And how fared it then with the infant church—the little flock from which the Shepherd was thus torn away? It found itself in an arena of deadly strife. To whichever side it turned, it was met by bitter opposition. Its situation may aptly be compared to that of one of its followers, as he stood for martyrdom in a Pagan amphitheatre. Around him were the wild beasts of the forest ravening for his blood, and above him, circle on circle, were foes more fierce than they, who had doomed him to a cruel death. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." Thus it was that Christianity stood amid the dominant systems of this world.

But not like the early martyr did it sink and die before its foes. Its path indeed was marked with blood—the noblest of its champions offered up their lives upon its altar—but *it* survived. It came forth from the conflict leaving its enemies stricken and prostrate. It was "persecuted, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed." Realizing the classic fable of Antæus, who when stricken to the earth derived new vigor from the touch of the mighty Mother, so the Church sprang up from every struggle with fresh strength for the next, and triumphed in every contest. The Ark of Truth floated uninjured down the stream of time amid the wrecks of the religions it had crushed.

We look back to this as a history of the Church's glory. We rejoice as we see her thus confronting every enemy and yielding to none. We feel that the martyr's undying courage is a part of *our* heritage, and that the glory he won in his spiritual conflicts is the common property of a brotherhood to which we also belong. But how seldom do we realize the severity of that contest through which the faith was obliged to pass! We meet with traces of it in the Word of God, as it relates the trials which gathered about the Apostles, when persecuted in one city they were obliged to flee to another, and found that the faith was "everywhere spoken against." But to comprehend it fully we must take a wider view of the state of the world, and the condition of those systems against which Christianity was obliged to array itself. We must throw ourselves completely back into the age when our Lord and his

Apostles went forth as teachers of this new religion through the villages of Galilee; we must try to sympathize with the Jew in those habits and feelings which formed the national character of the people; we must understand the tone of public sentiment while they were crushed by the Roman power, and the influence of those stirring events which quickened every pulse from Idumea to Lebanon, till all at last were maddened to desperation; we must appreciate the hold which rites coming down from a dim and distant antiquity had upon those who were trained to regard them as sacred and unchangeable. And the same course must be pursued, not only with the people of that Holy Land which our Lord "environed with his blessed feet," but with those of every other country in which we trace the progress of the faith. Thus we shall be able to identify ourselves with the past—to understand the nature of that warfare through which Christianity passed, as it slowly developed itself into strength, and won its way among the adverse elements it encountered, not only in Judea, but throughout the earth.

This is the task we purpose to attempt. We would gather from the pages of ecclesiastical history the allusions to that mighty conflict of opinions which then stirred society to its very depths, to portray, as fully as our limits will allow, the contest our faith waged with Judaism—with the philosophy of Greece—the licentiousness of Corinth—the degrading errors of barbarism—and that beautiful classical mythology which was nowhere so powerful as under the protection of the domi-

nant hierarchy of Pagan Rome. With all these antagonists in succession St. Paul found himself in conflict. Against all these errors he was forced to contend. We have therefore only to trace him in his progress, and the changing scenes of his ministry will bring before us the varied battle-fields on which our faith was called to struggle, not only for power, but even for existence.

St. Paul began his labors—as our Lord directed all his disciples—among "his brethren, his kinsmen after the flesh, who were Israelites." To adopt the language of the sacred historian, "he preached Christ in the synagogues." This, then, presents us with a view of CHRISTIANITY IN CONFLICT WITH JUDAISM.

We know that everywhere the Jew arrayed himself against the faith with the most relentless hostility, and that thus the worst foes the Apostles met, were "they of their own household." And we can easily discern those peculiar features of Judaism which so enlisted all the feelings and prejudices of its worshippers, and rendered them deaf to every argument which might attack its permanency. One of these was the exclusive nature of its rites. The Jews felt that they occupied a peculiar position in the world—that God had selected them to be the special guardians of his truth—and that whenever they wandered from it, retribution followed in their steps. The Unity of the Godhead was the great doctrine they were called to support, and this they were to maintain single-handed against all the world. Everywhere else, this cardinal truth, if not

utterly extinct, was but dimly recognised as "the recondite treasure of a high and learned class," or a conclusion held with no steady grasp by the philosophical few who had adopted it in their creed. But in the popular theology it was entirely unknown. The symbols which an early priesthood had devised to represent the attributes of God, had become themselves the deities of later generations. The Persians learned to worship the pure immaterial fire which had displayed the Theism of their ancestors, and the forms by which the priests of Memphis and Heliopolis shadowed forth their views of the One Supreme, their mystic import forgotten, became in after ages the countless gods of Egypt.

With the Jew alone the Divine Unity was the very groundwork of his creed, and a truth distinctly recognised by every class, from the learned Rabbi in the courts of the sanctuary, to the humblest vine-dresser on the hills of Hebron. Alone among all the nations of the earth, their temple held no "graven image;" and when the conqueror Pompey entered the Holy Place, he learned with wonder, says Tacitus, that it contained no emblem of the Deity whose sanctuary he had violated.* Heathen writers, too, observed the fact, and sometimes recorded their astonishment at a spiritual worship, the sublimity of which they seemed unable to appreciate. Its grandeur was lost even upon the philosophical historian of

* *Hist.* v. 9. Nulla intus Deum effigie, vacuam sedem et inania arcana.

Rome, though he recognised the fact itself, and in a single sentence described their doctrine.* The poet, too, who pours out his sarcasms so bitterly upon the vices of his countrymen, on one occasion turns aside to give a distorted view of the tenets of the Jews, and states it as a truth, that they adored nothing but the clouds and the Divinity that fills the heavens—

"Nil præter nubes et cœli numen adorent."†

Each prophet inculcated upon the Hebrews the truth, that idolatry was to be their national peril and their national crime. The Deity they worshipped was "a jealous God," and apostacy, even in a single city, if not atoned for, was to bring upon the whole land weakness and servitude. Judea was the fortress of the truth, and among its rugged heights and through its deep valleys, the chosen people dwelt from age to age as guardians of the honor of their Sovereign, though beleaguered by unnumbered foes. Difficult indeed was the warfare committed to these simple and pastoral tribes, for the idolatrous nations which hemmed them in on every side were "greater and mightier than themselves," and the worship of their "strange gods" gorgeous and seductive. With the faith they were to support, Egypt, Philistia, and Sidon,—the Chaldean, the Assyrian, and the Grecian,—could have no sympathy, and Israel therefore stood alone. Through all the changes of so-

* Judæi mente sola, unumque numen intelligunt.... Summum illud et æternum, neque mutabile, neque interiturum. *Tac. Hist.* v. 5.

† *Juv.* xiv. 141

ciety—in every gradation, from the barbarism of a nomadic tribe to the luxury which marked their closing years—the Jews remained an unmingled people. In every step, left as they were in a measure to work out their own advance in civilization, and displaying ever the virtues and the vices peculiar to the state through which they were passing, they retained that great lesson for the preservation of which Abraham had been forced to leave the home of his idolatrous fathers, lest their Isabian worship should infect his children. Thus, we have always the same picture before us. Under the tents of the Syrian shepherds, when they wandered over the wide and open plains of inland Asia—in the gorgeous temple of Solomon,—or when Grecian art endeavored in vain to graft its refinements on the rigid system of the Mosaic law—they preserved the simplicity of their creed, or if for a time they wandered, returned again with new devotion to cling to their belief in the Unity of God. It is therefore a high compliment which Gibbon pays them, when he bitterly says—"The sullen obstinacy with which they maintained their peculiar rites and unsocial manners, seemed to mark them out a distinct species of men, who boldly professed, or who faintly disguised, their implacable hatred to the rest of human kind. Neither the violence of Antiochus, nor the acts of Herod, nor the example of the circumjacent nations, could ever persuade the Jews to associate with the institutions of Moses the elegant mythology of the Greeks."* What the

* *Decline and Fall*, ch. xv.

skeptical historian regarded as religious fanaticism, was with them the result of a deep, settled, and conscientious feeling.

And this was the very object of Providence. This solitary attachment of the Israelites to their sacred code was to perpetuate an immutable faith. They were to be different from every other people, and their system to be what no other nation had imagined. They were withdrawn from the rest of their fellow-beings, by isolating them amidst a multitude of rites and ceremonies, to occupy their unsteady spirits. These were gorgeous, to indulge them in their sensual tastes, as far as possible without violating the adoration of the Creator; and the people were hostile to their neighbors, that they might never be seduced to blend with them.* "A great gulf" they could not pass, was to separate them from the dark and sanguinary superstition of Moloch, the licentious worship of Baalpeor, and the impure and flagitious rites of the Babylonian Mylitta, of Chemosh and Ashtaroth.

We can imagine, then, how deeply this system must have been graven on the hearts and linked to the prejudices of the people. And yet against it—so cherished and time-honored—the new faith seemed to be arrayed. Christianity proclaimed that Judaism was intended only for the childhood of the human race, but the time had now arrived when they should "put away childish things;" that it was to be the conservator of the truth, while, age after age, the promises of Redemption

* *D'Israeli's Genius of Judaism*, p. 75.

were slowly brightening; but now, "the fulness of time" had come, and its mission was fulfilled. It needed nothing else, therefore, to summon up against the faith the fanaticism of every sect among the Jews, for with all it was equally uncompromising. With the Pharisee, it poured contempt upon his boasted learning, and swept away the long list of traditions, which ages had been building up, until every action of the Jew was fettered with a grievous bondage. The lawyers—the interpreters of the Sacred Books—were filled with dismay, while they listened to one who assumed authority over the divinely inspired institutes of their ancient Lawgiver, because Moses was only "faithful in all his house as a servant;" but He Himself "as a son over his own house"—while the Sadducee felt that the very existence of his sect depended on the defeat of Christianity. The members of this increasing party in the Sanhedrim had, at an early period of our Lord's ministry, been brought into collision with Him, and retired from the contest silenced and ashamed. And as the new faith became more fully revealed, and "the rising from the dead" stood forth as one of its prominent articles, it was of course committed in irreconcilable hostility with those whose leading doctrine was "that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit."*

In addition to this, the fact that to the Gentiles the Gospel was preached, gave a final blow to every thing which enabled the Jews exclusively to appropriate the promises to themselves.

* *Acts*, xxiii. 8.

Enslaved as they were to ancient prejudices, this doctrine was alone sufficient to array them against the innovating faith. It was something utterly inconsistent with the privileges of the chosen people, and the cherished idea from which they parted most reluctantly was the belief, that for them alone were reserved the promised blessings of the Messiah's reign. It clung to them even after they had become the disciples of our Lord, and the first Christian teachers were Jews in the inveteracy of their prejudices. Of their early narrow views they could not divest themselves. They had, indeed, found the Messiah—they preached Him to their own countrymen—but they believed not that any except of the lineage of Abraham were to share in these blessings. In His death and sufferings they recognised the fulfilment of those prophecies which portrayed Him as "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and now they waited for the hour when He should be revealed in His glory, and sitting on the throne of David, reign over a Kingdom without limit and without end. Even in those fearful days, when He still lingered on earth after His resurrection, this idea was still predominant, and an Apostle could put to Him the question—"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Before that generation should pass away, they expected all these things to be fulfilled—a day of triumph once more dawn upon the favored people as they gathered around their King—and the redeemed Jew, released from his thraldom, behold the Roman crushed before him, and his country's sceptre swaying a wider dominion than in the

days of Solomon. There is, therefore, nothing more striking in the whole history of our faith than the manner in which it acted on the minds of the Apostles themselves, gradually emancipating them from the narrowness of their Jewish prejudices, and imparting a wider and more comprehensive view. Their contracted horizon expanded as light was poured in upon their minds; it passed the borders of the Holy Land, and, like the horizon in the natural world, receding as the ministers of the truth advanced, lured them on to nobler conquests. One barrier after another was swept away—first the proselytes of the gate were admitted within the pale—then the whole Gentile world was welcomed into their bond of brotherhood, and St. Paul could make the sublime announcement, as embodying the spirit of his faith—"There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." Thus, at last, every film of prejudice was removed, and they were prepared to go forth to the work of the world's redemption. To them Jesus had ceased to be only the Messiah of the Jews, and they had learned to recognise Him in His loftier office of Redeemer of the whole human race. Yet we perceive how slow were the successive steps by which they reached this point, and freed their minds from the inveterate influence of the religion in which they had been trained.

But this was too high, too mysterious a view for the narrow vision of the Jewish Rabbis. They realized that their contest with the new faith had depending on it no trifling results. It

was not a warfare between rival sects for supremacy over the public mind. It was a struggle for the maintenance of that whole existing system on which their power was built up—for the life or death of that authority which they wielded with such despotic rule over a priest-ridden people. Let all Israel once acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, and their spiritual aristocracy was gone—their hierarchy must descend from its high place and be like the rest, mere learners in the school of Christ. Remove that passionate jealousy with which the people looked upon the ceremonial law, and it was smiting to the ground that majestic fabric which ages had been rearing into symmetry and beauty. And with it, of course, fell the power and influence of its teachers. What, to the Christian, was the profound study of the Rabbi, which enabled him to decide on the ambiguous passages of the Levitical law? What cared he for the acuteness of the scribe or the subtlety of the lawyer, when he had rejected the traditions they spent their lives in unfolding? To him the ancient Cabala was invested with no authority, and the learning of the older wise men was set aside for the simple teaching of Him who "spake as never man spake." To his eyes the wisdom of the synagogue and the school was obsolete. He had listened to nobler instructions, and his spirit rejoiced in loftier hopes and more cheering consolations than the rulers of Israel could minister to him. They looked, therefore, upon the Christian as an irreclaimable apostate, and one whose influence was fatal to all that most they prized. It was breaking the chains with which this hierarchy

had so long enslaved the public mind—it was sweeping away that popular reverence on which their supremacy rested—and stripping them at once of that pride of superior wisdom they had so long enjoyed and abused. And to whom were they to yield the sceptre of their power? Who were to fill the lofty seats they were called to abandon? A peasant of Galilee, with his disciples, fishermen, and tax-gatherers—leaders with regard to whom their own associates could ask, "Whence have these men learning?" Can we wonder, then, that every feeling and passion was stirred up from its lowest depths—that habit, and pride, and interest united to awaken their animosity against the rising faith—and that they replied to the holy precepts of its Teacher only with a sneer or an anathema?

It would be impossible to find any sect among the Jews which was disposed to make common cause with Christianity, or rather, whose prejudices did not at once array them against it. In the progress of the sacred narrative we see this developed, as our Lord and His disciples encountered either the contemptuous scorn of the Herodian and the aristocratic Sadducee,* or the fanatical rage of the zealot and the Pharisee. But of one sect alone, the Essenes, we find no mention there, nor does our Lord, in His discourses, seem ever to allude to them. Yet we know, from their tenets, that in this respect

* The sect of the Sadducees was confined to the wealthy and influential men, principally in the metropolis and cities. John Hircanus, the High-Priest, united himself with them, and after his death his sons continued to favor them.

they could have formed no exception to their countrymen. They were the predecessors of the Therapeutæ of Egypt, and in a later day, of the monks in the Christian Church. The same regions which, at the coming of our Lord, witnessed the emaciated forms of these Jewish ascetics, three centuries afterwards exhibited the folly of the Stylites.* Retiring from the world to the shores of the Dead Sea, the Essenes dwelt on some highly cultivated oases in the desert, among groves of palm-trees, of which, according to the picturesque expression of Pliny, they were the companions. Amid fertile fields, won from the barren wilderness, they passed their rigid and ascetic lives. They neither married nor gave in marriage—they neither bought nor sold, but all things were in common, and they gained their support from the earth by the sweat of their brow. Silent and unsocial, each one wrapped in his own thoughts, a quiet reigned through their habitations like that which now marks a Carthusian monastery. "Wonderful nation!" says the Roman naturalist, "which endures for centuries, but in which no child is ever born!"

With the tenets of the Jewish law they seemed to have but little in common, or rather, we should say, they had abandoned almost every thing that made Judaism distinctive. They went not up to Jerusalem, nor offered sacrifices in the temple; and the Heaven to which they looked forward was more like the fabled Elysium of the Greeks, than any thing which revelation

* *Mosheim's Eccles. Hist.*, v. i. cap. 3, sect. 12.

holds out as our future rest. Still less would their creed accord with the free and lofty spirit of Christianity. It might agree with the faith in its abolition of the ceremonial law and the substitution of a more spiritual worship in its place, but beyond this every thing would be repugnant to that system in which the Essene had embodied his faith. He was as much the slave to forms and minute observances as the strictest Pharisee, who prayed at the corner of the streets, or tithed out, with scrupulous accuracy, his "anise, mint, and cummin." But, unlike the Pharisee, he never attempted to disseminate his principles. He sought no proselytes, and could never have sympathized with that aggressive spirit of the Gospel, which bid its followers inculcate the truth wherever sinning, suffering man could be found to listen. Essenism was, indeed, a form of that wide-spread Oriental philosophy which, in after ages, under the name of Manihæism, infected for a time the Churches of Asia. Its main principle was, that all matter is the creation of an Evil Being; and, therefore, life must be spent in the most severe mortification of this material body which interfered with the purity of the immaterial spirit. Its appetites and propensities of every kind were, in themselves, evil. Every pleasure was forbidden as sin, and the entire extinction of the passions of the body was inculcated as the only real virtue. In this they agreed with the stern teaching of the Grecian Stoic, but not with the lessons of Him who dignified our mortal nature by Himself assuming it, and who hath declared that the body is "the temple of the Holy Ghost," and

is to be again lifted up from the dust of dissolution and made fit forever to be the tabernacle of its spiritual and glorified partner. Is there not, too, something significant in the fact, that our Lord seems never to have brought His Gospel before the members of this monastic fraternity? He appears never to have encountered them, though he mixed with men of every class, and every shade of opinion—the self-righteous Pharisees and the despised publicans and sinners—and in His repeated journeys, we can trace Him through every district of the Holy Land, except that near the Dead Sea, in which the agricultural settlements of the Essenes were situated.*

These then were the different sects of Judaism. Upon all of them the exclusive spirit of its rites was acting, creating that narrowness of view which was sufficient to array them against a faith whose gentle lessons and expanded charity were a reproach to all.

But another consideration—the people were attached to the rites of their law from their venerable antiquity. It is a strange coincidence that the language of the Hebrews contains no present tense. How singularly adapted to the state of a peo-

* *Milman's Hist. of Christianity*, v. i. p. 158. Philo divides the Essenes into two classes, the practical and the contemplative, the former dwelt in Palestine and the latter chiefly in Egypt. It is to these, called the Therapeutæ, that many learned men suppose St. Paul refers, when he warns the Colossians against "voluntary humility," and "worshipping of angels," and where he censures that kind of "will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body," which distinguished these Egyptian ascetics.

ple who had themselves no present—who, deep in the shadows of the past, seemed to have flitted on the scene from some pre-existent state, and whose gaze was either backward to the glories of an earlier day, or forward to the nobler revelations which the future promised! Yet living thus with the past, how must the institutions of their faith have become entwined with every feeling of reverence and affection! With them, every thing was ancient—nothing obsolete. They felt that these rites were inculcated on their fathers, while "the earth shook and the heavens also dropped at the presence of God." The fires of Sinai proclaimed the deliverance of this law to Moses. The appearance of the Deity—an appearance without similitude—rested before the eye of mortal man, and millions of human witnesses attested and trembled. From amidst the dense cloud resting on the awful mountain, "the voice of words" sanctified and established Judaism to them forever; and when their leader returned from the lofty peak where he had been alone with God, the awe-struck people beheld his face so radiant with the reflected glory before which he had been standing, that they could not gaze upon it, and he was obliged to cover it with a veil. Thus they received their system of belief and worship, and it is to this that the Law-giver sublimely refers when he says—"He is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen." These wonders formed the legends of the people which they rehearsed to each other as they sat in their homes, or met together on their holy festivals, and it was

on these awful revelations that they rested the foundation of their faith. It was to these, too, that the Pharisees exultingly appealed, when as an answer to the miracles of Jesus, they replied, "We know that God spake unto Moses."

They saw also that the laws of other legislators had passed away, for their views were transient as the glory of the people to whom they administered. Mysterious Egypt, with her lessons of wisdom which were ancient when Greece was young—Media and Persia, with their laws pronounced unchangeable—Assyria with her mighty power, and Babylon with her magnificence—all the nations with whom through the lapse of centuries the chosen people had been brought into contact, had in succession lost the sceptre which once they wielded, and their codes become only records on the page of history. And over each mighty empire, as its greatness sank in ruin, the Hebrew prophets had uttered their sublime funeral anthem, like the tragic chorus of the Greeks, as they calmly watched the progress of some awful drama.* But "the fewest of all people" were still a nation living among these wrecks of the past, and surviving the spoilers who had formerly trampled them beneath their feet. And the laws of Moses—unaltered as they were once delivered to their race, breathing the inspiration in which they originated—after countless ages, were still guiding their unchangeable tribes, and were thus commended to their affections by claims which each year was strengthening.

* *Milman's Hist. of Jews*, i. 243.

And how much was there to enlist the attachment of the worshippers! Solemn as were the sanctions of their faith, there was much in its festivals which was joyous and calculated to brighten the chain of brotherhood which linked together their distant tribes. See them in the autumn, when, the vintage over, the Feast of Tabernacles called them to rejoice. When the gardens and fields had begun to assume the sear and yellow hue of the declining year, the environs of their villages were again covered with a sudden verdure. The palm, the fir, the myrtle, and the pomegranate, were compelled to yield their more durable foliage; and while the fields were parched by the heat of the sun, and the vineyards had been already stripped, at once Spring appeared to return with all its variety of colors.

> "The thickly woven boughs they wreathe,
> A soft reviving odor breathe
> Of summer's gentle reign."

The citrons and apples of Paradise glowed amidst the dark green of the bowers, and when the evening star appeared in heaven above the western sea, every family, after the customary ablutions, left its dwelling to occupy its tabernacle, thus commemorating the years their fathers dwelt in tents during their passage through the wilderness. The inhabitants of Jerusalem beheld at once thousands of lamps sparkling forth on the Mount of Olives, in the vale of Kedron, and on the roofs of the houses in their city, seeming like stars of the earth, answering to those by which the heavens were already over-

spread.* And the gentle breeze which stirred the leaves of their bowers brought on its wings the sounds of festivity and mutual congratulations, as they echoed on every side amidst the music of the harp and cymbals. It was indeed a season of rejoicing; and each year, as the sacred festival came round, was renewed that scene witnessed at its first celebration after the captivity, when Nehemiah declared, "there was very great gladness."† Then the song and dance were heard in the vineyards of Heshbon and Esdraelon, while loftier recollections cheered their hearts than any which could gladden those who on the banks of the Ilissus rejoiced at the gathering of the grapes. No laughter of mad votaries echoed through their tabernacles, no frantic bacchanals degraded their week of festivity, no dances of the satyrs spoke of the rites of heathenism‡—but the daughters of Israel, as they moved in graceful measures, thought of Miriam by the Red Sea, and their hearts responded,

"I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."

Still more striking was the yearly gathering of their people at Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. To the hill of God, the habitation of their Heavenly King, they turned with glad-

* *Helon's Pilgrimage*, ii. 230. † *Neh.* viii. 17.

‡ Under the persecution of Antiochus, as a last insult, the feasts of the Bacchanalia were substituted for the national festival of Tabernacles, and the reluctant Jews were forced to join in these riotous orgies, and carry the ivy, the insignia of the god.

ness as this solemn festival drew nigh. "Thither the tribes went up." It was not the simultaneous moving of the population of a single country—not even the gathered worshippers from each district and village of Palestine—but the confluence of countless multitudes of pilgrims from every quarter of the world; for the dispersed Jews had planted their law in its remotest extremities, and all its proselytes, at least once in their lives, presented themselves to pay their homage at that temple which was to them the only earthly shrine of their faith. From their homes on the Euphrates came the descendants of those who had remained in Babylonia after the captivity, where they had grown to be a powerful community; yet still they "remembered Zion," and taught their children to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land." The tribes of Arabia—the thousands who in Egypt lived where once their fathers dwelt as slaves—the varied races of Asia Minor, Damascus, Greece, Italy, and even the distant West, as far as Spain and Gaul—all sent their representatives to mingle with that mighty concourse which then thronged the streets of Jerusalem. St. Luke thus enumerates some of those who listened to the first preaching of the Gospel after the crucifixion of our Lord:*—"Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the

* "Every race of mankind, in its most marked peculiarities, there passed beneath the eye. There came the long train of swarthy slaves and menials round the chariot of the Indian prince, clothed in the silks and jewels of the regions beyond the Ganges. Upon them pressed the troop of African lion-hunters, half naked, but with their black limbs

dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." As the feast drew nigh, the highways which led to the Holy City were filled as by one living torrent; and Josephus, from the number of paschal lambs sacrificed on one of these solemn occasions, has estimated the pilgrims and residents at Jerusalem at nearly three millions. "It is difficult for those who are ignorant of the extraordinary power which local religious reverence holds over Southern and Asiatic nations, to imagine the state of Judea and Jerusalem at the time of this great periodical festival. The rolling onward of countless and gathering masses of population to some of the temples in India; the caravans from all

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wreathed with pearl and fragments of unwrought gold. Behind them moved on their camels a patriarchal group, the Arab Sheik, a venerable figure with his white locks flowing from beneath his turban, leading his sons, like our father Abraham, from the wilderness to the Mount of Vision. Then rolled on the glittering chariot of the Assyrian chieftain, a regal show of purple and gems, and convoyed by horsemen covered with armor. The Scythian Jews, wrapped in the furs of the wolf and bear, iron men of the north; the noble Greek, the perfection of the human form, with his countenance beaming the genius and beauty of his country; the broad and yellow features of the Chinese rabbins; the fair skins and gigantic forms of the German tribes; strange clusters of men unknown to the limits of Europe or Asia, with their black locks, complexions of the color of gold, and slight yet sinewy limbs, marked with figures of suns and stars struck into the flesh—marched crowd on crowd. The representative world was before me."—*Chroly's Salathiel*, i. 10.

quarters of the Eastern world, which assemble at Mecca during the holy season; the multitudes which formerly flowed to Loretto or Rome at the great ceremonies, when the Roman Catholic religion held its unenfeebled sway over the mind of Europe—do not surpass, perhaps scarcely equal, the sudden, simultaneous confluence towards the capital of Judea at the time of the Passover."* It was indeed a magnificent spectacle, well calculated to awaken in the breast of the Jew every feeling of national pride, both for his country and his faith.

We must remember, too, the deep religious spirit, amounting even to a high-wrought enthusiasm, which pervaded all these gathered thousands, and invested every step of their pilgrimage with a surpassing interest. "They went from strength to strength, until every one of them in Zion appeared before God." We can imagine some features of this scene, as it was witnessed among those who went up from the land of Judea. The sun is rising over Hebron, its earliest beams lighting up the lofty palm-trees at the gates, when every family is in motion, for the procession is about to set forth to Jerusalem. The priests and elders head the train—the people follow, interspersed with their camels and beasts of burden—while the Levites, with their instruments of music, are distributed among the multitude. At length the signal is given, and as they set forward together, they raise the Psalm—

* *Milman's Hist. of Christianity*, i. 152.

I was glad when they said unto me,
We will go into the house of the Lord!
Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem is built as a city,
That is at unity in itself!
Thither the tribes go up,
Even the tribes of the Lord to testify unto Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of the Lord.
There is the seat of judgment,
Even the seat of the house of David.
O pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
They shall prosper that love thee.
Peace be within thy walls,
Plenteousness within thy palaces!
For my brethren and companions' sake,
I wish thee prosperity!
Because of the temple of our God,
I will seek to do thee good.—*Ps.* cxxii.

It rises like "the noise of many waters," for a soul-felt exultation animates the voices of old and young. Sweetly must the sounds have been borne to one who from a distance could have watched their march, as now their holy song rose from the summit of some hill, and then again sank into the depths of the valley. It was on such occasions only that the true sublimity and beauty of the Jewish poetry could be felt, when the harp and the viol were heard—the tabret, the cymbal, and the stringed instruments—mingled with the voices of the living multitude. They were a people indeed who imbibed a love of music with the air they breathed, and whose very climate seemed to dispose them to harmony. The glorious anthems, too, which they chanted—anthems which taught as much as

they elevated—were those composed by their warrior king, when a shepherd-boy he watched his father's flock in Bethlehem, or which had cheered his solitude in the desert caves of Engeddi. And now—fresh and vivid for a thousand years—they had become "familiar in their mouths as household words."

Every scene through which the procession passed was legendary, and served for a theme on which the old addressed their children. The region around was smiling with all the luxuriance of Nature—its lovely valleys filled with vineyards and olive-groves—yet it had a higher interest from the fact, that there the patriarchs had pitched their tents and tended their flocks, and in the morning of the world held high communion with Jehovah. They passed through the grove of Mamre, and looked with veneration upon the gigantic oaks and terebinths, beneath which Abraham dwelt and angels appeared to him; and not far distant was the Cave of Macpelah, where, said Jacob, as he gave directions that his remains should be placed—"they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife; and there I buried Leah." The same feelings seemed to animate all. The youths and maidens bounded for joy, and tears of pleasure stood in the eyes of the aged. Those who were going up for the first time to the festival, looked and listened to those who had already been there, as if to hear from them an explanation of what they sung. The old heard, in these festive acclamations, the echo of their own youthful joys, and while their

hearts swelled with the remembrance of the feelings of their earliest pilgrimage, they beat yet higher with gratitude to Jehovah, who had permitted them, in their gray hairs, to go up once more to His Holy Place.

In every town and village to which they came, they were received with shouts of joy. With the proverbial hospitality of the East, before the doors of every house tables were standing, with dates and honey and bread, to refresh the pilgrims. At the junction of the roads, in the fields, and at the entrance of each town, new crowds of persons were waiting to join themselves to the long procession. Here and there, before the houses, or in the vineyards, stood an unclean person, or a woman, or a child, who had been compelled to remain at home, and now replied with tears to the salutations of the passing multitudes. It seemed as if the people carried all joy with them from the country to Jerusalem, and only sorrow was left for those who remained behind. It was with such a procession that we remember our Lord, when twelve years old, went up to the feast. And this will explain, too, the apparent carelessness of His parents, when they set out to return without Him. "They, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey." They took it for granted that He was with some of their friends in the long train, and not until night, therefore, did they "seek Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and when they found Him not, turn back again to Jerusalem."

And thus the pilgrims from Hebron journeyed on, their

trains sometimes covering both the ascent and descent of the hill, spreading over the plain, and winding like a wreath around the hill beyond. At length, descending a lofty elevation, whose sides were covered with vines, they beheld before them in the valley, the Pools of Solomon. Then they halted their pace, and the following Psalm was sung :—

How lovely are Thy tabernacles, Lord of Hosts!
My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord,
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
As the sparrow that findeth her house,
As the swallow, a nest for her young,
So I Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts,
My King and my God!
Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house;
They are still praising Thee;
Blessed is the man who placeth his confidence in Thee,
And thinketh of the way to Jerusalem!
Who, going through the Vale of Misery,
Find therein a well,
And the pools are filled with water.
They increase in strength as they go on,
Till they appear before God in Zion.
O Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer!
Hearken, O God of Jacob!
Behold, O God, our Defender,
Look upon the face of Thine anointed!
One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God,
Than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.
For Jehovah, our God, is a sun and shield;
Jehovah giveth grace and glory;
No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.
O Lord of Hosts,
Blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee.—*Ps.* lxxxiv.

Here they halted during the heats of mid-day beneath the shade of the double row of palms, which had been planted around the pools, and as they drank the refreshing draught of the cool rock-water, they blessed the memory of the King. Under every palm-tree groups were gathered, absorbed in the prospect before them. Here the young were eagerly inquiring concerning Jerusalem and the festival—there a group was listening to a description of the magnificence of the Temple service—and there a company of men were speaking of the heroic deeds of Hyrcanus and the Maccabees, until their hearts burned within them, and they would have rejoiced once more to unfurl the banner of their tribes, and rush into deadly conflict with their new oppressors.

But the timbrels of the Levites once more struck up their music, and the procession again was formed. From the Pools of Solomon they took their way through the hills to Bethlehem, continual accessions swelling their number, until it amounted to thousands. Beautiful, indeed, was the view from the rocky ridge on which stands this City of David! The amphitheatre which stretches around embraces the region about Jericho, the Dead Sea, and the plain of the Valley of Rephaim. The Kedron flows through its fields, fruitful as the garden of the Lord, and all are thickly set with olive and fig trees, with vines and corn. In those luxuriant pastures Jacob fed his flocks—in its fertile fields Boaz was reaping when he found his kinswoman Ruth—and here grew up the son of Jesse, till the day when he came forth to avenge the honor of his people

on the boastful heathen. All who could, went through Bethlehem on their way to the feast at Jerusalem. The road passed by the grave of Rachel, and the city itself was invested with a hallowed interest in their eyes, because to it the greatest of all promises had been given. Here, then, in his birthplace, the warrior-bard was commemorated, as the one whose heart first conceived the wish to build that Temple to which they were now going up, and together they sang the Psalm :—

Lord, remember David!
And all his afflictions.
How he sware unto the Lord,
And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob;
Surely I will not come into mine house,
Nor go up into my bed;
I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Nor slumber to mine eyelids,
Until I find out a place for the Lord,
A habitation for the Mighty One of Jacob.
Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah,
We found it in the fields of Jaar:
Let us go into his tabernacle,
Let us worship at his footstool!—*Ps.* cxxxii.

The last strophe seemed to embody the feelings of the people, so that they lingered over it and repeated it again and again, as if they could not leave it. Then the instruments of the Levites rang forth with still a louder tone, and the multitude lifted up their voice, as they repeated the glorious promises of Jehovah with regard to this Temple :—

This is my rest forever:
Here will I dwell; for I have chosen it.

I will abundantly bless her provision,
I will satisfy her poor with bread;
I will clothe her priests with salvation,
Her holy ones shall shout aloud for joy.
There will I exalt the might of David
And prepare a lamp for mine anointed.
His enemies will I clothe with shame,
But on his head shall the crown flourish.

A short distance only now separated them from Jerusalem, and as their eager haste increased at every step, their impatience found utterance in the Psalm :—

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised
In the City of our God, even upon His Holy Hill.
Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole land,
Is Mount Zion, on the north of the city of the great King.
God is known in her palaces for a refuge.
We think of Thy loving-kindness, O God,
In the midst of Thy temple.
As Thy name, so Thy praise reacheth to the ends of the earth.
Thy right hand is full of righteousness.
Let the Hill of Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad
Because of Thy judgments!
Walk about Zion, go round about her!
Tell her towers!
Mark well her bulwarks!
Consider her palaces!
That ye may tell it to the generation following.
For this God is our God, forever and ever.
He will be our guide, as in our youth.—*Ps.* xlviii.

Expectation had now reached its height. It was too great even to allow its expression in words, but all were silently watching for the first sight of Jerusalem. A faint murmur

spread from rank to rank as they were pressing eagerly forward. All at once the foremost exclaimed—"Jerusalem"—and through the valley of Rephaim resounded the shout—"Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" All rushed onward to the brow of the hill, the children dragging their parents forward—every hand was raised to bless the place of Zion's solemnities—and from every heart and tongue uprose the anthem:—

> Jerusalem, thou city built on high,
> We wish thee peace!*

There rose the Holy City, and above it the dazzling glory of that Temple which once covered the heights of the Mount of Vision. Its walls, of the purest marble, cast a gleam through the valley. Court above court it circled round the mount like a succession of diadems—its alabaster porticoes—its porphyry pillars and richly-sculptured walls—and above all, that shrine which contained the Holy of Holies—the very palace of the

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* How similar to this is the description given by Tasso of the Crusaders, as from the overhanging hills they gained their first view of the city they came to rescue from the infidel:—

> "Wing'd is each heart, and winged every heel;
> They fly, yet notice not how fast they fly;
> Lo, tower'd Jerusalem salutes the eye!
> A thousand pointing fingers tell the tale;
> 'Jerusalem!' a thousand voices cry,
> 'All hail, Jerusalem!' hill, down, and dale,
> Catch the glad sounds, and shout, 'Jerusalem, all hail!'"
>
> *Gerus. Lib. Cant.* iii. 3.

King of Kings. Built of the most precious marbles, it glittered in the light, and as the setting sun sank beneath the western hills, his rays flashed back from the pinnacles of gold and burnished plates which cased its roof. Such was Mount Moriah, "a mountain of snow studded with jewels."*

It was the hour of the evening sacrifice, the trumpet had already sounded, and slowly the smoke of the sacrifice rose up to heaven, till, spreading out above, it seemed like some gigantic palm in the clearness of that Eastern sky. A few moments and the assembled multitudes had recovered from their surprise, when thus they paid their salutation to the temple and its priests :—

> Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord,
> Who stand by night in the house of the Lord!
> Lift up your hands towards the sanctuary,
> And bless the Lord.
> So will Jehovah bless thee out of Zion;
> He who made Heaven and Earth.—*Ps.* cxxxiv.

We have dwelt—perhaps to a disproportionate length—upon this pilgrimage,† but we know no better way of showing the spirit of Judaism and the manner in which the rites of their faith were calculated to arouse the imagination and enlist the affections of an excitable people. And was all this to be given up—these journeys so endeared by the recollections of

* Rev. George Croly.

† For the main features of this sketch we are indebted to *Straus' Helon's Pilgrimage*, v. i. 144.

"their fathers' day and the old time before them?" So Christianity announced, for its system was an expansive one, stretching over the whole earth.

But, above all, the solemnities of the Temple itself were those which most appealed to every feeling of reverence in the Jew. The superb mysteries of Grecian Idolatry, splendid as they were, could not so enchain the mind of the worshipper, nor those costly fabrics of later days, whose remains are still the wonder of the world, compare with the dazzling beauty of that sanctuary, which crowned the highest point in the City of the Lord. The Israelite entered through the Beautiful Gate, and before him were the different courts, separated by porphyry pillars, and the many stately buildings for the priests and officers of the Temple. Every material employed was costly and rare. Gold and the finest marbles glittered on every side. He turned, and behind him, through the open colonnades, beheld the rich landscape which, like an amphitheatre, stretched around the Holy City, before it was spoiled and desolate, and the very features of Nature were forced to share in the devastation which the Infidel brought upon Zion. There, on the one side, was Bethlehem, with its lovely slopes, covered with vineyards and orange-groves, and on the other, the green sides of the Mount of Olives; and the eye wandered on till, in the distance, it saw the mountains of Gilgal, which overlooked the rich valley of the Jordan. But before him was the Gate of Nicanor—worthy in its beauty of the royal Solomon—and through it he beheld the Levites, standing with

their instruments of music on the fifteen steps, which led to the altar of burnt offerings—that altar, the ceasing of the daily sacrifice on which, in the last hours of their siege, struck a mortal blow to the heart of the people, and made them feel as if all was lost indeed.

But in the Tabernacle itself the Israelite realized that he stood in the presence of God. The altar was the throne, and every thing around displayed the rich pomp and beautiful ornaments which deck the court of an earthly monarch—the embroidered tapestry—the fine linen—the golden-branched lights—the transparent curtains—the fuming incense—and the columns on their brazen bases. There were the dedicated loaves on the table of gold—the vases holding "the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord"—the ewers "to wash with water, that they die not"—and the flesh, ever renewed on the sacrificial altar. It seemed to be for the banquet of a monarch, yet it was ever inviolable, forever renewed, yet forever untouched. The veil which was never to be lifted—the cherubims spreading their mystical wings—the propitiatory, where the cloud of glory hung over "the Holy of Holies"—every object around brought to the mind of the Israelite the perpetual recollection that the palace of his sovereign was the Temple of his God.*

How numerous, too, the attendants in this court, who served before the throne, and performed that ritual whose grandeur

* *D'Israeli's Genius of Judaism*, p. 39.

has never been surpassed! The Levites ministered by turns in four-and-twenty courses of a thousand each. Four thousand more performed the lower offices, while four thousand singers and minstrels, with the harp and trumpet, the cymbal and organ, supplied that rich harmony which ever floated out from the Hill of Zion's solemnities, and, borne on the wings of the wind over the Holy City, was a ceaseless invitation to its people to come up and worship. And with what reverence did the Jews regard him who stood at the head of this consecrated band—the High Priest—when on solemn festivals he came forth in the gorgeous robes which God Himself had prescribed! We will let one of themselves sketch the picture, as it was presented to his own mind. It is in this language, glowing with Oriental metaphors, that the son of Sirach describes Simon, the High Priest, the son of Onias:—

"He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full:

"As the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds:

"And as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, as lilies by the rivers of waters, and as the branches of the frankincense-tree in the time of summer:

"As fire and incense in the censer, and as a vessel of beaten gold set with all manner of precious stones:

"And as a fair olive-tree budding forth fruit, and as a cypress-tree which groweth up to the clouds.

"When he put on the robe of honor, and was clothed with the perfection of glory, when he went up to the holy altar, he made the garment of holiness honorable.

"When he took the portions out of the priests hands, he himself stood by the hearth of the altar, compassed with his brethren round about, as

a young cedar in Libanus; and as palm-trees compassed they him round about.

"So were all the sons of Aaron in their glory, and the oblations of the Lord in their hands, before all the congregation of Israel.

"And finishing the service at the altar, that he might adorn the offering of the Most High Almighty,

"He stretched out his hand to the cup, and poured of the blood of the grape, he poured out at the foot of the altar a sweet-smelling savor unto the Most High King of all.

"Then shouted the sons of Aaron, and sounded the silver trumpets, and made a great noise to be heard, for a remembrance before the Most High.

"Then all the people together hasted, and fell down to the earth upon their faces to worship their Lord God Almighty, the Most High.

"The singers also sang praises with their voices, with great variety of sounds was there made sweet melody.

"And the people besought the Lord, the Most High, by prayer before Him that is merciful, till the solemnity of the Lord was ended, and they had finished His service.

"Then he went down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to give the blessing of the Lord with his lips, and to rejoice in His name.

"And they bowed themselves down to worship the second time, that they might receive a blessing from the Most High."*

Such was the gorgeous and impressive ceremonial of the Jewish Temple. And should all this give way to the simple and severe worship of the Christian Church? Should Jerusalem cease to be the glory of the whole earth and "the place where men ought to worship," but the proclamation go forth, that in any place "the true worshippers might worship the Father in Spirit and in truth?" Why, the very thought

* *Ecclesiasticus*, i. 6–21.

awakened the deadly hostility of the Jew, and he felt that a contest with Christianity was a struggle for all his nation had prized through almost countless centuries.

And these sacred and venerable rites were also entwined with the daily life of the Hebrews. They marked the seasons of the year and the dates of events by religious feasts and fasts. They watched the sun set which brought the Sabbath to all their habitations—the new moon, that they might hold its solemn celebration—and the earliest star, which told them it was lawful to break their penitential fast. Religion with them was not a thing to be easily put off, or another system to be substituted in its place, but it was a part of their very being. By the miraculous interposition of Providence the laws of the people constituted their religion. The world has never witnessed the alliance between Church and State so closely cemented as among the religious Hebrews, or any system which so pressed upon every step in life as the Mosaic code. "Everywhere and at all hours, was their law, or some symbol of their law, like the works of the Deity, kept in their sight. It was variously worn on their persons; it was nailed to the doorposts of their habitations; it formed their daily occupations in the morning, the noon, and the evening sacrifice. All Nature was consecrated to Religion: for the first-fruits, a portion of the harvests and certain animals, were dedicated to its service. Judaism was in their fields, in the unmixed seed, and the ungrafted fruit; in the ablution of the stream, and in the separation of the pure from the impure. Their great festivals

were connected with the productions of every season. The Passover could not be kept till their flocks furnished the paschal lamb; the Pentecost, till the wheat had ripened for the fresh loaves of propitiation; and the thick boughs and branches could not cover their tabernacles till they had gathered in their vineyards and their olive-grounds. The Israelites were reminded of their religious festivals by the living commemorations of nature. The whole earth became one vast synagogue."*

We can easily therefore imagine, how entirely the Jew must have changed his nature when all this was renounced, and he turned from the countless associations of his former life to begin a new existence. Even among those who had received the new faith we find the same spirit prevailing. They endeavored to impose upon the Gentile converts the countless provisions of the Mosaic law, and to make Christianity but a wider form of Judaism. The conflict went on during the whole Apostolic age, nor ceased until by the gradual extension of the Church, the converts from the Synagogue became an insignificant minority. We trace this contest through all the Epistles, particularly those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, for there were none against whom St. Paul was so often obliged to warn his converts as against the Judaizing Christians. "But now," he inquires, "after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly

* *D'Israeli's Genius of Judaism*, p. 22.

elements, whereunto ye desire to be again in bondage? Ye observe days and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."* They could not divest themselves of feelings which they had imbibed with the very air they breathed. They could not learn to sympathize with the expanded spirit of a faith, which scorned to be narrowed down to a single temple for its worship, but claimed as its sanctuary, the wide earth and Heaven. And if such continued often to be the feeling of the Jewish converts, we can imagine how stern must have been the spirit of hostility with which the unchanged Israelite met the claims of our religion, and how unyielding the prejudice with which he drew around him the narrow line of demarcation, and restricted the divine blessings to his own visible pale.

There was one more consideration which, more than any thing else, tended to array the Jews against the reception of Jesus of Nazareth. We refer to the preconceived notions of the Messiah which they had adopted. A kingly government, which is perceived and felt, alone suits the genius of the East. The climate which dissolves the energy of the heart, and the indolence which loves to gaze on the pageantry of a show, have rendered the Orientals prone to look on an earthly king with a sort of idolatry. Their vanity is gratified by his pomp, and their pride by his power.†

And this was peculiarly the case with the Jews. Even in

* *Gal.* iv. 9. † *D'Israeli's Genius of Judaism*, p. 44.

the days of their theocracy they were sighing for a king. Their inspired Lawgiver perceived that this would be the case—that even his perfect government would weary their inconstancy, and their passions corrupt its divine institution—and, with prescient wisdom, therefore, he limited the power to be intrusted to the hands of royalty. And the same feelings colored all their hopes when they looked forward to the promised Messiah. They were too earthly and sensual to conceive of that mysterious Being as only a spiritual reformer. The brightest pictures the Greek poets have drawn of their golden age, fade into dimness before the incoherent and dazzling images which teemed in the imagination of the Jew, when he thought of the monarch who was expected to sit on the throne of David. To this the gorgeous visions of Isaiah had contributed to form their minds. There, He was arrayed before them as a mighty conqueror, travelling in the greatness of His strength, treading down His enemies in His anger, and trampling them in His fury—their blood sprinkled upon His garments, and staining all His raiment. And this harmonized too well with that brooding hope of vengeance on their oppressors which was moulded up in the heart of every Jew, and quickened into life by their religious fanaticism, to render them able to think of their Deliverer in any more peaceful character. We trace in the history of Josephus the existence of this feeling in his countrymen. Though writing when Judea had been crushed to the earth, and the futility of these visions shown, he endeavors to prove the fulfilment of these prophecies in the regal govern-

ment of his master Vespasian. In the whole current, too, of Jewish tradition—and in the later ages of their existence as a state, they listened to its voice as reverently as to the written word—every thing about the Great Deliverer was national and exclusive. The Holy City was to be the centre of His government, and there He was to reassemble all the scattered descendants of the tribes, and expel their barbarous and foreign rulers. From the shores of the Nile—from the cities of Greece—from the crowded streets of Imperial Rome—from the banks of the Euphrates, where their fathers left them in exile—the spoiled and despised Israelites, everywhere the victims of infidel insult, were to come forth, and gathering around the City of Holiness, behold at their head a king who should proclaim, that "the day of vengeance was in His heart, and the year of His redeemed had come."

It is curious, indeed, to take each rank and sect which existed among the Jews in the first age of the Christian era, and see how, from the tenets of each, we can gather the attributes in which it naturally arrayed the Messiah. Their enthusiasm was colored by their peculiar temperament, and while all looked to the gorgeous language of ancient prophecy, each dwelt only upon that particular portion which was most in accordance with its tastes, and therefore the view of each was equally partial and erroneous. The Herodians regarded Herod Antipas as the anointed saviour of his country—the one destined to drive the Gentile from her borders, and raise Jerusalem from her sackcloth and ashes to her ancient pinnacle of renown.

They felt that "the set time had come" and the times of prophecy been fulfilled, but they needed a prince to accomplish all that had been foretold. Where then, they inquired, can we find him but in Herod, powerful and wise, connected with the blood of our ancient kings,* and already wielding a formidable power? To political views they had sacrificed many of the inveterate prejudices of their nation, and even admitted some of those Grecian habits which the stricter portion of their people most religiously avoided. They, therefore, could recognise no lineament of the Messiah in the peasant prophet of Nazareth.

With the Pharisee, He was to be "a prophet like unto Moses," to restore, with greater strictness, the ceremonial code of their great Lawgiver, and bring all mankind under "a yoke which neither their fathers nor they were able to bear." The pure and spiritual glimpses, too, of the future state, which we can gather from the discourses of our Lord, must, in that day, have been at utter variance with the sensual views of the Rabbinical writers, which more resembled the Elysium of the Greeks than the Paradise of Revelation. Josephus was a Pharisee, and if he is to be taken as a type of his sect, we can readily see how one who could address to his countrymen the unspiritual view of the life to come which he has given—a

* The father of Herod had married Mariamne, daughter of Hircanus, the last of the family of the Asmoneans or Maccabees. Herod himself was at this time married to Herodias, of the same family.

view incorporating even the doctrine of a Metempsychosis*—must have shrunk from a faith so unearthly as that announced by Him who claimed to be the promised Deliverer. The Sadducee, on the contrary, abandoning as innovations much to which the Pharisee clung, looked upon the notion of a spiritual Messiah as a mere delusion, while he agreed as little as his antagonist in our Lord's view of the future state. He had

* "Their souls are pure and obedient, and obtain a most holy place in heaven, from whence, in the revolution of ages, they are again sent into pure bodies."—*Wars*, lib. iii. ch. ix. 5. The Pharisees had undoubtedly imbibed many notions which had their origin on the banks of the Nile. They despised, indeed, the learning of Greece, but had not the same antipathy to that of Egypt, for they had the example of Moses, who was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." They had adopted the Pythagorean doctrine, that when the soul had left the body, it did not die, but transmigrating to some other body, through a succession of removals, lived to infinity. Even the disciples of our Lord were infected with this error, as they showed by their question with regard to the blind man, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (*John*, ix. 2.) This question supposes a state of pre-existence—that it was possible for a man to sin before he was born; that is, that his soul had sinned in some other body, and this blindness was an expiating punishment, which must be endured for the soul's sake.

Basnage thus truly traces the origin of these views:—"La Religion Judaïque commença de s'altérer par le commerce qu'on eut avec les étrangers; ce commerce fut beaucoup plus fréquent depuis les conquêtes d'Alexandre qu'il n'étoit auparavant, et ce fut particulièrement avec les Egyptiens qu'on se lia, surtout pendant que les Rois d'Egypte furent maîtres de la Judée, qu'ils y firent des voyages et des expéditions, et qu'ils en transportèrent les habitans. On n'emprunta pas des Egyptiens leurs idoles, mais leur méthode de traiter la théologie et la religion; les docteurs Juifs, transportés ou nés en ce pays-là se jettèrent dans les interprétations allégoriques," &c.—*Hist. des Juifs*, l. ii. c. ix.

shunned the fanaticism of the bigot, only to fall into the dreary coldness of the skeptic.

The nature of the Samaritan belief in the Messiah is more obscure to us, and but once in Scripture—in the conversation of our Lord with the woman at the well—do we find any allusion to it. While, by the Jews, they were scorned as "the foolish people that dwell at Sichem,"* and utterly excluded from all interest in this Deliverer, they themselves clung to the belief, "We know that the Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things."† We should suppose, therefore, that when He Himself offered this redemption for their acceptance, they would gladly have responded to His call. Yet their views on this subject were "adulterated with profane mixtures of Pagan errors;"‡ and the success of Simon Magus,§ Menander, and other later teachers, who inculcated the Oriental heresies, shows that their conceptions of the Messiah were tinged with the Magian errors they had brought with them from Babylon.

A single other sect sums up the number of those among the Palestinian Jews. We refer to the Zealots, who perhaps were most violent of all in their opposition to the reign of a

* "There be two manner of nations which my heart abhorreth, and the third is no nation. They that sit upon the mountain of Samaria, and they that dwell among the Philistines, and that foolish people that dwell at Sichem."—*Ecclesiast.* i. 25, 26.

† *John*, iv. 25.

‡ *Mosheim's Ecclesiast. Hist.* v. i. p. 46. § *Acts*, viii. 9.

peaceful Deliverer, and whose influence was most deeply felt as clouds darkly gathered around the closing days of Judea. The principles they avowed had been inherited from Judas, the Galilean, who, in bold yet eloquent language, had proclaimed the doctrine, that submission to a foreign yoke was treason against the Jewish theocracy. They refused, therefore, the payment of tribute to Cæsar, and rejected as impiety every other badge of subordination to Rome.* It was an attempt to revive that war-cry, "No other Lord and Master but God!" which once had rallied the whole nation under the banner of the Maccabees against their Syro-Grecian kings, and triumphantly wrested from them the independence of Judea. The same spirit had lived on in secret, and fomented the resistance which at times was arrayed against the Idumean dynasty. And now, when the sceptre seemed entirely departing from Judah, and, in desperation, the more violent of the people looked around for some weapon with which to meet their foe, they eagerly rushed forward to enroll themselves among the followers of Judas, and to swell the ranks of the Zealots. In the days of our Lord this feeling seemed to infuse a degree of religious enthusiasm into every struggle against their invaders. The robber chieftain joined in each desperate foray against the Roman legionaries in the same spirit with which, in later ages, the Crusaders warred against the Infidel. He looked out daily for that resistless Conqueror whom he literally expected to see

* *Basnage, Histoire des Juifs*, b. i. c. 17.

"coming from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah," the leader of innumerable hosts, His arm nerved with the power of the Omnipotent, unfurling His blood-red banner to repeat, on a nobler scale, those triumphs which were still sung through every household in the land. These doctrines accorded with that wild fanaticism of Jewish character, which was nurtured by the remembrance of Ehud and Gideon, Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam; and thus was propagated that fiery spirit of resistance which at last arrayed them in deadly conflict with the crushing power of Rome, and ended in the utter subversion of their state.

Such were the sects which divided among themselves the Jewish populace. These were the lessons taught in the synagogue and the schools, or preached by zealous emissaries through the retired villages of Judea, till an intense expectation seemed to have absorbed the minds of all men. Each sect had its system, but the people gathered from each what was most striking, and often most violent, and thus was moulded up the popular creed with regard to the Messiah. Yet how fatal was all this to the training of meek and peaceful hearts to receive Him who was to come as the Prince of Peace!

But this sketch would be incomplete, did it not include some notice of those extensive communities of Jews in Babylon and Egypt, who had each their separate schools of doctrine, so plainly colored by the faith of the land in which their lot was cast. The termination of the seventy years captivity had not found all the banished Jews ready to return to their own land.

There were many to whom the rivers of Babylon were pleasant, and they would not accept the invitations of Ezra and Nehemiah to build up again the fallen cities of Judea. There they remained in the land to which their fathers came in sorrow; and, in after ages, when a crowded population induced the Jews of Palestine once more to emigrate, many joined their brethren on the Euphrates, so that the Mesopotamian colony swelled into strength and importance. Here was devised the Mystic Cabala—here, when Jerusalem was destroyed, the Prince of the Captivity held the seat of his power—and here arose those famous schools whose wisdom has been handed down to us embodied in the Babylonian Talmud. But with them, many peculiarities of the faith of Zoroaster had become incorporated with the doctrines of Judaism. While they looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, they did so in the spirit with which the Magian waited the final triumph of Ormusd. In the same worldly spirit, too, of their countrymen in Judea, they expected One who should spread the bounds of His empire wider than the sway of Solomon, so that even they in the far East, no longer regarded as exiles, should be as much His subjects as they who dwelt at the foot of Mount Moriah.

Far different from this had been the training of the Western Jews, who, under the favor of Ptolemy, had settled at Alexandria, and whose temple in Leontopolis was intended to be an exact copy of that on Mount Zion. Instead of the fantastic yet poetical dreams of Orientalism, they had been subjected to

the more intellectual influence of Grecian philosophy. It was a form of Platonism, tinged, perhaps, with a more mystic character than it displayed in its home at Athens, but which left ample room for the imagination, and accorded well with that spirit of Egypto-Jewish theology which reduced the history of the chosen people to a mere moral allegory. Its tendency, therefore, was rationalistic, and the Pharisee of Jerusalem looked upon the Aramæan Jew of Alexandria with as little favor as he did upon the Sadducee. Yet amid all their errors, we find substantially the same views of the Messiah which were held by their brethren in Asia. They can be gathered from the mysticism of Philo, when, amid his philosophical flights, we find ever floating before his imagination the picture of a golden period, when the Jews were to be the great teachers of the world, and all submit to the Mosaic institutes. Then the Deliverer, "a more than human being, unseen to all eyes but those of the favored nation," was to reign, and all the blessings predicted in prophecy were to be poured out upon the chosen people as they were united once more in their own land.* Something of this also may be traced in "the Wisdom of Solomon," a book, from its allusions to Grecian writers and the acquaintance with the works of Plato which its author evinces, evidently the production of an Alexandrian Jew. There the most glorious promises are repeated to the faithful Jews. Their lot it should be to "judge

* *Milman's Hist. of Christianity*, v. i. p. 42.

the nations," and "have dominion over the people." Their reward should be to "receive a glorious kingdom."* It is evidently the conception of a temporal sovereignty to which he is looking forward. And we can see the same idea struggling in the mind of every Jew—whether the Palestinian, the Alexandrian, or the Hellenist. Whatever may have been the peculiar tenets of each, in some form we can detect his belief in the coming of a conquering Messiah.

We think, indeed, that the prevalence of this popular feeling pervades even the Magnificat—that song of thanksgiving which the Virgin uttered when visited by her cousin Elizabeth. We find no allusion to the spiritual nature of the Messiah's kingdom—nothing which partakes of a Christian tone, or looks forward with joy to the redemption to be wrought out. It is the proud triumph of a Jewish woman that the time of deliverance to her land had come, and the fallen family of David was once more to be raised above the mighty who had usurped their place. "He hath showed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy."† Every thing here is national and exclusive, partaking more of the spirit of the old Dispensation than of the new.

* *Wisdom*, iii. 8. v. 16. † *Luke*, i. 51–54.

It is an anthem which Miriam or Deborah might have uttered, in the hour of Israel's victory over their enemies. And so, too, it was, when Zacharias spake at the circumcision of his son. If at the conclusion his song rises to higher spiritual views, and he speaks of "remission of sins," and "a light to them which sit in darkness and the shadow of death," yet his first thought is of Israel—"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David." The first object he states of the Messiah's coming is, "That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. That He would grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear."* We cannot but feel how strongly this contrasts with the expanded and beautiful character of our faith, as first proclaimed in the angel's song, "Glory to God, Peace on earth and good-will towards men."

There may, indeed, among the many thousands of Israel, have been, here and there, a more spiritual mind, which looked beyond the veil of types, and could recognise, in the imagery of the prophets, the delineation of One, whose glory it should be "to preach good tidings unto the meek, and to bind up the broken-hearted,"† but they were too few to act on the tone of public sentiment. No considerable body—except it may have been the Essenes—seem ever to have dwelt on the peaceful

* *Luke*, i. 68, 69, 71, 74. † *Isaiah*, lxi. 1.

images of the prophets, or to have expected the accomplishment of any thing but their own visions of conquest and glory. The very depression under which they were at this time groaning, made them look with greater certainty for the coming of that mysterious Deliverer, who was to restore all things. "The sceptre had departed from Judah," and it was therefore time that "Shiloh should come." That, too, was to be "the great and terrible day of the Lord,"* and tradition declared, that dark and fearful should be the trials which gathered around Israel, and severe the ordeal through which they were to pass, before the time of their deliverance came, and their foot was to be placed upon the neck of their enemies. And now, when the beaten slave of the heathen, and convulsed by the very impotency of his rage, the Jew asked, whether these were not the dark sorrows which were to precede the light, and strained his eyes forward, chiding the tardiness with which the future glory came.

On the shores of the Jordan, too, a prophet had already distinctly announced, that "the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand," and there was often much in the language of the Baptist which admitted of an interpretation confirming their view of the Messiah's character. "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."† And who were the precious "wheat" to be "ga-

* *Joel*, ii. 11. † *Matt.* iii. 12.

thered into the garner," but Israel—the elect people—the sons of God by the very prerogative of their birth? And who were "the chaff" destined to "unquenchable fire," but the hated Gentiles, who were to be thrust down to hell? They were to share the fate of the Amorite, the Hittite, and the Perizzite. The Roman and the Greek were to be to the Jews what the idolatrous Canaanite was to their fathers. They were to be driven from the land where their presence was as blasting and mildew. All, therefore, however they might differ in other respects, anticipated the coming of a Deliverer, who should make Israel inheritor of a kingdom, and sit in solemn judgment upon their mighty enemies. And as the time drew nigh, it seemed as if the exactions of their foreign enemies became more frequent and intolerable, and their tyranny maddened the people beyond endurance. Is it wonderful, then, that they writhed under that chain which had bound them down to the earth—that each lip muttered conspiracy—that each eye was turned, as the only hope, to a temporal Deliverer—while every peaceful image and every spiritual view of His character was lost in their intense desire for that vengeance which they thought the future held out? Never, probably, during the existence of the Jewish state, were its people so little prepared to welcome a peaceful Messiah as in the very age of His advent.

At length He came, and how were these high-raised hopes fulfilled? No visible glory heralded His approach—no king arrived "to reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and

before his ancients gloriously."* The true-hearted were summoned to a stable, and in a feeble wailing infant in a manger, they were to recognise the long-expected Messiah. We look back, indeed, through the vista of eighteen centuries, and it seems to us as if wonders waited on His birth. Yet the angel's song was only uttered among the silent pastures, and before the lowlyshepherds, who watched their flocks by night—the wise men of the East departed as suddenly and as mysteriously as they had come—and few probably listened to the prophetic words of Simeon and Anna, while fewer still understood their solemn import. "The Kingdom of God came not with observation."

"Thou didst come,
O Holiest! to this world of sin and gloom,
Not in Thy dread omnipotent array;
And not by thunder strew'd
Was Thy tempestuous road;
Nor indignation burn'd before Thee on Thy way.
But Thee a soft and naked child,
Thy mother undefiled,
In the rude manger laid to rest,
From off her virgin breast.

The heavens were not commanded to prepare
A gorgeous canopy of golden air,
Nor stoop'd their lamps th' enthroned fires on high;
A single silent star
Came wandering from afar,
Gliding uncheck'd and calm along the liquid sky;

* *Isaiah*, xxiv. 23.

The Eastern sages leading on
As at a kingly throne,
To lay their gold and odors sweet
Before Thy infant feet.

The earth and ocean were not hush'd to hear
Bright harmony from every starry sphere;
Nor at Thy presence brake the voice of song
From all the cherub choirs,
And seraphs' burning lyres,
Pour'd through the host of Heaven the charmed clouds along;
One angel troop the strain began,
Of all the race of man,
By simple shepherds heard alone
That soft Hosanna's tone."*

It was, too, in a season of intense national excitement—in the very agony of that crisis on which their future destiny seemed to be resting. The days of Herod the Great were drawing to their close, and the clouds which had gathered around his stormy path appeared now to have deepened, until even his mind was darkened into savage insanity. All ties of natural affection were obliterated. His own children were condemned to the scaffold—the noblest blood in Judea was recklessly shed—and as the last fragments of life were slipping from his grasp, the heads of all the influential families in Jerusalem were assembled in the Hippodrome, that the hour of his death might witness their execution, and thus no leaders be at hand to oppose the succession of his son. Amid such unpar-

* *Milman's "Fall of Jerusalem."*

alleled horrors every individual trembled for his own personal safety. Fanaticism, too, had risen to its height, and the great parties which divided the people were standing ready at the slightest signal to meet in deadly conflict. Every mind, therefore, was wrought up to the most feverish anxiety. What impression, then, could be produced by the birth of an humble infant? The strange story of the Magians' visit, imperfectly known, would soon be forgotten—the narrative of the simple shepherds, if heard in the courts of the temple, would be regarded as an illusion—and the predictions of Simeon and Anna be pronounced the mere drivelling of age. In addition to this, the immediate disappearance of our Lord, and the obscurity in which He lived for thirty years, must have quenched the hopes of any of the more sanguine or better informed.

And when the years of His retirement were over, and He came forth to act as the Herald of His own Gospel, who was the Messiah offered to their worship? A peasant of Galilee—the companion of fishermen, publicans, and sinners—"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"—without being invested with a single attribute of that pomp in which they had been accustomed to array Him. And not even the beauty of His precepts—the holiness which pervaded all He uttered—or even the miraculous power which He wielded—could reconcile them to His lowly station. He came, too, in a spirit of philanthropy which offered the most striking contrast to the bitterness of Jewish prejudice. Every word He spoke must have jarred with the harshest discord on the popular ear. Imagine Him

preaching to His infuriated countrymen the doctrine of forgiveness, and as the train of their hated conquerors swept by, proclaiming the duty, "love your enemies." How deeply would it sink into the hearts of His audience? The answer would be a scowl of undying hate, and every quivering lip would utter forth the national curse, "Gehenna." They had no sympathy with a universal Saviour whose beneficence was to embrace the whole human race. They were startled, when in opposition to the violent antipathy of the Jews, our Lord talked with the woman of Samaria at the well, and still more so, when He healed the daughter of the Canaanite mother—the member of a race which bore upon them the seal of condemnation. There was nothing about Him of the warlike signs which they expected—nothing which spoke of the condemnation of Gentile nations, or flattered the exclusiveness of Jewish pride.

His kingdom, too, was not of this world; and a community united by spiritual ties—held together by the bond of a common faith—was to them something utterly unintelligible. It had nothing about it local—nothing distinctive of a single race or nation—but embraced within the grasp of its influence, man wherever he could be found. The despised Samaritan was invited to be "a king and priest unto God;" and in the contest for eternal rewards, his might be a nobler prize than any which could fall to the lot of the proudest Jew. It utterly set at defiance all the grades and honors of earthly life. In the awards of the coming world, the despised and down-trodden Helot

might inherit a brighter crown than that assigned to the master of Imperial Rome. There was no place for any spiritual aristocracy—no reservation for those who gloried in the lineage of Abraham. This faith, too, was equally adapted to every country and clime. It was to spread its cheering rays over the snows of the North, and hold its cup of blessing to the panting savage beneath the tropic heats. Nothing could be conceived more utterly opposed to the narrow spirit of Jewish prejudices. It was a long time, indeed, before the Apostles themselves could learn to look beyond the barriers which education had built up around them. They were continually startled by our Lord's revelations—wavering and fluctuating in their faith—and attempting in vain to reconcile His declarations with their own deeply-seated erroneous views. We see in every action their exclusive Jewish feelings.

This, then, was the field of labor before our Lord when He went forth to inculcate the gentle and peaceful doctrines of His faith, and these were the discordant elements which would be arrayed against Him. And so the result proved. He encountered at once a fierce and turbulent national spirit wrought up to the highest pitch of fanaticism, and every word He uttered clashed with the strongest prejudices of His audience. For once, the proud Pharisee, the lordly Sadducee, the zealot, the hypocrite, the bigot, and the skeptic were united. He spoke to them of a day bright beyond human splendor—magnificent beyond the loftiest conceptions of human thought—but they had no sympathy with any thing that the distant future should

unfold. Now was the time of Judea's degradation, and they demanded that *now* the glory should dawn upon them. He displayed before them the Divine Goodness in human form, but they, in their inward wrath and despair, cared only for a demonstration of the terrible and destructive attributes of the Almighty. They wished a Deliverer who should embody all the fierce yearnings and national prejudices of Judaism. It was with such revelations that the Old Testament had rendered them familiar, and they looked for one, before whom—to adopt the terrible imagery of the older prophets—their enemies, the uncircumcised and the accursed, should be broken, and scattered, and destroyed, as the chaff before the whirlwind, as the stubble beneath the flail of the thresher, as the fine dust beneath the hoofs of the horses and the wheel of the chariot.

We see how careful our Lord was Himself to correct this impression, when the mother of James and John, dazzled by the prospect of a temporal empire, which she expected soon to be established, requested, that "her two sons might sit, the one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His kingdom." He points her, in reply, to the cup of suffering of which they were to drink, and the baptism of blood which was to be their portion. And then, addressing the twelve, He inculcates the lesson, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."* Such, too, was the unvarying tenor of His preaching to the people. He spread before them no

* *Matt.* xx. 21.

glowing vision of Judea's greatness. He spoke of good tidings to the poor, of consolation in sorrow and deliverance from affliction. In the synagogue at Nazareth, He took for His text the passage, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." He then proceeded to declare, that these days of peace and comfort were now dawning upon them. And it is to be noticed, that before He came to the next clause, which harmonized ill with the character of the new faith and spoke of "the day of vengeance," He broke off and closed the book.* But the effect of this pacific tone, which characterized all His teaching, was, that "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." It was an entire disappointment of all the expectations which had been raised by the evidences He gave of miraculous power. He held out nothing in accordance with their excited hopes—nothing which could

* This is the idea of Milman, (*Hist.* i. 100.) This passage was probably the lesson for the day, and we cannot tell how far it extended, as these verses are not included in any of the lists of lessons used among the modern Jews, and which they assert have been unaltered since the days of the Maccabees. The 51st Haphtoroth now commences with the tenth verse of this chapter instead of the first. "Have the Jews," asks an eminent commentator, "altered this haphtoroth, knowing the use which our Blessed Lord made of it among their ancestors?"—*Dr. A. Clarke, on Deut.* xxxiv.

minister to that passionate national feeling inwrought in the Jewish nature. And we learn how entire was this desertion, from the mournful question which He puts to the chosen twelve, "Will ye also go away ?"*

Thus the ministry of our Lord passed away. The circle of His acknowledged influence was narrow, for the faithful who clung to Him were few, while He had provoked the deep-rooted hostility of the rulers of the people. In the hearts of many, like Nicodemus, He may have sowed the seeds of truth, yet they shrunk from taking up the Cross and becoming openly His professed disciples. To the Apostles, therefore, the task of establishing the faith was more difficult than ever, for the intense suspense in which the public mind had been held for three years was ended by His death, and the hopes of even His attached followers seemed buried in the sepulchre in the garden. They had, too, to meet the bitter disappointment of the people, whose deliverance from their foreign yoke was apparently more hopeless than ever. The power of Rome fell with crushing weight wherever the least resistance was seen. Let a tumult occur in a distant village, and, as if by magic, a Roman cohort appeared on the spot, and the whole village was swept from the earth. Let the fanatical populace of Jerusalem show signs of violence, and Pilate, leaving his abode at Cæsarea, appeared at once among them, set up his tribunal, and even the imperious Sanhedrim trembled and bowed with humility before it.

* *John*, vi. 67.

Not even the sacred courts of the Temple were a refuge from his soldiery, but at the very altar they mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices. The proud and restless people had the lesson of Rome's supremacy constantly forced upon them with terrible distinctness. Everywhere, too, they encountered the publicans, oppressive in their exactions, and the living evidences of their subjection to foreign rule. For a Jew to accept this office was regarded as treason against his country. And yet our Lord had uttered no word of reprobation, and so far from sanctioning the popular feeling on this subject, it was one of the charges against Him, that He was "a friend of publicans."* He had entered into their houses, ate and drank with them; and even in selecting the chosen twelve, who were to be the leading ministers of His faith, one of the number was a member of this hated profession—an agent of this foreign rule—the very mention of which maddened the Jew with the wildest rage, and caused him to utter fierce prayers against the oppressor. The natural inquiry of the people, therefore, was, What has Jesus done? and they turned from one who, to their minds, bore not a single mark or sign of the expected Deliverer.

We have thus endeavored to bring forward a portraiture of Judaism in the first century of our faith—its holy festivals and glorious worship, the pride and passions, the hopes and prejudices, which swayed its fickle population. If we have suc-

* *Matt.* xi. 19.

ceeded, you will be able to appreciate the obstacles which were heaped up in the pathway of Christianity as it went forth from its cradle to inherit the earth. Can you not imagine, therefore, the situation of St. Paul, as "he preached Christ in the synagogues?"* Can you not picture to yourself the astonishment which filled the minds of his hearers, when he proclaimed to them that the gorgeous rites and ceremonies their fathers loved, were now to pass away, and the burst of indignant rage which rang around him when at last he pointed them to a crucified malefactor as their Messiah? Can you wonder at the relentless hostility with which they pursued him from city to city, seeking even his life: that at Antioch "the Jews were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming:" that they "stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts:"† that at Iconium "there was an assault made of the Jews, with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them:"‡ that when they had fled to the heathen cities of Lystra and Derbe, and the Gentiles heard them gladly, "thither came certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead?"§ Is it strange that their resentful oppo-

* *Acts*, ix. 20.
† *Acts*, xiii. 45, 50.
‡ *Acts*, xiv. 5.
§ *Acts*, xiv. 19.

sition even preceded the Apostle to Rome, and the Jews of the Imperial City could declare, "Concerning this sect, we know that it is everywhere spoken against?"* It was a struggle between the Old Faith and the New, which was for life and death, and there is no warning which the Apostle reiterates more frequently, in various forms, than the caution, "Beware of the concision."†

And yet, this contest was fought and the triumph achieved. The Synagogue and the Church for a time stood opposed to each other in implacable hostility; but each year beheld the power of the former weakening. The fierce intolerance of the Jew could not stand before the calm endurance and the martyr courage of the early Christian. The offence of the Cross gradually ceased, until it became the badge of honor. At last, Jerusalem itself was spoiled and desolate—the tombs of her kings, consecrated by the ashes of the mighty, were violated—and every spot sacred to the broken and scattered tribes of Israel, was trampled by the insulting Infidel. Again might have been uttered over her the sorrowful lamentation of the prophet, "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how has she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!"‡ Judaism could scarcely retain its vitality, when its great central home, hallowed by the reverence of ages, had ceased to exist. The rush of wings which

* *Acts*, xxviii. 22. † *Phil.* iii. 2. ‡ *Lam.* i. 1.

was heard in the Temple, as the days of Judea's greatness waned to their end, and the voice that uttered, "Let us depart hence," were but significant of that withdrawal of the Divine favor which proclaimed the end of the existing polity. This, too, with many, must have given a death-blow to the dreams of an earthly monarch, and they were obliged to seek in the future glories which Christianity offered, something to compensate them for their present humiliation. The Roman ploughshare had passed over the spot on which once stood the Holy of Holies; where, therefore, could the throne of the Deliverer be erected? Sad and solemn were the memories which swept back over the mind of the Jew, when he thought of the Holy City, and the glorious scenes he had witnessed about the Mount of Zion! There once stood Jerusalem on its lofty hills, conspicuous from afar by the lightness and beauty of its Eastern architecture, while above it rose the massive tower of the Antonia, the stately palace of Herod, and the still more gorgeous palace of the King of Kings. How gloriously must the rays of a setting sun have played upon its golden roof and among its marble colonnades, lighting up all with a glittering radiance, and sending through the valley below broad masses of shadow which brought out the snow-white Temple into bolder relief! And at the hour when the evening sacrifice was offered up, the smoke would be seen rising slowly in the air, and the hymn of countless worshippers float solemnly on the breeze. But now every thing was changed. For a time desolation rested on Mount Moriah, until at last there grew up

the heathen city of Ælia, and sounds of busy life were once more heard on that sacred spot. But an edict of the Emperor prohibited the Jew from entering its walls,* and he could not even come to die amidst the graves of his forefathers. And if he attempted to evade the law, how could he pass through the Bethlehem gate, over which was erected the image of a swine, in mockery of his faith! He would have shrunk from it as his countrymen at Rome did from the arch of Titus, which displayed upon its sculptured panels the last scene in their country's shame—the triumphal procession of the captive Jews, bearing, as they march, the sacred utensils of the Temple, the table of show-bread, the golden candlestick, and the silver trumpets of the priests. Or how could he bear to see the hill of Zion's solemnities profaned by a temple of the impure idolaters—its incense reeking up from the spot on which once the Shekinah rested,—and the wild dissonance of Heathen worship, or the Bacchanalian chorus of forbidden rites, making it to him the Mount of Corruption! The Jewish mind was for a time utterly stunned. It has been truly described as—the bursting of the heart of the nation. The people had never contemplated the possibility of such a ruin, for they considered the promises of God pledged to the inviolability of His Temple. They beheld, in the records of the past, what the Heathen would call an avenging Nemesis, pursuing those who had profaned its shrine. The Assyrian and

* *Gibbon*, ch. xv.

the Persian in succession plundered it, and in a short time their dynasty passed away, and a stranger sat upon their throne. Antiochus Epiphanes trod in their footsteps, and terribly was he repaid by the sad and mournful death which terminated his career. Pompey followed, but from the hour of his profanation of their Temple the Jews marked with exultation that his course of conquest ended, and he poured out his life-blood upon the shores of Egypt. Crassus repeated his crime, and he perished with his legions on the sands of the desert, where the wild Parthians were the ministers of God's retribution. But now it seemed as if the vengeance of Heaven had ceased. Tower and temple, wall and citadel were dust—the sword and the flame had done their work—Israel was clothed in sackcloth and ashes; but still no storm gathered around her oppressors. There seemed no vision of hope remaining; the scattered tribes realized they were "earth's warning, scoff, and shame," and instead of contending for supremacy with the rising faith, were content to wrap themselves up in sullen isolation.

A century more went by, and the tone of the Christian writers shows how entire was the downfall of the ancient faith. The fiery Tertullian, from the shores of Africa, utters the sentiments which prevailed through all ranks of the Church.* His tone of triumph is mingled with no sympathy for the degraded Jews. He seems rather to rejoice that they are "a people scattered and peeled, a nation meted out and trodden

* *Lib. contra Judæos.*

under foot."* He exults as they are trampled into the dust by their Heathen persecutors. There is something almost unchristian in the bitter mockery which he heaps upon their prostrate foes, but he regarded them as those on whom rested the hereditary guilt of their Lord's crucifixion—a guilt which had been bequeathed to them by the fearful prayer, "His blood be upon us and upon our children!" and therefore no punishment could be too severe—no sufferings could too deeply abase them.

And since then, what has been the history of the once chosen people? It has realized the legend of the wandering Jew—ever living, yet in pain and sorrow—gifted with an immortality, yet roaming restlessly through the earth—never at ease, weary and desolate—followed, as it were, by some ancient curse ever cleaving to their garments. Thus bearing the sorrows of eighteen centuries on their brow, their path has been over the brier and the thorn, and they have merited the title—

"Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast."

* *Isaiah*, xviii. 7.

II.

GRECIAN PHILOSOPHY.

THE warfare which Christianity waged with Judaism was a contest with those of the same household. It was the struggle of the infant Hercules in his cradle before he began to accomplish his mighty works. But the new faith grew and expanded, until it overpassed the bounds of Judea, published its mission to nations which long had sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and began to vindicate its claim to the control of the human mind. Everywhere that man was found its appeal was made, without regard to the narrow distinctions of race or caste. In tracing, therefore, its progress, as it went forth to endure the warfare and win the conquest, we must follow it from its sacred home in Asia to another continent, and hear its voice amid the groves of Athens, as it offered to solve those problems which for ages had baffled the efforts of human learning. The subject, therefore, which it brings before us is, CHRISTIANITY IN CONFLICT WITH GRECIAN PHILOSOPHY.

We confine our view to Greece, because there only did the faith encounter philosophy in its strength. The Romans con-

fessedly had none of their own, and did but feebly imitate that which they imported from Athens. It was "Roman plagiarism worshipping the echo of Grecian wisdom." After the subjugation of Greece, when the conquered had woven their intellectual chains about the conquerors, the study of their literature became the fashion at Rome. To speak and write the language was an indispensable accomplishment. A Greek slave to instruct the children was the necessary appendage to every family, and Greek professors taught philosophy and rhetoric to those who aspired to a liberal education. The youth of the Imperial City visited Athens and returned with that refinement which was requisite to throw a grace around the sternness of the Roman character. We trace this influence in the Dialogues of Cicero, and still more in that light and careless philosophy enshrined by Horace in those verses which are now as sparkling as when they won for their author the favor of Augustus. Amid the schools of Athens—adopting the system of none, yet culling from all what gratified his taste—a student by turns in the Academy, the Portico, and the Grove—he seems to have been imbued with that graceful Epicureanism which imparts a tone of pensive skepticism to his poems. And this was the only kind of effect which philosophy seems to have produced at Rome. It tinged, in some degree, the intellectual firmament, and softened and refined the literature, but it did not sink into the hearts of men. It was not elevated into a belief, moulding the whole life, and becoming a guide not only to the intellect but to the conscience. It was

not a great system involving moral obligations, and for which, like Socrates, men would die. It took no root in the national existence, produced no great thinkers, and therefore exercised no abiding influence.* At Rome, then, philosophy could scarcely be numbered among the antagonists of the faith.

But at Athens it was far different. There Christianity had to measure strength with the pride of earthly wisdom—that insidious spirit which, more than any thing else, could array its possessor against the humility of the Gospel, and which gave St. Paul occasion to declare, that "not many wise men after the flesh are called" to be numbered with its followers. To this, too, he refers, when, comparing the national characteristic of the Jews and Greeks, he says, "The Jews require a sign, (i. e. a miracle,) and the Greeks seek after wisdom, (i. e. philosophy.)† And when he stood upon Mars Hill, and by the simple weapons of the Gospel struck a deadly blow at the loftiest dreams to which human learning has ever given birth, he was the first combatant in that struggle which went on for centuries. The task, therefore, to him, was one of peculiar difficulty. He came to the seat of Grecian learning uncalled and unexpected. He knew not that any spirit there was yearning for his tidings, or any heart prepared for the revelations he was to unfold. The cry, "Come over and help us," was heard from a region which the enlightened philosophers of Greece looked down upon as barbarous, and from a province

* *Lewes' Hist. of Philosophy*, ii. 184.

† 1 *Cor.* i. 22.

which they were reluctant to acknowledge as a part of the Hellenic nation.* It was not an inhabitant of refined Corinth or intellectual Athens, but "a man of Macedonia," who, in a vision, stood by St. Paul, and called him from Asia into Greece.

We would endeavor, therefore, to portray the nature of those obstacles which the character of the Athenians and their intellectual training placed in the Apostle's way, for we believe they are seldom realized. We are content to rejoice in the glory which was won—in the possession of the truth which has made us free; but we think too little of the pains and sufferings of those who passed through the conflict and achieved the triumph. And in performing this task, we shall regard the philosophy of Greece, which the Apostle here encountered, as an antagonist entirely distinct from that ancient mythology, which, if it had not its birth on the same spot, was at least here shaped into those forms of beauty in which it has come down to us. The two are often so mingled as to render it impossible to separate them; yet, as far as practicable, we shall pass by the consideration of the latter until we meet it in all its wide-spread influence, when beholding the establishment of the faith in the Imperial City.

We must begin by considering the character of the Greeks at this time. We seldom appreciate the habits of thought on the intellectual character of a people who are removed from

* *Wordsworth's Greece*, p. 8.

us by the distance of centuries. It is a point not brought before us. "History is rarely more than the biography of great men. Through a succession of individuals we trace the character and destiny of nations. THE PEOPLE glide away from us, a sublime but intangible abstraction, and the voice of the mighty Agora reaches us only through the medium of its representatives to posterity."* But these often give no true idea of the nation from which they come, and thus we are led to form false conclusions. Dazzled by the eloquence of a few imperishable names, we dwell upon these alone, and suffer the character of a departed people to rest in silence.

The world has never witnessed a national character like that of the Greeks at the advent of Christianity. These were their most Grecian days, when they had reached their highest culminating point. The vast and colossal features of the Iron Age, stamped as they were with the heroic and sublime—rugged yet grand—had given place to forms of grace and beauty. Nature itself acted on the Greek to give a higher tone to his character. The transparent atmosphere—the cloudless sky—the balmy winds, all so pure that they rendered mere animal existence a luxury—lightened the heart and acted on the whole system with an exhilarating power. His imaginative faculties, too, were kept in constant exercise by the scenes on which he gazed. They partook both of the sublime and the calm and beautiful. Here, he beheld the traces of volcanic

* *Bulwer's Athens*, ii. 9.

fires which had desolated the soil, or of earthquakes, which, as at Sparta, had overthrown cities and convulsed the lofty mountains, so that when they passed away, the dark wide chasms were their footsteps, and their impress remained stamped upon the enduring rock. There, his eye met only forms of softness and repose—glittering shores resting in the calmness of a vivid sunlight, such as is seen but in those Eastern lands—and countless islands floating in a sea which appeared to be ruffled only by a summer breeze. Nor was nature left to produce this influence alone. When the Greek looked to some distant hill, he beheld, perhaps, the Doric columns of a stately temple rising on its brow; while in the retired grove—in the open spaces of the Agoras—and in the crowded avenues of the streets—he encountered breathing statues wrought from the radiant marbles of Paros or Pentelicus. And the love of these creations of art became a part of his very existence. They appealed to his imagination like the trophies of Miltiades to the mind of Themistocles, haunting him by day and mingling with his dreams by night, until the outward world acted like inspiration to his spirit and moulded his whole nature into an intense love of the ideal and the beautiful.

The Greek, therefore, in this age, had attained the very height of intellectual culture. Never before had mind been so active, and at Athens was collected all that human wisdom had ever devised. The heritage of traditions they had received from their Pelasgian ancestors, the dim track of whose existence we find it so difficult to trace—the discoveries of Egyp-

tian hierophants, enshrined in their dark and mystic creed—the relics of old Chaldean learning, when its sages looked out from their towers on the hosts of heaven, or calculated that mystery of numbers which they supposed to enclose the secrets of prophecy—all, in truth, that the world had known from the distant West to the antique temples of India, had become the property of these brilliant children of the South. The pride of human intellect was throned in Greece, and from thence her philosophers ruled the mind of many nations. And this exertion of thought and energy of genius was not confined to the favored few. It pervaded the mass of the whole people. Each Athenian was esteemed competent to decide on all matters, from the most venerable to the least important, and all in succession came before him and claimed his attention in those great assemblies which were the nurseries of Grecian eloquence. There they met the jewelled heralds of Persia, and sent back their taunting defiance to the power which seemed ready to crush them. Thither came the ambassadors of Sparta with their complaints, when they would prevent the rebuilding the demolished walls of Athens, and the acuteness of Attica was called into exercise to defeat by diplomacy the dishonorable craft of their more warlike neighbor. There were discussed the measures of Miltiades and Themistocles, and each citizen watched with jealous care the movements of these popular leaders, ever anxious lest the state should be injured by their ambition. There each expedition was publicly discussed, and the whole people decided how many war-ships

should sail against Paros, and how many troops should march to succor Lacedemon, when the earthquake had rent asunder the chains of her Helots, and amidst the very convulsions of Nature, the wild and desperate slaves had risen on their masters. There, too, were settled all that concerned the gorgeous rites of their faith—the recognition of a new deity—the erection of another temple—or the remodelling those forms of ancient worship, to which each age was adding a higher poetical beauty. To the people, too, was submitted every thing that concerned literature and art—the numbers of a tragic chorus—the material of that statue of the champion deity which Phidias was to execute for the Acropolis—the meed of praise to be awarded to the successful painter—and the judgment to be passed upon the poet, who stood trembling for their decision. If, therefore, the genius of an Athenian was unnaturally forced, it was most prodigal in its luxuriance. And the same training necessarily produced in him a most thorough cultivation of the taste. Everywhere we trace the existence of "the vision and the faculty divine." He was at home in every department of life, for every thing was referred to him, and he learned to judge of every thing. From his earliest years he was brought into contact with all that could refine the mind and elevate the imagination. This was his education. His academe was the public Agora—his books were those productions of art, before the unequalled glory of which the world even now bows in reverence—his teachers were the noblest orators of antiquity, and the writers of those

lofty tragedies whose sublimity modern genius has never yet surpassed. An Athenian, therefore, was born a statesman—thought was his natural heritage—he felt from the earliest dawn of reason that he was himself a part of the state—and hence arose that idolatrous love of country which in him contrasted so well with the fanatical patriotism of Sparta.* For him were erected those lofty temples—those noble porticoes—and those schools of learning. For him were those sumptuous baths—those groves and gardens which sheltered him from the noonday sun—and that noble theatre, where the inhabitants of a city could range themselves on its benches. And never again shall the world see such an audience! What other assemblage could have appreciated the lofty dramas of

* This love of the Greek for his native city is beautifully set forth by Metastasio, in his drama of *Temistocle*. In the interview between Themistocles and Xerxes, the latter, endeavoring to show that a banished man can have no love for an ungrateful country, receives from the Athenian exile an answer whose very brevity is sublime,—

Nacqui in Atene.

"Born in Athens." And then most beautifully does the Italian poet express the reverential reply of the exile to the haughty question, "What he loves there so well?" In a few lines he enumerates the objects of his love and regret—the ashes of the ancestral dead, the sacred laws, the protecting gods, the speech, the manners—yes, the sweat it has cost him, the splendor he has thence derived—the air, the trees, the soil, the walls, the very stones; and thus he seems to have exhausted every feeling, for his voice sinks into silence, and he closes abruptly, as if overwhelmed by the details of his patriotic love.-*Fraser's Mag.*

Æschylus, or the plays of Aristophanes, as he holds up before them a satire on themselves—boldly ridicules the humors of a democracy—and recklessly lampoons all the interests of the Agora and the Piræus! What audience but an Athenian would have responded to his sparkling wit with an applause, which, while it testified to the genius of the author, proved also the refinement of those for whom his plays were written! In what other nation, indeed, could we recognise as a truth what the Stagyrite has laid down as a general proposition—that the common people are the most exquisite judges of whatever in art is graceful, harmonious, or sublime!*

Such was the intellectual training of the Athenians. They passed their days in an atmosphere of intelligence which elsewhere has never had its parallel in the annals of the world. Incited to perpetual emulation, life with them was crowded with action, and that action was conceived and executed in the spirit of poetry. With the brightest rewards held out to the efforts of successful genius, they were ever struggling to produce some dazzling result which should win for them the applause of assembled Greece. And the fruits of these efforts are even now with us. They are witnessed in that proud philosophy, whose influence is still felt on the intellect of the world, and that lofty poetry which, long as the generations of men remain, shall furnish their models and master-pieces. We cannot, indeed, begin to trace the progress of the human mind,

* *Bulwer's Athens*, ii. 235.

without turning at once to the history of Greece. And now, when more than two thousand years have passed away, we find ourselves surrounded by the trophies of Athenian genius, and swayed by the spirit they impart. Her creations of beauty mingle in the dreams of the artist, and are reproduced in many a varied form—the student in his closet turns with reverent awe to commune with her mighty dead—and even the legislator gathers wisdom from the experience of those who essayed to rule that fickle and brilliant people. We cannot define her influence, but we feel that it has ever been to aid the triumph of the Intellectual over the Material and the Physical; and now, after the lapse of so many ages, we realize even more fully than did he who wrote the sentence, "that the power of ancient Greece was not an idle legend."*

A blighting change has passed over that fair city which once claimed to be the Ελλας Ελλαδος—"the Greece of Greece." The Propylæa and the Parthenon are in ruins—the olive-groves of Academe, which Cimon planted, and which were consecrated by the bright remembrance of Plato's presence, have been swept away—and silence and desolation have settled on the spot where once stood the tumultuous Agora. But the spirit of Athens is felt throughout the world. It gave birth to an imperishable language, and then to insure its universality, enshrined in it the rarest treasures. Every land over the wide earth has been breathed on by the air of Attica, and every

* *Plut. in vit. Per.*

civilized nation has done reverence to the genius of her people. Glorious, indeed, must have been that nation whom Miltiades led against the Mede at Marathon, and Aristides at Platæa—over whom the brilliant Pericles ruled—who listened to the burning eloquence of Demosthenes—whose code was written by Solon—and to whom Plato unfolded those glowing visions which even now float in beauty before the eyes of the scholar and the philosopher!

But we must turn to the social life of the Greeks, thoroughly to understand their character. They were not a reading, but a hearing and a talking people. With them the mind was reached through the eye and the ear. The imaginative faculty was perpetually called forth, and these impulsive children of the East, with every power expanded into the very fulness of life, were the very audience to be swayed by an orator who could play upon the impulses and passions of those he addressed. There was no press through which the philosopher could appeal to his countrymen; and therefore, instead of writing for their benefit, he mingled with them in their daily walks, and by the living voice inculcated his doctrines. He established a school, and its benches were crowded by those who loved to seek in any form the excitement of intellectual activity. No cares of business occupied their time, for they lived on the tribute of subject-nations, or on the industry of their slaves. The Romans spent their leisure hours in reading—we find their poets alluding to the "midnight oil"—and Homer and the Greek writers were their constant study. But the

Athenian listened to these authors recited in the open air. The charms of domestic life were comparatively unknown, and *home* conveyed not to the Greek the idea with which we in modern times invest it. His social hours were spent abroad—in the groves and gardens—and in those noble colonnades which Simon erected, that beneath their shade, sheltered from the western sun, his countrymen might assemble and converse. There they reviewed the operations of their generals, canvassed the merits of opposing orators, or listened to the reasoning of philosophers upon subjects the most abstruse, such as the soul, the creation of the universe, its sustaining causes, its duration, and the purposes of its various parts. For one library, the Greeks had a hundred theatres for plays, music and spectacles—groves and academies for disputation—forums for orators—and gymnasia and palæstræ for exercise and conversation.*

With us, indeed, in the cold regions of the north, it is difficult to understand the attachment of these impassioned children of a warmer latitude, to the mere physical enjoyment of climate. Yet without taking into account this element of Greek character, we can scarcely comprehend them aright. They display an ardent love for the sun, as if he were a familiar friend. It was the practice of the Grecian children, when his rays were obscured by a cloud, to exclaim, "Ἔξελθ' ὦ φίλ' ἥλιε!"—"Come forth, beloved sun!"† He was to them an emblem of glory and fertility. In the gladness of their

* *Retros. Rev. Introd.* † *St. John's Hellenes*, v. i. p. 149.

temperament they asked only that the skies should shine above them, and the seas sparkle at their feet. They basked in the sunny air while life continued, and when they were obliged to depart from this world, the chief terror of "the gloomy Hades" is, that its fields are unvisited by those bright beams which had shed such cheerful beauty about their earthly homes. To the god of day, therefore, they turned to utter their last farewell; and the personages of Grecian poetry seem to linger with the same reluctance, as if they were parting from those who claimed them as earthly kindred.* We hear this in the mournful tones of Antigone, when she exclaims,—

"Farewell, my friends! my countrymen, farewell!
Here on her last sad journey you behold
The poor Antigone: for never more
Shall I return, or view the light of day.
The hand of death conducts me to the shore
Of dreary Acheron."†

And to contrast with the womanly tenderness of Antigone the more manly language of Ajax, it is thus that the hero concludes his apostrophe to the objects he was leaving, before he dies by his own sword,—

"And thou, O Sun! who drivest the flaming car
Along the vaulted sky: when thou shalt see
My native soil, O! stop thy golden reins;

* *Bulwer's Athens*, ii. 314.

† *Sophocles, Antig.* 750.

Tell the sad story to my hapless sire,
And my afflicted mother; when she hears
The mournful tale, her grief will fill the land
With dreadful lamentations; but 'tis vain
To weep my fate: the business must be done.
O Death! look on me, Death! I come to thee;
Soon shall we meet: but thee, O glorious Day,
Present and breathing round me, and the car
Of the sweet Sun, thou never shalt again
Receive my greeting! henceforth time is sunless,
And day a thing that is not! Beautiful light."*

Such were the characteristics of the Greeks. And now, to bring this vividly before us—to enable us to realize more fully the nature of that life they passed, crowned by all that could elevate and refine—let us endeavor to summon up a picture of the glorious city in her palmy days, and see her children in some of those occupations which formed their characters, and made them what they have come down to us—restless, brilliant, and intellectual. We pass the gates of Athens, and everywhere meet her gay and graceful population, thronging the streets or wandering through the olive-groves, whose leaves rustle with the gentle breezes from the sea. We behold on every side the very triumph of Grecian art—the works of Praxiteles and Myron, of Phidias and Scopas—not concealed within the enclosure of halls, but everywhere, on the lofty pediments of temples, by the wayside, and in the open air, whose purity preserved those beautiful creations unchanged

* *Sophocles, Ajax*, 790.

from year to year. Later times have seen them only in their broken remains, mutilated and defaced; yet each generation gazed on them with reverent wonder, and they have ever been the world's immortal models. But in the age to which we are referring, they were in the freshness of youth, and we can mingle with the crowds who gather around the Olympian Jove of Phidias, awed by his Homeric majesty, as they behold him seated in his lofty car. Architecture, too, lends her aid. Those glorious fabrics are before us, which, Plutarch says, "seem endowed with the bloom of a perpetual youth." As far back as the days of Homer, the palaces of Greece, even making some allowance for poetical embellishment, must have displayed a beauty in the array of precious metals, and the harmonious blending of azure and gold, beyond what we are accustomed to ascribe to that early age.* We may imagine, then, in later generations, with the greater refinement of taste, the Queen of Attica had lost none of her glory. The quarries of Paros and Pentelicus had given up their treasures, and entablature and column, of snow-white marble, meet the eye wherever

* "Walls plated bright with brass, on either side
Stretch'd from the portal to the interior house,
With azure cornice crown'd; the doors were gold
Which shut the palace fast; silver the posts
Rear'd on a brazen threshold, and above,
The lintels, silver, architraved with gold.
Mastiffs, in gold and silver, lined the approach
On either side."—*Odyssey*, l. vii. 103.

we turn. The sister art, too, of painting, had been invoked to impart her charms, and the marble of frieze and pediment are covered with a brilliancy of colors which could long be preserved in no atmosphere but that of Greece. Thus they stand, palaces and temples—beautiful in their fair proportions, dazzling in their hues—and, rising far above them all, as if to consecrate the whole, the sacred Acropolis, "the City of the Gods." Such is the glory of this fair city, giving occasion to the bitter reproach of the allies, that she is "as a vain woman decked out with jewels."*

But a crowd obstructs the way. Two rival sophists are disputing, and as the intellectual warfare grows warmer, the delighted circle gathers closer around them. They reason by the strictest rules of logic, and the enjoyment of the spectators reaches its height as one is forced into a position where he is obliged to acknowledge his defeat. We pass on, and a rhapsodist is reciting to his audience. The poem he declaims with such impassioned gestures, embraces the most vivid and animating subjects of interest, and his hearers catch the excitement. It is the combat between Hector and Achilles, and the story, heard a thousand times before, is to them ever fresh and new. They share in the sorrows of the aged Priam, as he prays his son to avoid a combat with him, who had already "unchilded him of many a son"—tears flow as they listen to his mother's weeping entreaties—with clenched hands and flashing eyes

* *Plut. in vit. Per.*

they trace the progress of the fight; and when at last the mighty Hector falls, pierced by his foeman's spear, one heart-felt groan is heard from all the rapt listeners. It is a scene, the copy of which we may see at this day upon the Mole in Naples, except that there the lazzaroni listen to the strains of Tasso, instead of the lofty verse of Homer.

But the people are thronging to the Pnyx, the place of their public assembly. We find it on the sloping side of a hill, where a semicircular space has been hewn out of the lime-stone rock, with no roof above it, and no wall enclosing it. Six thousand citizens have filled this area, and in the presence of this multitude Themistocles rises and stands upon the Bema, a solid pedestal cut from the rock. There is a hushed attention, for he is to address them on the forming of the port of Piræus, a scheme which his far-reaching wisdom saw, would secure to Athens the sovereignty of the seas. He is to appeal, not to these six thousand alone, but through them to all his countrymen. He pauses for a moment and looks abroad upon the scene. Below him is the Agora, filled with statues, and altars, and temples, memorials of the great of other days, for Greece ever honored the dead more than the living. Beyond it is the Areopagus, the most venerable tribunal of the ancient world; above it the Acropolis; and, towering high in the air, the colossal statue of Minerva Promachus, armed with helmet, shield, and spear, and seeming to challenge the world in defence of Athens. To the right is the Parthenon, rising in severe and stately beauty, dazzling the eye with its statues, its painting,

and gold. To the north are the plains and vineyards, the olive-grounds and villages of Attica, lying in peaceful quiet away from this stirring scene. Beyond are the poetical heights of Phyle, and in the distant horizon the mountain-ridges of Parnes and Pentelicus. He turns to the left, and traces with his eye the road to Eleusis—the Sacred Way—which passes by the groves of the Academy, and over the classical stream of Cephissus; and in the distance is the now neglected Piræus, to which his eloquence to-day is to direct the attention of his countrymen, so that the vacant spot will soon be filled with vessels from distant lands—from the islands of the Ægean, the peninsula of Thrace, and the coast of the Euxine—and his native city become the empress of the seas. And if other objects were wanting to fire his mind, there was the gulf of Salamis, where he himself, as leader of the Greeks, had won imperishable glory—with on the one side, the eminence of Mount Ægaleos, where Xerxes sat upon his throne of precious metals to watch the progress of the fight, and on the other the Cape on which stands the trophy of Themistocles himself.* Is it strange, then, that he can stir the hearts of his countrymen with a resistless power, or that the Pnyx became the school of Athenian oratory?

But it is time to pass to another arena of Grecian glory, and one from which a spirit has gone forth for two thousand years to influence the literature of the world. It is the great Theatre

* *Wordsworth's Greece*, p. 150.

of Athens, like the Pnyx, hewn from the living rock of the Acropolis, beneath the Parthenon of Minerva and the majestic statue of Jupiter. From its sloping seats the wide prospect of both sea and land stretches out before the eye like some vast amphitheatre, till sky and earth mingle in the dim distance. Open above to the heavens, the actors were hemmed in by no painted scenes, but they turned to the skies and the lofty mountains, and the shores so rich in historical associations. No artificial lights were there, but the glorious sun of Greece was above them, and the breezes which swept by were filled with odors from the purple hills of Hymettus. On the lower benches of the semicircle are the archons and magistrates—the senators and priests—while rising above them are tier upon tier of seats crowded with eighteen thousand spectators. "Athens," says Plutarch, "spent more in dramatic representations than in all her wars." But we are to remember that the drama of Greece was the loftiest portion of her literature, and when Aristotle ranked the tragic higher than even the epic muse,* he was but echoing the voice of all his countrymen. It dealt with the highest interests of men—it was hallowed by the solemnities of religious faith—its subjects were those legends of the elder times in which the gods themselves were actors—and it was brought before the audience heightened by all the pomp of spectacle and the charms of the loftiest music. It was no pastime of an hour, but the assembled multitude listened with

* *De Poet.* c. 26.

reverent ear as the plot unfolded, and it came to them with somewhat of sanctity from its connection with the spiritual world.

We see this in the noblest drama of them all—the Prometheus of Eschylus—where an awful interest invests the sufferings of the hero, as, an elder and a better Deity, he sinks before the power of his Olympian successor. Yet he himself feels, that "the dark course of the grim Necessity" is pressing him down, and "unawed by the wrath of gods," he submits to what he regards as an inevitable fatality. But physical anguish cannot crush him, and when the Oceanides rise around his couch of pain, and in their notes of pity impart the sympathy he had excited—that "the wide earth waileth him," and through all its dwelling-places, "fall for a godhead's wrongs, the mortals' murmuring tears"—the Titan answers in the voice of prophecy, bids defiance to his oppressor, and predicts the time when the son of Saturn shall be "hurled from his realm, a forgotten king." We see the solemn grandeur of the subject, and the learned have supposed that the drama shadowed forth some old-forgotten creed which had given place to the more cheerful mythology of Greece—that the poet was arraying before the imagination of his cotemporaries gigantic phantoms, summoned from the wreck of a vanished ethical system, in which such greatness found congeniality and sympathy. But if so, with what added interest must the dark sublimity and the vast conceptions of the poet have appealed to those who in an age of faith listened to scenes which we only admire for their lofty intellectual tone!

But it is impossible for us in this day to enter into the feelings of an Athenian as he attended the representation of his national tragedies. The life-giving spirit which animated them is gone. They derived their freshness and beauty from the place in which they were performed, and the natural association they had with the scenes around—the earth and sparkling sea—the air and cloudless skies of Athens. We may imagine what impression it gave to the delivery, when the subject was the woes of the House of Atreus, and the spectator saw in the distance the hills of the Peloponnesus, beneath which the hero of the tragedy dwelt; or when the acts of Media were unfolded before them, they beheld the lofty summit of Acrocorinth, beneath which they were performed; or when in "the Persians" of Eschylus they listened to the description of the battle of Salamis, with the bay spread out before them in which these deeds were achieved, and the trophies on the shore which were reared to commemorate their triumph.*

But perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the noble opening of the "Agamemnon." On his solitary tower the watchman has been stationed to discern the beacon-fires which were to be the signal of the fall of Troy. But ten years pass away, and no light is seen. At length, it comes—the announcement of victory—and thus Clytemnestra gives the progress of the beacon flame from Troy to Argos:—

* *Wordsworth's Greece*, p. 157.

"A gleam—a gleam—from Ida's height,
By the fire-god sent, it came;
From watch to watch it leap'd that light,
As a rider rode the flame!
It shot through the startled sky,
And the torch of that blazing glory
Old Lemnos caught on high,
On its holy promontory,
And sent it on, the jocund sign,
To Athens, mount of Jove divine.

Wildly the while it rose from the isle,
So that the might of the journeying light
Skimm'd over the back of the gleaming brine!
Farther and faster speeds it on,
Till the watch that keep Macistus' steep—
See it burst like a blazing sun!
Doth Macistus sleep
On his tower-clad steep?
No! rapid and red doth the wildfire sweep,
It flashes afar, on the wayward stream
Of the wild Euripus, the rushing beam!
It rouses the light on Messapion's height,
And they feed its breath with the withered heath.
But it may not stay!
And away—away—
It bounds in its freshening might.
Silent and soon,
Like a broadened moon,
It passes in sheen, Asopus green,
And bursts on Cithæron gray.
The warder wakes to the signal rays,
And it swoops from the hill with a broader blaze
On—on the fiery glory rode—
Thy lonely lake, Gorgopis, glowed—
To Megara's Mount it came;

They feed it again,
And it streams amain—
A giant beard of flame!
The headland cliffs that darkly down
O'er the Saronic waters frown,
Are pass'd with the swift one's lurid stride,
And the huge rock glares on the glaring tide;
With mightier march and fiercer power,
It gain'd Arachne's neighboring tower—
Thence on our Argive roof its rest it won,
Of Ida's fire the long-descended son!
Bright harbinger of glory and of joy!
So first and last with equal honor crown'd,
In solemn feasts the race-torch circles round.
And these my heralds! this my SIGN OF PEACE!
Lo! while we breathe, the victor lords of Greece,
Stalk in stern tumult, through the halls of Troy!"*

We read this splendid passage, but to us it is a mere collection of names—most of them invested with but little association to our minds. But how different was it to those who listened with the landscape of Greece spread out before their eyes, and to whom all these were sacred and familiar spots! And as the trilogy goes on, the scenes assume even more of a local interest. Orestes comes to Athens to plead his cause in the temple of Minerva—that very temple on which now they are gazing—the trial by the gods takes place—he is absolved—and the enraged Eumenides, soothed by Minerva, conclude to dwell at Athens, and be the benefactors of the city where now this story is represented.

* Translated by Sir E. B. Lytton.

We may be permitted, perhaps, to summon up one more picture of Grecian life. It is a wider scene—the gathering of the people to the Olympic Games. Thither the Greeks came up—as the Jews to their Passover—for a national festival of all their tribes. From their home upon the continent—from the shores of Asiatic Ionia—from the colonies which luxurious Corinth had spread through the Mediterranean—and from the islands of the broad Ægean, they have assembled—their jealousies forgotten—their petty differences laid aside—every feeling merged in the thought of their common origin. But what emotions sway the multitude, as they gather around that solitary individual, who, worn with toil and travel, stands up among them, and reads passage after passage, holding them in breathless attention? They are listening to Heroditus, who has returned from his long sojourning in the East and among the antique temples of Egypt, and he holds in his hand that picturesque narrative which has made him immortal. He has struck the chord of national feeling, and listening thousands shout their rapturous applause. The young Thucydides is there—the tears which fall from his eyes are a proud homage to the writer's genius—and perhaps the remembrance of that hour induced him in after years himself to frame the tragic story of his country's fall—a history which in its commencement he declares to be "an everlasting heirloom for the future."* No cold or critical skepticism is found in that vast

* Κτημα ες αει. *lib.* 1.

audience. Inquisitive and credulous as children, they listen with unwavering faith to fictions, whose only foundation is tradition, or some ancient ballad. With them there is no questioning or doubt with regard to the marvels of which he tells. They shudder at the description of each strange beast—each tribe of dwarfs or giants. Of the monuments of those ancient dynasties which had passed away—the colossal temples of Ipsambul and Thebes—the Babylonian gardens—and the mysterious pyramids of Egypt—they conceive as vividly as if their own eyes had seen these stupendous wonders. They hear with superstitious awe of the solemn rites of the Magi on their mountain-tops—of deities whose very name no lip must utter—and of the dread secrets of Egyptian priests, which they had graven with a pen of iron on their own antique monuments. All—the romantic legend—the wild adventure—the popular superstition which now excites the laughter of the world—had to them a living and truthful reality.

But he comes to scenes which awaken an interest even more intense. It is the glowing narrative of their country's glory. They trace the progress of the Persian host as it spreads over the land, and its fleet, in all the luxury of Asiatic pomp, sails slowly along the deserted shores. Nature seems to yield to their sway—the mountains are cut through—the seas are bridged—the rivers of the plain are drained to quench the thirst of these countless thousands—while desolation and famine follow in their path. But the hour of retribution is at hand. He leads his hearers to the pass of Thermopylæ, and

with stormy brow and flashing eye they hear the story of its gallant deeds. He pictures to them the plain of Marathon—the gay armor of the Medes, "whose very name in Greece had hitherto excited terror"—the solemn hush for vows, and sacrifice, and prayer—the loud clang of the trumpets—the desperate onset—the millions of Asia scattered like dust before the wind—when suddenly his voice is drowned by the deafening response of excited thousands. The children of those who won that fight cannot restrain their shouts of patriotic enthusiasm. Again the scene has changed, and he points them to the Bay of Salamis—the serried order of the Grecian fleet—the furious attack—the flying Persians—and the grief and indignation of Xerxes, as, from his lofty throne upon the shore, far off and impotent, he saw his power buried beneath the waters. Look at the strong contortions of countenance with which they hear the tale, and the impassioned gestures in which they give vent to their emotions. Do you wonder? Those wild hands, now flung upward in delight, grasped spear and sword on that memorable day. See the multitude turn from the historian with one spontaneous move, to hail a majestic personage who sits among the audience. Can they withhold their praise? That is Themistocles, the leader of their fleet, when, in the words of a warrior-poet who fought that day—

——— "from every Greek with glad acclaim
Burst forth the song of war, whose lofty notes

The echo of the rocks of Salamis return'd,
Spreading dismay through Persia's hosts."*

Such was life at Athens, and you can perceive how necessarily such a training must have made its inhabitants a people different from any thing else the world has ever seen. They were restless, active, and audacious—turbulent when any exciting cause aroused them—yet most cultivated in repose. Brilliant of wit, versatile, disputatious, and talkative—they had the very characteristics to produce arrogance and pride. We have endeavored to sketch them in one of the most brilliant periods of their history, when the Persian war had closed, and that refinement and elegance been imported, which perhaps reached its height in the later age of Pericles. Yet we know not that at the advent of Christianity they had altered in any of those marked traits of character which would affect their reception of the faith. Their nationality, it is true, was gone, and, like the rest of the world, they were crushed beneath the Roman yoke. The Greek realized it, and feeling that no new day of Marathon was to dawn upon him, he lived on the recollections of his ancient glory. The spirit of poetry still lingered in his land—its venerable mountains, its legendary streams, and its sacred groves were there—and he turned with as much reverence as ever to the heights of Phyle and the unfading glories of the Ilyssus. Perhaps, too, sorrow for his departed

* *Æschylus, Persæ*, 405.

greatness induced him to cling with a firmer grasp to all that remained to speak of the past and its hallowed associations. If the Athenians had lost any traits of character, they were those which were most lofty and high-minded—those which belonged to freemen, and had trained the heroes of Salamis and Platæa. The closer intimacy with the East, particularly with their Ionian colonies, introduced a higher style of luxury and a greater degree of Asiatic effeminacy. The light of the heroic age glimmered more feebly on the banks of the Cephissus, and the dwellers there were losing in each generation more of the stern features of their Homeric ancestors. We can trace the progress of this feeling even in their Drama, as they gradually turned from the lofty sublimity of Æschylus, divorced as it is from all the softer emotions of our nature, and popular taste began to incline to the passionate display and more earthly sentiments which marked the tragedies of Euripides.

We believe, then, that when the Apostle entered Athens, life there was as vivid and intellectual as of old, but even more graceful, and certainly more voluptuous. And we can see, from what has already been said, the force of that single sentence in which St. Luke sums up the occupation of its inhabitants:—"All the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing."* But was it easy to preach to such the humbling truths of our faith? And did it not seem to be a

* *Acts*, xvii. 21.

mighty conflict into which Christianity was entering, to attempt to gain the mastery over this versatile intellect, and to impart to it an entirely new direction?

We proceed, then, to the consideration of that philosophy which Christianity encountered at Athens, and which had there, if not its origin, at least its firmest seat. And in attempting it, even so far as to show its influence on the rising faith, we feel how utterly inadequate must be any account which can be compressed into the narrow limits of this chapter. We can but give its outline most briefly sketched. Its history, if faithfully written, would be the history of the human mind—its mighty struggle—and often its sad defeat, as centuries went by, and the goal which gigantic minds aimed to reach, seemed equally distant after their long journeying over the arid desert. It would be a picture of man's sublime attempts, yet fearful failures—

> "Of poor Humanity's afflicted will
> Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

It is impossible to discover the first beginnings of Philosophy. Its fountain is like that of the mysterious Nile, springing up in a distant and unknown region, the theme of visionary story and the subject of curious speculation. We naturally, however, turn to the East when we attempt to trace the germ of that wisdom which in a fairer form at last came forth from the shores of Greece, to challenge the admiration of the world. Meditation is as peculiarly the characteristic of Asia as action

is of Western Europe. It is a trait increased by the lassitude produced by climate, and that inert abstraction which is the peculiar temperament of the inhabitants. It is a taste as distinctive of the fervent suns of tropical regions as are the aromatics of Arabia or the spices of India. To withdraw the soul from the senses—to divorce the exterior from the inner man—to repose during lengthened periods upon a single idea, without a wish for progression or change—to break entirely away from the visible world—these are the pleasures of the Orientals.* It was this craving after speculation which led in later ages to the dreams of Gnosticism, and the fatal heresy of the Manichæans. It was this which sent men forth to "the dead and voiceless wilderness," that they might commune with their own hearts and be still—which peopled with monks the deserts of Egypt and the dreary wastes which border the Dead Sea. The East, therefore, from the earliest period of recorded time, was the home of thought, and, of course, the cradle of contemplative philosophy.

And with the same feeling which declares that no man is a prophet in his own country, the imaginative Greeks were accustomed to turn for what was grand and striking to those dim and shadowy lands, which their very ignorance invested with influence. They listened with awe to those dark and early oracles, which contained the first deductions of human wisdom. There seemed to be in the Athenian character a

* *Nat. Hist. of Enthusiasm*, p. 207.

sympathy for the speculative genius of the East. The mysticism, born on the banks of the Ganges, or among the fire-worshippers of Persia, reappeared in a new form on the banks of the Nile, and tinged the dreamy Platonism of Greece. There was something, indeed, from the very contrast, fascinating to this restless and reasoning people, in the tranquil abstraction of the East. They looked to Chaldea as the fountain of human wisdom—and the dim speculations of her priests, as from their towers they watched the hosts of heaven, and sought to learn their influence on the destinies of this lower world, or selected corporeal tokens as the types of their philosophical creed, were received by them with reverence, as the very inspirations of the Divinity. The first movings, indeed, of the human reason—its first gropings in the misty twilight—were to form some system of philosophy. Its first effort was to solve the enigmas of human life. The creative breath of philosophy is the spirit of inquiry, and this turns most naturally to those solemn mysteries which concern man's spiritual interests. Thus arose these speculations of an elder wisdom, which passed through the channel of the Ionian colonies to the schools of Athens, and were there reproduced in a new and more luxuriant form. The dreams of these Eastern sages were shaped into systems of poetic beauty, and the Ideal was changed into the Practical.

But, above all, Egypt was to them the land of wonders. There was something in the venerable antiquity which marked her colossal temples, her mysterious pyramids, and the won-

derful sepulchral palaces of her departed kings, which seemed to impress the lively Greeks. All there was rigid and antique, and they were even awed by the dark symbolism which characterized the teaching of her priests. Pythagoras spent many years in Egypt, and there he learned that doctrine of a Metempsychosis which marks his system. Plato, too, in the words of Valerius Maximus, "wandered along the winding banks of the Nile, himself a disciple to the old men of Egypt." And it is curious to mark how the dreamy mysticism of that land was changed, when incorporated with the elements of Grecian character—how much more practical it became—how, without losing any thing of its lofty spiritual tone, it abandoned the region of mere meditation and mingled itself up with the common interests of mankind. Herodotus tells us, as the result of his researches, that Greece even imported from the Nile the names of almost all her deities;* and interwoven as were the philosophy and theology of Egypt—the priests being instructors in both—this could not have happened without a sensible influence being exercised over the intellectual character of the Greeks. Through all ages, indeed, the lore of Egypt stamped its impress upon the systems of the Academy, the Porch, and the Garden. The dark enigmas of Eleusis, in which religion and philosophy united, had been celebrated for a thousand years in the colossal temples of Thebes before they were transported to the shores of Attica; and from

* *Herod.* ii. c. 1.

thence also came the mystery of the Anaglyph—that secret writing known only to the priesthood.* Thus Egypt was the mother of Athens. From her came those dread rites which embodied the maxims of early wisdom—maxims derived from elder dynasties—but whose antiquity was claimed for Isis, when the priesthood made for her the boast—"None among mortals hath taken off my veil!" These dark and mystic creeds in Greece expanded into the graces of intellectual life, and those many systems of philosophy which marked the progress of the human mind.

Thus it was that the spirit of conjecture was first awakened in the schools of Athens. Henceforth, could we trace its progress, we should find it to be one series of struggles as men groped their way on through the darkness—each age working out some hard-wrought conclusion—and this serving as a position from which its successors were to set forth on their journey, or else as a problem which the next generation was to overthrow. It is a picture of

> "Spirits yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."†

We may begin with the teaching of Pythagoras. His own history is enshrined in legends, which impart to it a romantic

* This was a different system from the Hieroglyph, which could be read generally by the educated classes.

† *Tennyson.*

interest. Returning to his own countrymen after long study in the venerated yet mysterious learning of Egypt, and affecting to receive instruction from the inspired ministrants of Delphi, he was prepared to wield an influence over the minds of his hearers which no one else had enjoyed. The very wonders which tradition related of his life—the fabulous glory which, in after ages, rested upon it—show that his career was that of no ordinary man. His generation must have listened with no little reverence to one, to whom they ascribed authority over the powers of Nature, and to whom it was said, "the harmony of the spheres was audible music." He stirred up, indeed, the intellect of Greece and Italy, and, rising from the preceptor to the legislator, overturned the government of the country in which he had made his home. It must have been an august philosophy which could implant the principles thus to convulse entire nations; yet he taught only in secret, for he could not be led to believe in the fitness of the multitude to receive the truth. Immense, therefore, as was his personal influence over those who knew him, we are now obliged to learn his doctrines from the general tendency of his disciples' speculations. We feel that we cannot grasp his theory of the occult properties of NUMBERS, and the language in which his followers reveal it, sounds to us like the dreamy speculations by the alchemists of the middle ages. But apart from this, his mild and simple rules—the doctrine of SELF-COMMAND being the centre of all his instructions—form a system of ethics admirable in itself. Yet as time passed on, all this became cor-

rupted or obscure—men, as usual, lost in the symbol a view of the truth it was intended to shadow forth—and the influence of his great name was borrowed to sanction perversions which he himself would have condemned. Thus, at the dawn of Christianity, the philosophical school of Pythagoras was arrayed against it, and among those works which the heathenism of that age produced to combat the influence of the rising faith, was the life of its founder by Jamblicus, portraying to his readers the Pagan philosopher as a nobler example than Jesus of Nazareth.

Among the other schools of Greece the spirit of poetry long exercised its influence over the reasonings of philosophy. Xenophanes was the first who arrayed himself against "the sunny legends" of Homer. Yet he did so, not because he was dead to their poetic beauty, but because of the false theology they contained. He had looked abroad over nature and learned the lesson of God's Unity, and in the deep sincerity and boundless reverence of his nature, he could not believe in a divinity gifted with human attributes. He seemed to have imagined to himself a Deity whom graven images could not represent; and Aristotle, in a single sentence, has given his argument and conclusion:—"Casting his eyes upward at the immensity of heaven, he declared that *The One* is God." And the attributes in which he arrays Him are—ALL HEARING, ALL SIGHT, ALL THOUGHT. But, unlike Pythagoras, he had faith in Humanity. He labored for the many. He had looked upon existence with infinite sadness—he had seen the primal error

which most of all degraded it—and he went forth through his whole life to wrestle with it. A poet himself, and a rhapsodist, for three quarters of a century he wandered through many lands—like the Jongleurs and Troubadours of the middle ages, though with a higher aim—uttering his voice to raise up within men a recognition of the Divine.

This was a great advance, and hence arose the Eleatic school, and its disciples, Parmenides, Melissus, Zeno, and Heraclitus. Parmenides seems to have trodden in the steps of Xenophanes; but believing from his reason that there is naught existing but the One, while his sense taught him that there are many things, he was led to the conviction of the Duality of human thought—the two principles, one to satisfy the reason, and the other to accord with the explanations of sense.* This was the foundation of idealism. It was a metaphysical doctrine, however, which in other hands soon passed into mysticism and error.

Then came the lofty spiritualism of the Ionian school, and Anaxagoras, living in the most brilliant period of Grecian history—that which followed the battle of Thermopylæ—was enabled to appeal to intellects which were afterwards to rule the destinies of Athens. His doctrines struck at the root of the Hellenic worship, substituting in place of the multitude of gods, One Intelligence, and reducing every thing else to material and physical causes. The philosopher shared the usual fate of reformers, and, driven into exile by those whose preju-

* *Lewes' Hist. of Philos.* i. 89.

dices he had assailed, died in a foreign land. But his influence survived his departure, and he who had formed the minds of Pericles, Euripides, and Socrates, had done enough to stamp his influence on the world.

We pass by the brilliant yet dangerous school of the Sophists, about whom, indeed, all information is unsatisfactory. We learn their tenets only from their opponents—even Plato's account is evidently a caricature—and the combatants in an intellectual warfare seldom do justice to those arrayed against them. Yet the disputatious, quibbling nature of the Greeks was one to which their arts would readily commend themselves. They were brilliant and showy rhetoricians, but their teaching was the preference of expression to truth—the power of achieving a victory, no matter on which side the truth might be. They seemed, indeed, to deny that there was any Eternal and Immutable Truth, or that there were any such things as Right and Wrong, otherwise than by convention. It was a shallow skepticism, which passed away when the deeper philosophy of Socrates asserted its claims.

But of him—the martyr for Truth—the world has heard more, perhaps, than of any other who taught at Athens. Yet is it not more a name to point the moral of a schoolboy essay, than an intelligent understanding of what he believed and why he suffered? He was the patient searcher after Truth. To her, as to his soul's mistress, he dedicated all the powers of his expanded mind, and worshipped her with a true devotion. And if the results he reached are now familiar to the children

in our schools, the philosopher no less deserves immortal honor. It is because such men as he labored in the fields of intellect, that the great truths, so strange to his generation, have become the common-places of to-day. Look at him—rude and ungainly in appearance—compared by his cotemporaries to Silenus—wandering through the streets absorbed in meditation, or disputing in the market-place. Yet he who lingers to hear "the old man eloquent," is caught by the witchery of his conversation, and even the brilliant Alcibiades declared—"I stop my ears, as from the Syrens, and flee away as fast as possible, that I may not sit down beside him and grow old in listening to his talk."

We will not speak of the method of Inductive reasoning on which his intellectual fame is based,* but rather turn to the sublime truths he held which concern man's moral interests. He taught that God is One—perfect in Himself—immutable—the Author of the existence and welfare of every creature ;† that this Being, not chance, made the world and all that it contains.‡ And yet what darkness shrouded even his mind, when he came to the borders of the Unseen world! "It is now," he said, "time that we depart, I to die, you to live ; but which has the better destiny is unknown to all except the God."§ And his last words show that he had not yet entirely

* "There are two things of which Socrates must justly be regarded as the author ; the *Inductive Reasoning* and *Abstract Definitions*." *Aristotle, Met.* xiii. c. 4.

† *Plato in Phædon.* ‡ *Plato in Timæo.* § *Plato in Apolog.*

emancipated his own mind from the errors against which he argued. "O Crito!" said he, "I owe Æsculapius a cock, pay it—do not neglect it."*

From Socrates to his noblest pupil the transition is natural. It would, however, require a volume to give any idea of the writings of Plato—his ideal theory—his dialectics—and his system of ethics. He was one of those whose whole soul seemed pervaded with a sense of the Beautiful. We see in every part of his works that he was possessed by

> "A presence that disturbed him with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things."†

It is thus that he has come down to us, and in this light the world chiefly knows him. Thousands who are entirely unacquainted with his theology or his ethics,‡ regard him as having

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* *Plato in Phædon.* † *Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey."*

‡ Plato wrote also tragedies, lyrics, and epigrams. Some of the latter only have been preserved. One of them, quoted in Lewes' "Hist. of Philosophy," is so beautiful that we cannot forbear giving it:—

> ἀστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς ἀστήρ ἐμός· εἴθε γενοίμην
> οὐρανὸς ὡς πολλοῖς ὄμμασιν εἴς σε βλέπω.

"Thou gazest on the stars, my Life! Ah! gladly would I be
Yon starry skies, with thousand eyes, that I might gaze on thee!"

conceived the idea of the τὸ καλὸν, "the Beautiful," and the mere mention of his name calls up, they scarcely know why, visions of splendor before their eyes. But what did Plato mean by this? He considered Beauty as a revelation of the Divinity in the things around us—not that appearance which depends on symmetry of form or harmony of color—but the radiant image of Truth in whatever it can be seen. And the loftiness of his view can be learned from his description of those whose eyes are sealed against this spiritual Beauty. "They," he says, "who are not fresh from heaven, or who have been corrupted, are not vehemently impelled towards that Beauty which is aloft, when they see that upon earth which is called by its name. They do not, therefore, venerate and worship it, but give themselves up to physical pleasures."* And love, with him, was the intense desire of the soul for this lofty Beauty—the longing of the spirit for that which is like unto itself. Love, then, is the bond which unites the Divine and the earthly. But the defect with Plato was, that he could see no nobler end in life than that of familiarizing the mind with the Beautiful, the Good, and the True.

And yet no writer, without the pale of the Church, that has ever lived, has exercised so marked an influence on the spirit of Christianity as this Greek philosopher. There was something so fascinating about his elevating doctrines, that men clung to them even after they had received the purer light of

* *Plato in Phæd.*

our faith; and if St. Jerome could hear, in vision, a voice saying to him, "Thou art no Christian, thou art a Ciceronian,"* there was many an early writer of the Church to whom the charge might be addressed, "Thou art no Christian, thou art a Platonist." Eusebius names him, as "the only Greek who has penetrated into the antechamber of Christian truth." Justin Martyr, Clement, Origen, and Augustine warmly express their admiration—and Celsus impiously declares, that Christ has borrowed from Plato. We know not, therefore, a nobler work by one who understood the spirit of Platonism, than to trace its influence from the time when its followers attempted to engraft it on the New Faith, and to show how in all ages its subtle spirit has acted on the belief of the world.†

But this very fascination rendered Platonism a most dangerous antagonist of Christianity. It seemed to satisfy that thirsting after something nobler than heathenism taught, which must be a natural characteristic of the mind. Plato united in his system all the conflicting tendencies of the age, selecting from the works of his predecessors each portion of truth that

* *Ad Eustach. Epist.* xviii.

† There is a work on this subject in German, which we believe has never been translated. *Das Christliche in Plato und in der Platonischen Philosophie, entwickelt und hervorgehoben von D. C. Ackermann, Archidiakonus zu Jena*, 1835. (The Christian Element in Plato, and the Platonic Philosophy, developed and exhibited, by D. C. Ackerman, Archdeacon at Jena, 1835.)

they had discovered, and reconciling these portions in one general doctrine. In that vast system all skepticism and all faith found acceptance; the skepticism was corrected, and the faith was strengthened by more solid arguments.* Men, therefore, were willing to rest in the higher philosophy which he taught—the subjugation of sense to reason, and the emancipation of what was purely spiritual in man from the degrading fetters of the material. They inquired, what more than this could Christianity teach us?

There was much, indeed, in the system of Plato which harmonized with the doctrines of our faith. For instance, in one of the most striking of his myths, he clearly declares the fact of the fall. It is thus that he gives his view of human nature:—"We may compare it to a chariot, with a pair of winged horses and a driver. In the souls of the gods, the horses and the driver are entirely good: in other souls only partially so, one of the horses excellent, the other vicious. The business therefore of the driver is extremely difficult and troublesome."† His views, too, of the Supreme Being are marked by sublimity. "We are wrong," he says, "in speaking of the Divine Essence, to say, *it was—it shall be;* these forms of time do not suit eternity. *It is*—this is its attribute."‡ So it was, too, with his doctrine of the Trinity. We trace in it the truth of what Josephus declares, that Plato obtained much of his theological

* *Lewes' Hist. of Philos.* ii. 81.
† *Plato in Phæd.*
‡ *Plato in Tim.*

knowledge from the books of Moses. He must, indeed, have been acquainted with the Jewish Trinity, or the ancient Cabala, for his doctrine so nearly resembled that of the Christian system, that his three persons, or hypostases, are never by him accounted as created beings, but are set above all creatures.* He concentrated and personified Infinite Goodness, Infinite Wisdom, and Infinite Vital Energy in the fountain of his Divinity. These are the three Essences of his Trinity.

It is pleasant, indeed, to find oases like these in the dreary wastes of Grecian Philosophy, and these were the points which drew the attention of early Christian writers, and induced them to claim Plato as almost one of themselves. Yet still much is wanting, and there is "a great gulf" between his theology and that taught by St. Paul. It aims nobly, but reaches not the goal which it seeks. It needs—what is the very heart and soul, the living pulse of Christianity—the doctrine of the Incarnation. We find this defect visible in every department of heathen philosophy. Its conceptions of the holiness of God were feeble, because He had not been brought before them with the living distinctness of the Christian system. Its loftiest view was the apotheosis of man—not the Incarnation of God. The distinguishing element of the true faith is the power of redemption—its healing influence—its representation of the Son of God, the purest, noblest life the world has ever seen—the only one pervaded by the very ful-

* See *Bishop Horsley's Letters to Dr. Priestley*, Let. xiii.

ness of holiness. And no system which wants this, can achieve the recovery of man from his fall and ruin. We read the lofty thoughts of Plato, and still we are reminded of the words of St. Augustine, "Apud Ciceronem et Platonem, aliosque ejusmodi scriptores, multa sunt acuté dicta et leniter calentia, sed in iis omnibus hoc non invenio, 'Venite ad me.'" There is no Cross—no true abasement of the heart—nothing to bring man in humility once more into union with God.

Aristotle was for twenty years the disciple of Plato, and of him his master remarked, "Aristotle is the *mind* of my school." Numbers resorted to his school in the Lyceum, and as, in his restless temperament, he walked up and down its shady paths, crowds of admiring pupils followed, and hung with delight upon his words. But Aristotle—wide as has been for ages the influence he exercised over the human mind—is now known for his logic and metaphysics, not for any effect he produced upon the ethics of the world. The universal statement has been, that Plato was an Idealist, and Aristotle a Materialist. Later German writers, like Hegel, have denied the truth of this assertion, but certainly, when we pass from the writings of the former to those of the latter, there is a great transition. There is not the lofty spiritual tone, nor the same high aim. Perhaps, then, we may safely say, that he sacrificed ethics to metaphysics and physics. He suffered the latter to usurp that attention which Plato bestowed upon the former.

We come now to what may be regarded as the last Epoch

of Grecian Philosophy, before the dawn of Christianity. The skepticism of the Sophists had been refuted by the reasoning of Socrates, but now the tide of doubt flowed back, and the protest against faith was made with more terrible power. The age of disbelief had come, and Pyrro, after his return from India with the expedition of Alexander, began to question the origin of knowledge until doubt became irresistible. He founded the School of the Skeptics, and his tenets infected the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the members of the New Academy, so that Grecian Philosophy closed in an utter want of faith in Truth or in human endeavor. With a notice of two of these schools we may conclude this sketch.

We are told by St. Luke, that when St. Paul commenced his public ministry at Athens, "certain philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him."* The sect of the former was extensively spread, and we can now read their moral precepts in Catullus and Lucan, or the more widely-known pages of Horace. They denied the gods, except in name, acknowledging indeed their existence, but depriving them of all government over the affairs of men, and all interest, either in their crimes or virtues. They supposed them to remain in passionless apathy, contemplating only their own happiness, and thus, the dwellers in this lower world were deprived of all check upon their baser passions, and all those incitements of hope which shed their radiance to relieve the

* *Acts*, xvii. 18.

dreariness of our pathway. The chief good, they taught, consisted in pleasure. The founder of their sect, indeed, made pleasure to consist in virtue, and the pleasures of the body, though not to be despised, to be insignificant when compared with those of the soul. Yet we know the necessary tendency of human nature. The milder code of morals enabled men to degenerate into indolence and sensuality, and the system, therefore, which his followers taught in the luxurious Gardens of Epicurus, was one congenial to the growing effeminacy of Grecian character.

Or, if there were loftier spirits who needed something less sensual—something more above the world—the teaching of the Porch supplied the want. The Stoic was at hand with his doctrines, which were elevated enough to captivate many of the noblest minds of Greece and Rome, from Zeno to Brutus and Marcus Antoninus. It was in one of those crises which sometimes happen to a nation, when all that is pure and venerable seems to have lost its sanction, and society is rushing downward with reckless levity, that Zeno appeared. He beheld social anarchy advancing with rapid strides. Skepticism and Epicurean softness had eaten like a canker into the heart of the people, and there was nothing to counteract them except the magnificent but vague works of Plato, or the vast but abstruse scheme of Aristotle.* And these could not act upon the life of the people. All, therefore, for which Greece had

* *Lewes' Hist. of Philos.* ii. 151.

been most venerated, was hastening to decline, and the glory which lingered about her was that which rests upon decay. Zeno came, then, with the inspiration of a reformer, to correct these evils. He wished to restore the stern simplicity and manly energy of older times—to lay again the deep foundation of a reverence for moral worth—and thus stem the sweeping torrent of enervating pleasure. But it was a reaction, and therefore became one-sided. It was a warfare of the mind against the body, intending, if possible, to produce in the latter a total annihilation of all those tastes which Providence had implanted. It was an effort after apathy as the highest condition of our nature. And yet, this was only the creed of the fatalist, marked, indeed, by its mental strength and self-reliance, but rooting out all human passions, and, in the attempt to rise above Humanity, sinking man far below it. Well has Milton summed up the character of this sect :—

"The Stoic last in philosophic pride,
By him called virtue ; and his virtuous man,
Wise, perfect in himself, and all possessing
Equal to God, oft shames not to prefer,
As fearing God nor man, contemning all
Wealth, pleasure, pain or torment, death and life,
Which, when he lists, he leaves, or boasts he can,
For all his tedious talk is but vain boast,
Or subtle shifts conviction to evade.
Alas! what can they teach, and not mislead,
Ignorant of themselves, of God much more,
And how the world began, and how man fell
Degraded by himself, on grace depending?
Much of the soul they talk, but all awry,

> And in themselves seek virtue, and to themselves
> All glory arrogate, to God give none;
> Rather accuse Him under usual names,
> Fortune and Fate, as one regardless quite
> Of mortal things. Who, therefore, seeks in these
> True wisdom, finds her not; or, by delusion,
> Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,
> An empty cloud."*

We have thus imperfectly sketched the successive schools of Athens, that we might form some estimate of the intellectual condition of the people when the dawning Gospel began to shed its soft and consecrating rays upon them, and they were summoned to worship at its shrine. These schools were the footmarks of generations as they had toiled onward in the perilous journey. They had for ages been seeking in vain to reach that region where the face of Truth can be seen unveiled, but all had been a miserable failure. The great problems which concerned man's moral interests had not been advanced one step towards their solution. The view, indeed, is a saddening one, from the first awakenings of human inquiry with Thales, to the days of the Skeptics, who denied the possibility of any answer to the questions which had tasked their predecessors. And whatever may have been the system—whatever fragment of truth it may have worked out—it spoke without authority, and the claims of conflicting sects distracted the bewildered inquirer. The picture of Grecian Philosophy becomes,

* *Paradise Regained*, l. 300.

therefore, a picture of the vain and impotent struggles of the human mind—of noble reasonings,* yet without a Star, like that which led the Magi of old through the clouds of Heaven and the darkness of earth, to their God at last. The desert over which they passed was arid and trackless—the fountains at which they drank were bitter, quenching not the insatiable thirst of their souls—the horizon ever receded—and poor Humanity pressed on until every effort became palsied by despair. The profound thinkers at last saw the insufficiency of these rival systems, and turning from all, settled in a calm and contented skepticism. It has been well remarked, that "Philosophy began with a childlike question; it ended with an aged doubt." And what is the lesson we learn from this melancholy record? It is the truth, that

> "Wisdom is ofttimes nearer when we stoop,
> Than when we soar."

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* ———— "But, though they erred
When all was dark, they reason'd for the truth.
They sought in earth, in ocean, and the stars,
Their Maker, arguing from his works toward God;
And from His word had not less nobly argued,
Had they beheld the Gospel sending forth
Its pure effulgence o'er the farthest sea,
Lighting the mountain-tops, and gilding
The banners of salvation there. These men
Ne'er slighted a REDEEMER; of His name
They never heard. Perchance their late-found harps,
Mixing with angel symphonies, may sound
In strains more rapturous things to them so new."
Hillhouse's "Judgment."

Yet look at the picture. See the Greeks for ages, carping and questioning—cavilling and doubting—taught to dispute every point of ethics which could be propounded, and continually to change their system for something new—and then say, whether a more unfavorable state of mind could be found for the reception of the humbling doctrines of our faith.

And when this philosophy descended to the mass of the people, it assumed a different character, as it became mingled with the lofty poetical traditions they had received from their fathers. It is, indeed, almost impossible to separate their philosophy from their popular religion. We shall enter more fully into the latter subject when we come to the discussion of their Classical Mythology, but it is necessary to allude to it here, for with many this took the place of the graver studies of the Schools. They needed something in which to repose faith, and when the mind ceased to dwell on abstract truths, the imagination assumed its empire. It turned to the gods of Olympus, and even threw an ideal grandeur and an unearthly loveliness over the human form, until, by degrees, they reverenced men as deities. The mighty dead were to them more than human. The patriot who fell for his country's cause, was elevated by that very death to the rank of a Divinity. The noblest orator of antiquity swore by those who were buried at Marathon, as if they were gods, and his countrymen trod with solemn awe about their sepulchre. To them it was a consecrated spot, and amid the darkness of midnight, the startled traveller heard borne over that deserted plain, the neighing of

steeds, the sound of arms, and the wild shout of the onset, as shadowy forms swept by him in all the pageantry of spectral war.* The character of the people operated on their belief, and their belief reacted on the popular character. Their faith was the religion of the arts—an embodiment of all that was beautiful to the senses—and therefore its hold was strong upon the minds of those who worshipped all that was noble and graceful. No land was so sanctified by the golden legends of the past, and never was there a nation in whom a discernment of the beautiful was of such universal growth—developing itself in the mighty heart of the whole people—forming every member of it—and pervading even the pastimes of children and the athletic struggles of manhood. They had, indeed, a refinement of taste and a love of imaginative beauty, which rendered them impatient of the reality, when inconsistent with their own conceptions. And they demanded this attribute even in their religion. How far removed, then, were the tastes they had formed, from those which could appreciate the self-denying precepts of our faith!

The great difficulty, indeed, of Grecian character, as shown fully in their literature, was its inability to deal with the solemn realities of another world. Philosophy, as we have seen, was dim and uncertain in its reasonings, while poetry led its hearers only into a world of the imagination, where the fancy could delight itself, but the faith found nothing on which to

* *Pausanias*, l. i. c. 33.

rest. They could not lift the veil which separated eternal realities from their view, or pierce the clouds which rested on the grave, and therefore they dreaded to look forward. In most of the Greek writers there is a visible reluctance to walk amid the forms of Hades. They shuddered at the darkness before them, and reverted their eyes to where alone the light was resting. On the present scene they could pour the flood of sunshine and splendor, and see around them the freshness and loveliness of the morning, and they therefore cared not to look beyond it. The very clouds which hovered around the horizon, by the contrast of their shadows, rendered the landscape to their view more delightful.* And when, as in the tragedies of Æschylus, the writer turns to images of a sterner grandeur, and going back to the twilight of an antique mythology, produces fragments of its forgotten creed, his hearers seem gladly to have escaped from these to the more human creations of Sophocles. If the former was the Michael Angelo of their literature, the latter was its Raphael. His poetry, sunny as the Ægean in spring, seems to be redolent of freshness, but yet, it is confined to this "bank and shoal of time." And so it was with most of those whose writings helped to form the character of their countrymen. They taught them to rejoice in the glory of nature—to feel a rapture in the freshness of the dawn and in the blaze of noon—to welcome the stillness of evening and the solemn grandeur of night—and in all the

* *St. John's Hellenes*, i. 315.

workings of this outward life, to partake of its sympathies, and share its hopes and aspirations. But the object of every lesson was, that they should love the world and all that is in the world—and for it alone—its joys and sorrows—they seemed to live.

Such were the Athenians, in the pride of their intellect, as we see them in their literature and in the schools of philosophy; and in concluding this view, we cannot forbear quoting the graphic description of Milton, when he represents Satan from the top of Mount Niphates, as showing our Lord "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." In a single passage he has grouped together all that made Athens famous in her most palmy days.

"Behold;
Where on the Ægean shore a city stands,
Built nobly; pure the air, and light the soil;
Athens, the eye of Greece, Mother of arts
And eloquence, native to famous wits,
Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,
City or suburban, studious walks and shades.
See there the olive-grove of Academe,
Plato's retirement, where the Attic bird
Trills her thick-warbled notes the summer long;
There flowery hill Hymettus, with the sound
Of bees' industrious murmur, oft invites
To studious musing; there Ilissus rolls
His whispering stream: within the walls then view
The schools of ancient sages; his, who bred
Great Alexander to subdue the world.
Lyceum there, and painted Stoa next:
There shalt thou hear and learn the secret power

Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit
By voice or hand; and various-measured verse,
Æolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,
And his who gave the breath, but higher sung,
Blind Melesigenes, thence Homer call'd,
Whose poem Phœbus challenged for his own:
Thence what the lofty grave tragedians taught
In chorus or iambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight received
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,
High actions and high passions best describing:
Thence to the famous orators repair,
Those ancient, whose resistless eloquence
Wielded at will that fierce democracie,
Shook the arsenal, and fulmined over Greece
To Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne:
To sage Philosophy next lend thy ear,
From Heaven descended to the low-roof'd house
Of Socrates; see there his tenement,
Whom well inspired the oracle pronounced
Wisest of men; from whose mouth issued forth
Mellifluous streams, that water'd all the schools
Of Academies old and new, with those
Surnamed Peripatetics, and the sect
Epicurean, and the Stoic severe."*

And now, if we have succeeded in conveying any idea of the character of the Greeks, and the manner in which their system of philosophy and literature, which Christianity came to overthrow, was interwoven with all their thoughts and feelings, then you are prepared to appreciate the difficulties which gath-

* *Paradise Regained*, B. IV. 237.

ered about the Apostle when he attempted in Athens to preach the faith. Look, therefore, at the scene around him, when, a stranger from another land, he first entered the capital of Greece. It was not to him, as it now is to us, a land whose glory has faded, her songs hushed, and her sacrifices extinguished. He beheld a scene, every portion of which was consecrated by the recollections of the past and the glorious fables of their faith. About him was a wilderness of statues, which all the efforts of art have never since been able to equal. He saw the dreams of her poets embodied in the almost speaking marble, and on the frieze of every temple their radiant legends were written by the sculptor's hand. It was such a gorgeous city as Spenser has described in his Fairy Queen:—

> "High towers, fair temples, goodly theatres,
> Strong walls, rich porches, princely palaces,
> Large streets, brave houses, sacred sepulchres,
> Sure gates, sweet gardens, stately galleries,
> Wrought with fair pillars, and fine imageries."

The lucid atmosphere seemed to give a golden lustre to the stately columns of the Parthenon above him, and to color with peculiar tints the mountain landscape beyond, bathing the leafy sides of Cithæron in its pure and holy brightness. The breeze which swept by him was fragrant with odors of the wild thyme and saffron, and the thousand sweetly-scented plants which still grow with such prodigality on the soil of Greece, furnishing, as they did three thousand years ago, food to the bees of Hymettus.

And everywhere were proofs of the activity of that restless intellect, which characterized the inhabitants. St. Paul found himself mingling with an energetic people—their persons formed in the first mould of Nature—their minds, as we have shown, filled with the noblest shapes of ideal beauty—their tongues speaking the most melodious of languages—with all their faculties, critical, exact, and sensitive—filled with the buoyant spirits which arise from a beautiful country, a fine climate, and perfect freedom.* Every other literature but their own they despised. They looked with scorn and contempt upon the rugged Scythian, the enervated Persian, the depraved Egyptian, the lordly Roman, and above all, upon the narrow-minded Jew. Every thing was uninteresting to them which was not Greek; what was not Greek was to them beyond the pale of civilization. Even in their public games this exclusive spirit was shown, and the monarchs of the East were not allowed to contend for that olive-garland for which the lowest peasant on the soil of Attica might be a competitor. Even the son of Amytas, King of Macedon, was not admitted until he had proved his Hellenic descent. Yet before this audience, so keen to judge, and so prejudiced with regard to any inroads on their national customs, was to take place the first public conflict between Christianity and Paganism.

And who was to begin the contest and wage the warfare for our faith? A solitary stranger—a wayworn man from the

* *Retros. Review Introd.* vi

most despised of all nations—was to proclaim a creed which set at defiance all human learning, and sought its records only in the sacred volumes of an obscure and barbarous people. And the first teacher of this faith was no demi-god—not one of those who, surpassing in majesty the sons of men, had founded dynasties and left kings for his descendants—but a crucified malefactor, who in their own times, and among a despised nation, had fallen a victim, either to the malice of his countrymen, or the jealousy of the Roman government. In the mere fact of St. Paul's appeal there was nothing strange to the Athenians. They were accustomed to listen to new teachers, and it mattered not to them whether it was the priest of Isis or the fire-worshipper of Persia—all were equally welcome if they could furnish intellectual excitement, and aid them to while away the hours of the day. The more strange, therefore, the doctrine, the more acceptable would it be to the excitable listeners; but to yield to it their belief, or to make it the rule of conduct through life, was a result which entered not into their conceptions. We may believe, however, that there was something more solemn and impressive than usual in the address of St. Paul—something which arrested the attention of a portion of his audience—for though there were those who characterized him as "a babbler," and "a setter forth of strange gods"—yet there were others who treated him with a consideration for which he could scarcely have looked. They brought him to a more public place—the Hill of Areopagus—and there called upon him to explain his "new doctrine." He

stood, therefore, in the very midst of elevating associations—surrounded by every thing that was lofty and intellectual in the queen of cities—on the spot where the most venerable court of antiquity, whose predecessors had judged gods and heroes, was still accustomed to decide the most solemn causes which could affect the interests of Greece. All was antique and solemn, and the more so from its seclusion from the busy stir by which it was surrounded. On the one side, in a dark chasm of the rocks, fenced in by a grove, which cast a twilight shade at noonday, stands the shrine of the Eumenides, whose name an Athenian cannot utter without trembling. Thither, said tradition—and Æschylus, as we have seen, made the story the foundation of one of his immortal dramas—they were conducted, by order of Minerva, from the Areopagus, before which they had been the accusers of Orestes. To an Athenian, therefore, the spot was invested with a surpassing sanctity which it was sacrilege to invade, and yet there the Apostle was to attack the very existence of those gods whose dread influence imparted solemnity to the scene. Many a Grecian orator had stood there before him, and by the power of his eloquence swayed at will the same fickle audience which he was now to address, yet never one on a theme like that by which "his spirit was stirred in him." And St. Paul, we know, could appreciate these considerations, and feel the contrast between the humbling doctrines he preached and the influence which acted on his hearers from every thing around them.

His address is framed according to the most perfect rules of art, so that not even his fastidious audience could take exception to the method in which he brings forward his subject. Repressing his ardent feelings, he arrays every thing before the bar of their reason, and argues in a spirit of calmness and conciliation. There is no fierce denunciation of that idolatry to which "he saw the city wholly given"—no contemptuous disdain of those philosophic opinions which elsewhere he pronounces "foolishness."* He begins with nothing which can awaken prejudice—avoiding alike the sternness of the ancient Jewish prophet, and the taunting defiance of the later Christian polemic.† So far from this, his speech opens with a compliment to his hearers. "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very devout."‡ They had long paid their homage ignorantly to an "unknown God," and he came but as His messenger to unfold His attributes. "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing." The first clause of this assertion, indeed, was in conflict with the opinions of the Epicureans, who ascribed the formation of the earth to the accidental meeting of atoms; and also with that of Aristotle, who maintained that it was not created at all, but

* 1 *Cor.* iii. 19.

† *Milman's Hist. of Christianity*, i. 251.

‡ δεισιδαιμονεστερους. Not "too superstitious," as our version renders it.

had subsisted as it is from all eternity. Yet St. Paul was but echoing the general belief of men, and therefore his philosophical hearers might hesitate to take offence, particularly as the remainder of the picture was one to which both Epicureans and Stoics could accede. It bore some resemblance to the view given by the teachers of the Garden of their lofty and abstracted Deity, too far removed from this lower world to share in its sympathies, and too much wrapped in the contemplation of His own happiness to attend to the degrading sorrows of these children of a day. But if they felt any self-gratulation at this coincidence, the next sentence which the Apostle uttered must at once have dispelled it, as he declared of the Divinity, "He giveth to all, life, and breath, and all things." It proclaimed an active providential care, unknown in their creed, and arrayed itself against that doctrine of a blind chance, which Epicurus taught, instead of a Supreme overruling power. Perhaps the Stoic might so far have found much to applaud, nor had listened as yet to any very marked condemnation of his favorite doctrines, which could awaken his prejudice against the Apostle. He might even agree with his bold denunciations of idolatry, for there would be something in the loftiness and spiritualism of his views to please the disciples of Zeno. But neither sect could subscribe to the next assertion which he uttered, "He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." It was placing them on an equality with the barbarians they scorned, and striking a blow at the very foundation of Grecian

pride. It was teaching a lesson of common brotherhood, for which none were less prepared than the Athenians, who bound their hair with golden grasshoppers, to symbolize their belief that they, too, were children of the soil, older in their creation than the other tribes of the earth, and coeval with the world itself. And then, he goes on to urge their submission of themselves to this Divinity, from a sense of their need and dependence, enforcing this truth by a quotation from one of their own poets, "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live and move and have our being; as certain, also, of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring." And here, too, the Stoic would object. His creed, as we have shown, was that of the Fatalist, and this necessity for human effort—this humbling reliance on a Higher Power—was "bringing strange things to his ears." Still more so was the application of the Apostle, when he urges the duty of repentance, and enforces it by the news of a coming judgment and the resurrection of the dead. "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead." Priding himself on eradicating all degrading passions from his breast, the boast of the Stoic was the dignity to which his nature could attain, and his cardinal sin was self-righteousness. How humbling, then, to him, the demand for repent-

ance! How utterly at war with every precept taught in the philosophy of the Porch!

You perceive then the pregnant meaning of each sentence in this unrivalled address—the first blow struck by an advocate for Christianity against the concentrated wisdom of Greece. With what admirable skill does the Apostle touch the popular creed of each class of his hearers, blending with his display of their errors an exposition of the truth! He took what was right in their religion, infused into it a higher life, and expounded it into a nobler philosophy than they had ever imagined. It was bringing the light of revelation to bear upon what glimmerings of tradition remained among them, and giving certainty to what had only been doubts and questionings.

There is another point connected with this subject which it is well to consider—the peculiar feelings of St. Paul when he stood among the philosophers of Athens. It is not too much to say, that it required greater moral courage for him to proclaim the Gospel before that audience, than would have been needed by any other of the twelve apostles. The fishermen of Galilee, who formed our Lord's household of faith, had no appreciation of that profound philosophy and noble literature with which the religion of Greece was entwined. They could not in any degree sympathize with the feelings of its followers, and therefore arrayed themselves against it with a recklessness and unconcern which St. Paul, with his higher cultivation, could never feel. "Even by their simplicity and their want of erudition, the men of Galilee were well armed to encounter

whatever they might meet with abroad in the polytheistic world. All pagan nations, learned or barbarous, were placed on one and the same level in their view. To them the Athenian was as the Scythian—a worshipper 'of stocks.' Was the difference between one idol and another, in its fashion, a matter of any moment? The Jew of that age, by his conscious possession of the most important truths, and by his want of refinement, and taste, and philosophic sophistication, stood in the most favorable position for looking down with just and undistinguishable contempt upon all forms of idolatry. His very want of taste prevented his perceptions being confused. In his eyes, one sculptured folly was like another—neither more nor less offensive on account of its workmanship. What was the chisel of Phidias—what the pencil of Apelles—to the man who had been taught to adore the living and true God? Apollo was as Dagon—the temples of Greece as the pagodas of India.

"It must be admitted, that on some such occasions, when the most momentous truths have to be manfully asserted in opposition to splendid and erudite errors, there may be an advantage in this ignorance which prevents any influence being brought to bear upon the imagination. Plain and insensitive vigor of mind may perhaps trample heedlessly on some things which deserve a measure of respect, but it takes the right course, reaches an impregnable position, and leaves a host of frivolous sophisms in the rear, powerless, though unrefuted. And thus it was with the men of Galilee. In their un-

blemished simplicity, they thought of nothing but the infinite disparity between the true and false religions. On the banks of the Tiber or of the Tigris—of the Indus or the Nile—the Gospel of Christ was always their glory, and they saw nothing in the world which, by comparison, could for a moment make them ashamed of it."*

But with St. Paul the case was widely different. Possessed of a higher order of talent, and a greater vigor of mind than his associates, he could grasp a subject in all its bearings in a way of which they were utterly incapable. A whole world, of which they never dreamed, was open to his view. As he stood on the Hill of Areopagus, a thousand things were presented to his mind—a thousand poetical associations—against which their eyes were perfectly sealed. Forms of beauty, which, on another occasion, or when charged with a less imperative mission, would have awakened his highest admiration, could hardly have won from them a second look. He appreciated the fair fabric he was smiting to the dust—they, in their blissful ignorance, would have crushed it without a passing regret. His wider knowledge of the world—his acquaintance with human affairs—his keener sensibility and deeper discernment—rendered him conscious of unnumbered influences, which were lost upon less cultivated minds.

In addition to this, we must remember St. Paul's acquaintance with that literature which was sealed to his brethren.

* *Saturday Evening*, p. 35.

For several centuries, Judea had ceased to be what it once was, a secluded land. The tide of foreign invasion which more than once rolled over it, had not only brought it before the view of foreign nations, but opened to the Jews themselves some glimpses of the outward world beyond their own boundaries. Thus, the Macedonian conquest had brought them into contact with Greece, and from that time there were not wanting those among them who cultivated a knowledge of its literature. The mass of the people, however, looked upon it as disloyalty to Moses, for the effect seems generally to have been unfavorable. While these studies widened the intellectual horizon of the Jews, it diminished the single-hearted devotion with which they were bound to regard their own law. If Josephus may be regarded as an example of their influence, we cannot but feel that in his case all national feeling was destroyed, and he was prepared to be what he afterwards became—a Roman renegade.

But without the bounds of Judea, the scattered colonies of Jews, who were brought into more frequent intercourse with foreigners, indulged themselves to a greater extent in profane literature. The Jews of Alexandria were learned in the popular philosophy of the day, and we may believe that so it was with those who dwelt in the Roman city of Tarsus. St. Paul, we know, had been a reader of Aratus and Meander, and the philosophical poets of Greece, and the influence of these more liberal studies is visible in all parts of his writings. Yet he had also sat at the feet of Gamaliel, and had thus

escaped the danger which we mentioned as besetting others of his countrymen. Nothing seems to have weakened his attachment to all that was distinctive of his nation, and he never became so much a Grecian as to cease to be a Jew. We believe, therefore, that could he have selected his own field of labor, he would have delighted to argue with his "kinsmen after the flesh" in behalf of the New Faith, and to unfold—as in his Epistle to the Hebrews—the great truth, that Christianity was but the nobler development of Judaism. For this he was most eminently fitted—he would have had with his hearers, a common ground on which to stand—and if they hated him as an apostate from their faith, at least they could not scorn him.

But the task which his Lord had allotted him was one far more self-denying. He was "the Apostle of the Gentiles." And we cannot conceive a more mortifying trial which could have been devised, than for one who so fully realized his position, to be obliged to preach the humbling doctrines of the Cross through the cities of Greece. "He must have felt, in all its force, the contempt that covered him as the promulgator of such dogmas—he felt this obloquy as his colleagues could not. Not only in the single instance recorded by his biographer, but no doubt often in his circuit through Greece and its colonies, he stood surrounded by the sarcastic curiosity of Stoics, Epicureans, and Academicians. He knew, on such occasions, in what spirit he was listened to, as a busy and babbling zealot of the Jewish superstition. He could penetrate—

nay, he could feel a sympathy with the erudite scorn of his auditors. He understood the sentiment with which men of high culture give ear, for a moment, to a tale of wonder which they have condemned as absurd, before it is commenced. In the oblique glance of the half-closed eye—in the sneer that played on the lip—he read the mind and the malice of every sophist. He could mentally change positions with his auditors, and at the moment while uttering the 'strange things' of the Gospel, could feel as they felt—the harsh and abhorrent character, both of the principles and of the facts, which he had to announce—Jesus, the Galilean teacher—crucified—raised to life—constituted Lord and Judge of men, and now giving repentance for remission of sins."*

And what was the effect of this solemn appeal uttered to the crowds who thronged those immemorial hills? We may believe the emotions were as varied as the classes of hearers St. Paul addressed. "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked," and many probably were alarmed at a creed so sweeping in its denunciations against the gods they had been accustomed to reverence. The philosophical part of his audience, too, may have been startled by doctrines so far beyond the loftiest reasonings of their own teachers. And as they parted, the Cynic's sneer could have been seen, and the Stoic wrapped his robe about him with a sterner pride, while the careless Epicurean turned again to his luxurious Gardens

* *Saturday Evening*, p. 39.

with a laughing jest against those who could give heed for a moment to so unsmiling and gloomy a creed. Yet there were those who trembled at these strange tidings, and felt that the rushing Spirit of "the Unknown God" must have descended into the heart of him to whose voice they had listened. Their souls were stirred within them, and among the converts who were then persuaded to embrace the faith of the despised Nazarenes, was even a member of the Court of Areopagus. Thus was the Church first planted at Athens.

We perceive, from the statements that have been made, the obstacles which gathered around our faith when it invaded the stronghold of Grecian wisdom. And yet, in how short a time did the lofty tenets of the Portico and the Grove bow before the lowly doctrines of the Cross! A century went by, and Christianity numbered among its followers many of those who once wore the philosopher's robe, but now counted their wisdom foolishness in comparison with the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. From their trained intellects came the ablest defences of the Christian faith, proving how soon it enlisted human learning in its behalf.

Another century went by, and the conflict with philosophy was for a time once more revived in another land. Exiled from Greece, philosophy sought refuge in other climes, where, under new forms, it endeavored to revive its worship. And particularly at Alexandria, which, in the decline of Roman civilization, became both the home of science and the mart of commerce, its reign for awhile was brilliant. It was a revival of the doc-

trines of Platonism, blended with that Orientalism which suited so well the mystical character of the Egyptians.* Philo had sowed the seeds, which afterwards Plotinus and Proclus developed into a system, and arrayed as an antagonist to the Christian Church. But if they were unlike their predecessors of Greece, their disciples were still more so. While Proclus endeavored to revive the scientific spirit of Platonism, and Plotinus the religious spirit of Paganism, the effort was rendered sterile in the hands of men of feebler minds, who exhausted their strength in verbal disputes. They attempted to explore the secrets of the invisible world, and were led at last to the wildest vagaries. They flattered themselves that they possessed the secret of disengaging the soul from its corporeal prison—claimed a familiar intercourse with demons and spirits—and by a singular revolution, converted the study of philosophy into that of magic.† The doctrines of the Grecian schools were revived, and an attempt was made to breathe the breath of life once more into their expiring Pagan creed by interpreting its symbols in a new sense. They were invested with the veil of moral allegory, yet there was nothing in this that could stir the ten thousand times ten thousand hearts of men, or awaken them to a new spiritual life. The decline of this school, therefore, was sudden and undignified. After a

* "Recentiores quiqui philosophi nobilissimi, quibus Plato sectandus placuit, noluerint se dici Peripateticos, aut Academicos, sed Platonicos." *De Civit. Dei*, lib. 8, ch. x.

† *Gibbon's* "*Decline and Fall*," ch. xiii.

bitter warfare with the Christian fathers of that age—a warfare which brought forward Porphyry and Jamblicus—its last gleam of splendor faded with Proclus, and the death of the Emperor Julian was the signal for its entire defeat. Yet what a strange spectacle for a time was witnessed in that Egyptian city, when within sight of the ranges of alabaster and porphyry columns which marked the temple of Serapis, stood the Didascalia of the Christians, and the schools of Philo the Jew and Œnesidemus the Pyrrhonist—when the Hellenist Jews, the Christians, the Platonists, the Greek Skeptics, who scarcely believed in the existence of their own Elysium, and the adherents of a most degraded Paganism, were all contending for the dominion of the human mind!

With the fall of this school of Neo-Platonism, the reign of Philosophy, as a substitute for religion, was over forever. It still exercised its dominion over the human mind, as it does to this present time, but it had become the handmaid of religion. The effort now was to harmonize the glorious dreams of Plato with the sublime realities of the Christian faith. We have already spoken of the extent to which this was carried, and so many were the points of resemblance which the ingenuity of early writers discovered—so near his approach to some of the cardinal doctrines of our faith—that at last the tradition grew in the Church, that Plato was met by our Lord when "He descended into hell," and received from him illumination and pardon, and eternal life. But this very legend shows the change which had taken place. The noble speculations of

Grecian wisdom were esteemed of no value, but as they uttered the same tones with that New Dispensation which claimed the right alone to guide man on his dark and perilous way. Thus the dimness of Grecian Philosophy faded away before the light of the Gospel, and Christianity crushed its old antagonist in its ancient home, or else forced it to follow in its train. Philosophy, like the toiling Genius of Arabian fable, became the reluctant slave of a Master of a higher race, whose power was too mighty to be withstood.

III.

THE LICENTIOUS SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

The opposition which the early teachers of Christianity encountered was Proteus-like in its shapes. Wherever the heralds of the Cross went, they found hostility in a new form awaiting them. When they had overcome the narrow bigotry of the Jew, or vanquished the proud philosophy of Greece, enemies still thronged their path, and they were called at once to enter on a new strife. And we find this illustrated in the history of St. Paul, as he passed on from country to country, everywhere sowing the good seed of the Word. "He departed from Athens, and came to Corinth."* But if the scene is changed, and the nature of his warfare, there is still the same hostility to his message. He is commencing his ministry in the most profligate city of the East, and the subject which it suggests is—CHRISTIANITY IN CONFLICT WITH THE LICENTIOUS SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

Corinth was in that day the common emporium of the Eastern and Western divisions of the Roman empire. In the fresh-

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* *Acts*, xviii. 1.

ness of its early power, when it sent forth its armament to the siege of Troy, Homer had named it, "The Wealthy,"* and it was in the Old World what afterwards Venice became in the Middle Ages, when she ruled as Queen of the seas. To the North, along the coast of Greece, stretched her colonies, to which she had imparted her own character, and to the West was the same line of settlements, as far as Syracuse, the mightiest of the Grecian offspring. There was a beautiful custom which required them always to derive from the sacred hearth of the Mother state, the fire which they kept burning in the Prytaneum; thus the tie which bound them together was preserved by the holiest association, and when the parent had fallen, these colonies were destined to give her, as it were, a second youth. The name of Corinth was cherished among the patriotic associations of Greece, for it was the centre of the last brilliant Achaian confederacy, was sanctified by the remembrance of Aratus and Philopœmen, and the spot where the final stand was made against the crushing power of Rome. Nearly two centuries had now elapsed since its destruction by Mummius, but it had been restored and beautified by Julius Cæsar, who rebuilt it as a Roman colony. When it rose from the ashes of its mournful ruins, it was to expand into a splendor surpassing its former glory. Its conquerors, to atone for the barbarous destruction with which it had been visited, showered upon it all the honors and favors in their power;

* *Iliad*, ii. 687.

and, constituted the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, it grew to be the rival of Athens in elegance and art. From its situation it necessarily became, too, the commercial capital of the East. The traveller by land who was going from the Peloponnesus to visit any of the cities of Northern Greece, passed through its gates—by the port of Cenchreæ, it received the rich merchandise of Asia, and by that of Lechæum, it maintained intercourse with Italy and Sicily—while through the Isthmean road a communication was opened with the North and South. Its streets, therefore, were the very mart of the world, and through them passed that continual stream of commerce, which flowed towards the Imperial City, bearing with it all the luxuries of the Eastern provinces. Although the basis of the population was Roman, yet others thronged in from every quarter on account of its admirable adaptation for mercantile purposes, and probably in no part of the empire were both the inhabitants and travellers so various and diversified. There was, as we can now see at Trieste and other commercial cities of the East, a perpetual confusion and mingling of all costumes and dialects, the inhabitants of three continents meeting in the market-place and on the crowded wharves.

Amid, therefore, this stir of business and perpetual arrival and departure of strangers from all parts of the world, the preaching of a new and peaceful faith could excite but little attention. The established priesthood themselves had been but newly settled, and religious itinerants of every description

abounded, so that no argument of novelty could attract the inhabitants to any other form of worship. This city, too, was the favorite resort of the Sophists, and in an oration of Dio Chrysostom there is a graphic description, which we may quote, as illustrating the general appearance of society. Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher, appears, and endeavors to attract an audience among the vast and idle multitude. He complains, however, "that if he were a travelling dentist, or an oculist, or had any infallible remedy for the spleen or the gout, all who were afflicted with such diseases would have thronged around him; but as he only professed to cure mankind of vice, ignorance, and profligacy, no one troubled himself to seek a remedy for those less grievous maladies." . . . "And there was around the temple of Neptune a crowd of miserable Sophists, shouting and abusing one another; and of their so-called disciples, fighting with each other; and many authors reading their works, to which nobody paid any attention; and many poets, chanting their poems, with others praising them; and many jugglers, showing off their tricks; and many prodigy-mongers, noting down their wonders; and a thousand rhetoricians, perplexing causes; and not a few shopkeepers, retailing their wares wherever they could find a customer. And presently some approached the philosopher—not, indeed, the Corinthians, for, as they saw him every day in Corinth, they did not expect to derive any advantage from hearing him—but those that drew near him were strangers, each of whom having listened a short time, and asked a few questions, made his retreat for fear of

his rebukes."* This, therefore, was a place remarkable for the excitement which pervaded every class of society, and for the intensity of its worldliness. Every feeling which was not devoted to the pursuit of pleasure, was absorbed in the spirit of commerce and the rivalry for gain.

Thus Corinth became the latest home of Grecian enterprise and glory. When refinement and art were growing dim in their early seats in Ionian Asia and Attica, they had another revival—a brief flashing out into glorious beauty—in this splendid city of the Isthmus. We trace there the last gleaming footsteps of Hellenic art before it took its departure forever from the soil of Greece. But in the Apostle's day it was in its "high and palmy state"—at the very climax of its luxury and glory—its vice and heathen wickedness. No place could exceed it in the splendor and magnificence of its public buildings —its temples, palaces, theatres, and baths. It was the opulence of Rome, refined and guided by Attic taste. Perhaps, in many respects, life was more free and joyous in this vivid Grecian city than even in the Imperial capital of the world. There, the mighty pomp and opulence which were witnessed overpowered the senses, and threw all but the most favored few into insignificance. Pleasure was too ponderous and stately in the vicinity of the golden house of Nero, and about the precincts of the court. There, too, was felt the crushing power of a despotism always before their eyes, and men could not

* Quoted by Milman, *Hist. of Christianity*, v. i. p. 253.

breathe freely. But the inhabitants of the gay city of Corinth, shining in her gaudy fetters, were subjected to no such constraints, while they found within the narrow compass of her walls every gift which pleasure could offer. They had all the brilliancy of luxury, without ever feeling their spirits wearied by its pomp.

The Isthmean games, too, celebrated once in five years, drew to this spot a concourse from every part of Greece, and added much to the celebrity of the city. It is from them, as a subject familiar to his readers, that St. Paul draws many of his illustrations of the Christian life. And it is strange, that the only remaining monuments of ancient Corinth—the Amphitheatre, the Theatre, and the Stadium—are the very scenes to which the Apostle referred, when he endeavored to explain the emotions he felt, or those he wished to inspire.* When, for instance, he wrote to them—"I have fought with beasts at Ephesus,"†—they knew from what they had witnessed in their own Amphitheatre, the nature of the conflict to which he referred. When he declared—"We are made a spectacle (θέατρον) unto the world, and to angels, and to men,"‡—the thoughts of his readers must have reverted at once to their own Theatre, where the actors in the drama were exposed to the view of countless spectators, who watched and criticised each tone and movement. And how vividly must they have had pictured before their eyes the necessity of diligence in the

* *Wordsworth's Greece*, p. 354. † 1 *Cor.* xv. 32. ‡ 1 *Cor.* iv. 9.

Christian race, when he asked the question—"Know ye not that they which run in the Stadium, (ἐν σταδίῳ,) run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. I, therefore, so run, not as uncertainly." And he couples with it allusions to the gymnastic exercises by which the athletæ were trained for the combat:—"Every one that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, (a fading garland,) but we an incorruptible. . . . . So fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection."* And now these mouldering ruins remain to recall to our recollection the words of St. Paul, and the ministry which for two years he exercised in this dissolute city. Another race, indeed, dwells on this spot, but the seasons come and go as of old—the landscape, too, is the same—the lofty mountain still looks down on Corinth—the fountains send forth their gushing waters—and the sea stretches around her azure arms, and breaks her glittering waves upon the shore—as when, in a later day, St. Clement, the fellow-laborer of the Apostle, drew from these features of natural scenery his illustrations when writing to the Corinthians:—"The teeming EARTH brings forth at its appointed seasons overflowing nourishment to man and beast, not gainsaying nor altering any of God's decrees; the hollow of the immeasurable SEA, collected together in heaps by His workmanship, passes not out of the barriers thrown around it;

* 1 *Cor.* ix. 24–27.

the Ocean, not lightly crossed by man, and the worlds beyond it, are ruled by the same ordinances; the SEASONS of Spring, Summer, and Autumn, give way to each other in peace; the Posts of the WINDS perform their duty in their proper season, and interfere not; and the perennial FOUNTAINS, formed for delight and health, give their hearts of life to man, and never fail."*

But the beauty and wealth of Corinth proved its ruin. We have already said, that it was notorious for its profligacy, and in this respect it stood pre-eminent among the cities of the East. Living in a climate whose mild and enervating influence inclined them to enjoyment, its inhabitants yielded to its power, and in their pleasures sank to the lowest depths of moral degradation. Heathenism, too, held its rites among them with a licentiousness which the world has, perhaps, never seen equalled. Here was the most celebrated Temple of Venus with its thousand abandoned ministrants; and not even in her own Paphian home was the Goddess worshipped with so degrading a service. Here arose the most sumptuous style of architecture of the ancient world—an Order which still perpetuates the name of the city of its birth, and whose rich column, "waving its wanton wreath," seems to be a type of the characteristics of the people with whom it had its origin. And thus abounding riches swelled the tide of luxury and added to the corruption of manners, until the very name of

* *St. Clement's First Epis. to Corinthians*, 20.

voluptuous Corinth became a byword through the world, and it was proverbially said—

"Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum."

Profligacy was wrought into the very being of the Corinthians—entwined with all their earliest associations—and strengthening with their growth. Degraded as was the heathen world around, the Apostle writes to them, that they far surpassed it—that deeds were committed among them, which "are not so much as named among the Gentiles."* And so it continued to the end of their existence as a state. In spite of every change in the population, the Corinthians retained their luxury to the last; and the Epistles of Alciphron, in the second century after Christ, speak most clearly of the prodigality and vice which characterized the inhabitants. When, therefore, they turned to the holiness of our faith, their whole nature had literally to be remodelled. "Old things passed away, and all things became new."

We see the influences which were abroad in Corinth from the very character of the Apostle's letters to the Church which was established there. They are totally different in their subject and manner from those addressed to other Churches. These are occupied almost entirely with matters of faith—with those great doctrines which lie at the foundation of our religion. But in those to the Corinthians, the Apostle is obliged to de-

* 1 *Cor.* v. 1.

vote himself to the correction of abuses which could be traced in no other Christian community. He reiterates his warnings against those grosser forms of sin, which we should suppose the slightest knowledge of Christianity would induce them to flee.* He is called to decide on the case of an incestuous person, who, by his conduct, had outraged every principle of his faith, and the stern decision is, "I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."† Again and again he utters his exhortation, that they should flee from the enticing idolatry which surrounded them, because they could not "drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils, or be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils."‡ He reproves them for schism,§ and for the disorder which reigned in their religious assemblies, particularly when they met to partake of the Holy Communion, degrading it into a riotous feast, and losing sight of its origin and sacred import.‖ The Church was, perhaps, as richly as any other in the world, endowed with the extraordinary gifts of the Holy

* 1 *Cor.* ch. v. vi. vii.
† Ch. v. 3.
‡ Ch. x. 21.
§ Ch. i.
‖ Ch. xi. 20.

Ghost—speaking with tongues, interpreting and prophesying—yet they were inferior to most, in the ordinary graces of the same Blessed Person, acting disorderly, fond of strife, and running into parties, altogether in need of charity, "the excellent way" of Christian perfection. Indeed, schism, dissension, and error appear from the first to have set their seal upon the Corinthian Church.

All the evils, indeed, which the Apostle was called to redress, speak most forcibly of a Church struggling in the midst of corruptions—bearing the impress of the evils which surround it—tainted and enfeebled by that spirit of old idolatry which it had hardly yet cast off. It was probably the most unpropitious atmosphere in which the Gospel was ever preached. In an intellectual philosophy, or an established mythology, there was something tangible—something with which the mind could grapple—and when the reason had been convinced of their vanity, the influence they exerted was at once swept away. But far different is it with the insidious love of pleasure, when it has fastened upon the soul, and wonderful must have been the change in the Corinthians, when they renounced those things after which the depraved heart most yearns, and substituted, in their place, the strictness and purity of the Gospel. They were to discard and turn with abhorrence from things which they had not only looked upon as innocent, but which had been even ingrafted on their worship. They had to learn, that for their whole lives they had been calling evil good, and good evil. And to the adoption of these new views and feel-

ings, they came without any strength of purpose or vigor of mind. There was not even that decision of character which he might have who had merely turned from a form of heathenism. They were paralyzed by all the influences of the past. The moral sense was blighted by the withering atmosphere in which they lived; and the heart which should have responded freely to all that was great and glorious in the new faith, gave back but feeble pulsations to its appeals. The task was, therefore, a most difficult one, to break up this lethargy—to reanimate these prostrate spirits—and to teach the soul which for years had been grovelling in the dust, for the first time to plume its wings upward, and to look towards heaven.

We perceive, then, the arena in which Christianity was now to contend, and the nature of the adversary it met, when St. Paul proclaimed, before the Corinthians, the strictness of that law he was to inculcate, and the wealth of those promises which are for the pure in heart. And he realized the obstacles in his way. Familiar in his own native Tarsus with the degrading power of heathenism, he had been led, like the ancient prophet, within the curtains of the dark "chambers of imagery," and seen the secret abominations of the shrine, and with the same righteous indignation he uttered his rebukes. But with what arguments could he meet these slaves of sense? With what weapons could he contend against that subtle spirit of profligacy which there reigned so supreme, that—what the Apostle declares of the whole Gentile world was most emphatically true of them—they not only did these

abandoned deeds themselves, but also had pleasure in those that did them?* With what motives could he address those grovelling spirits—break the chains of corruption which bound them down—or awaken them to higher and holier thoughts? He used only the simple arguments of the Gospel; but the mighty results produced, proved that here as elsewhere, it was "the power of God unto salvation." What, then, were these arguments?

The first was—the Cross of Christ. St. Paul, himself, states this in the beginning of his Epistle to the Church at Corinth, as he reviews his ministry among them. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."† But how strange would have seemed this course to the worldly-wise—to bring before the pleasure-loving Corinthians the sad and mournful doctrine of the Cross—to begin at the outset with what must have been the most offensive truth of our faith—and to require them to turn from their enticing idolatry to a religion whose earliest lesson was thus one of tears and agony! And yet, the experience of eighteen hundred years has shown the wisdom of the plan adopted—that there is a true philosophy in meeting all who first hear the Gospel—the Greek and the barbarian, the bigoted Jew, and the enervated Corinthian—

* *Romans*, i. 32. † 1 *Cor.* ii. 1, 2.

with this same truth which lies at the very foundation of our faith.

Look, then, at the effect of this doctrine. It revealed to the Corinthians the meaning of the world's history—the end of all that succession of changes which had been going on since time began. For the first time, to their eyes, the records of the past were linked together by the Unity of one great purpose. They looked back to the ages which had gone—to those dynasties of the elder world which, one after another, had passed away—to the revolutions which had broken the sceptre of empires, and made Egypt, and Babylon, and Media, in turn the rulers of the earth—and they now learned that nothing was by chance, but was intended to exert its influence on a people, scattered over the hills of Palestine, and looked upon with scorn by the polished Grecian. They found that each change among the nations of the earth had its specific object, and was but to prepare the way for that Mighty Deliverer, whose blood was yet crimson on the Hill of Calvary, and who had been seen in the flesh by those who still lived to tell the story of His life. And then, looking forward, they saw that all things in the coming destiny of this world turned upon its reception of this doctrine, and that the shadowy future, whatever it might bring forth, would only work out its consummation.

It solved, too, for them, the enigma of life. They saw this present existence to be full of opposing elements, until men often lost faith in all they once had reverenced—ancient creeds

were deprived of their majesty—and new doctrines could exert no power over their minds. They felt themselves struggling against a destiny they could not conquer, and sunk, therefore, into sullen despair, or met the changes of life with reckless levity. They were ever encountering sorrows and afflictions whose object they could not understand. Life was filled with contradictions for which they had no solution. Where, then, was the interpreter to teach them its mysteries? Where was the key to all these things—the event which could throw its light upon the tangled web of human life, and dispel its shadows? It is the crucifixion of the Son of God, which links together all the shifting scenes around us—harmonizes all the varied interests of this world—and brings into one view the past and the future.

Thus this sublime truth gave the Corinthian hearer a reason for the dispensations which befel him, and he learned to recognise in them the discipline of life. In the pursuit of pleasure he must often have felt disappointment to be his lot, and his heart whispered to him the lesson, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity." The Cross of Christ, then, not only uttered the same voice to him, but gave the reason of that void which exists in every human heart. It showed that all this was the punishment of sin, and that the solemn sacrifice on the Mount was the propitiation for the iniquities of a fallen world. It explained, therefore, the cause of those sorrows which press upon suffering, sad Humanity—

——— "the weight of care,
That crushes into dumb despair
One-half the human race."*

But it held out, also, the remedy, while it appealed to the heart by every argument which could touch one not utterly "past feeling." And when the world again arrayed its enticements before them, from the heights of Calvary there came a warning which proclaimed their worthlessness. "It is the death of the Eternal Word of God, made flesh, which is our great lesson how to think and how to speak of this world. His Cross has put its true value upon every thing which we see, upon all fortunes, all advantages, all ranks, all dignities, all pleasures; upon the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It has set a price upon the excitements, the rivalries, the hopes, the fears, the desires, the efforts, the triumphs of mortal man. It has brought together and made consistent all that seemed discordant and aimless. It has taught us how to live, how to use this world, what to expect, what to desire, what to hope. It is the tone into which all the strains of this world's music are ultimately to be resolved..... In the Cross, and Him who hung upon it, all things meet; all things subserve it, all things need it. It is their centre and their interpretation. For He was lifted up upon it, that He might draw all men and all things unto Him."†

Was not this, then, a startling doctrine to break in upon the

* *Longfellow.* † *Newman's Sermons*, v. VI. pp. 93, 94.

dreams of those who had thought only of pleasure—to teach them, for the first time, to look below the surface of the struggling life around them and within them—and to call into exercise a class of feeling which no other argument had ever reached? We see a reason, then, even in the light of human wisdom, why it should have been received by the Corinthians "in demonstration of the Spirit and with power."

And connected with this, necessarily came the sublime doctrine of man's immortality. It was the absence of an assured hope on this point which led to much of the degradation of the ancient world. There came no warnings from the land of spirits to direct their steps—they felt that no punishment could reach them in this world—and therefore "the hearts of the sons of men were fully set in them to do evil." Life—this present life which was fleeting so fast away—became every thing. The teeming earth was only to them a place to trade and barter for a few years—its paths were worn by the footsteps of those who had gone before—the heavens above addressed no lesson to their hearts—and all was "of the earth, earthly." They felt, that after for a time they had trodden the same dull round, they must go, they knew not whither, and the stars, in their silent courses, be looking down upon their graves. Is it strange, then, that they grasped at the cup of pleasure which was within their reach, and with no elevating hopes in the future sank to that degradation which characterized the Corinthians? Their maxim was, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

The voice of the Apostle first broke in upon this dream. The instructions which he imparted first dispelled this darkness, and opened to them a view of realities of which the earthly and sensual had never imagined. "Thou shalt not die," was his earnest declaration, and he unveiled to them an existence "unmeasured by the flight of years"—a wasteless eternity through which they must exist. He disclosed to them that "life and immortality" which the new faith had "brought to light," and seizing on the actions of this present existence, gave them dignity by linking them to the next world, and showing that there they had their influence. He taught the elevating truth, that this life is but the germ of another, and that not until it has dawned upon us will all things have their fulness and completion. He revealed a pure and unsensual Heaven for the just—converted speculation into certainty—and proved that the soul did not yearn in vain, when visions of an immortality flitted before it.

Now, we can scarcely imagine in this day the weight with which such declarations fell upon the ears of those who had been trained under a form of Paganism. They heard "strange tidings." They learned the mystery of death. They were raised from the damps and shadows of their old belief, and began to breathe the pure air of heaven. Life beyond the grave had hitherto been a thing hoped for, but not assured. It had furnished a theme for the speculations of the philosopher and the dream of the poet, and we may now see it shadowed forth in the sculptured butterfly on their tombstones—

the representation of their Psyche, of the animating, surviving soul—an intimation that it was to reappear once more in a new form and region of being. But, unsanctioned by any divine authority, the doctrine never sank into the hearts of the people, or became a principle of action. There was no fixed belief—no realizing sense of the retributions of another world—sufficiently strong to dissipate the illusions of this, or to break the power of its fascinations. But far different was the case when their hopes became a certainty, and they realized that they were Sons of Immortality. It became a new tie to bind them to their Lord, for they learned that it was "because He lived, they should live also." They felt faculties within them, waking up as it were from a long torpor, and they rejoiced in the thought that these should go on expanding forever, and springing up to a renewed existence, long after the stars themselves had been quenched. They realized what the Apostle meant by "the power of an endless life." What, then, to them were the pleasures of the dissolute city around—the crowded circus—the glittering theatre—the voluptuous banquets—and the thousand allurements of sense which courted their notice? These must soon pass away and be forgotten. But they carried Infinity in their bosoms—were linked inseparably to that which could not die—and when the earthly tabernacle had crumbled into dust, were to find that all time was their heritage and domain. Ages might pass away—the globe itself be blotted from existence—but their wheel of life should be ever rolling round the circle of eternity,

and they gathering immortality by the side of the river of life. They trampled therefore under their feet all that before had enslaved their senses, and adopted as their rule of life the earnest exhortation of him who had first led them to the truth: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."*

But Christianity went even farther. It not only held out to them the certainty of an endless life, but it declared that the body also was to escape from the power of death and rise again to an imperishable existence. And this was beyond the wildest dreams of Paganism. The idea that this scattered dust should be reanimated—that it could for centuries mingle in every form of vegetable life, be blown about by the winds of heaven, or swept upon the waves of the surging sea, and then be again collected into its old forms of strength and beauty—was something which had never entered into the conceptions of any of their philosophers. The knowledge of this perpetuity of human nature came not till the New Dispensation was proclaimed, and it received its confirmation from the resurrection of their Lord. And nowhere does the Apostle enter so fully into the proofs of this sublime doctrine, as in his epistle to

* 1 *Cor.* vii. 29.

these same Corinthians. He meets the objections of the skeptic, and, in the loftiest style of eloquence, contrasts the feebleness of this present state with the glory which awaited even the frail tabernacle they inhabited:—"It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."* And when he had placed before them his great argument, he sums up all with the inspiring words:—"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."†

Stretching out before them, therefore, was a path bright with the beams of a perpetual day, and they were to travel it forever, complete in every attribute of their nature, the body as well as the soul. In the world of retribution they were to be, in every respect, the same persons who waged their warfare here. It is "THIS MORTAL" which is to "put on immortality." What a vantage-ground then did the Apostle occupy,

* 1 *Cor.* xv. 42. † v. 51–54.

when he summoned them to begin that mighty journey which led from darkness to light—from corruption to immortality! What an argument was furnished him against the prevailing sins of Corinth, when he exhorted his converts to reverence even this earthly body, for now it was the habitation of the Holy Ghost, and hereafter should go with them through eternity! "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."*

But there was still another argument most efficacious to win the attention of the profligate inhabitants of the City of the Isthmus. It was the visible living for another world which they saw in the lives of those who proclaimed the word. It is a strange contradiction in our nature, that no argument can win the devoted adherents of pleasure from their degradation so readily as a summons to endure suffering and self-denial in some lofty cause—nothing can turn the worldly-minded so soon from their empty dreams, as an exhibition of some one living visibly and entirely for that life which is beyond life. There is something in the heart, even of the most fallen, which responds to such appeals, and which kindles the desire up within it to tread in the footsteps of those who can thus sacrifice the present for the future. It was this principle which invested martyrdom with such power, and made the blood shed

* 1 *Cor.* iii. 16.

on the scaffold or at the stake, "the seed of the Church." Where a view of the agonies of the sufferer terrified one dastard into submission, it carried conviction to the minds of hundreds, and awakened an heroic emulation in their breasts to share the lot of those who could thus even die for their faith. But to prove this, we need not go back to Apostolic times. The annals of the Church contain, in all ages, instances registered to show the moral power of our faith, when taught by men who came in self-denial. From among these, then, we will select a single one—perhaps the most remarkable in the history of our race—to illustrate this point.

In the latter part of the twelfth century there dwelt in a mountain town of Italy, the son of an obscure merchant, who, turning from the plodding cares of his father, was the foremost in every feat, and the gayest in every festival among his townsmen. But, stricken by disease in the very dawn of manhood, he was brought to the gates of death, and forced for a time to gaze on the realities before him, and to estimate the value of those pleasures to which he had been devoted. He arose from his bed of suffering, "a new creature." Henceforth his thoughts were absorbed in the imperishable life he hoped to win. His days were passed in devotion—he wept and fasted—his alms were abundant—and he wandered alone over the Umbrian hills, communing with his God. But the sacrifice was not yet perfect. As he knelt before the altar in an agony of prayer, a voice seemed to say in the depths of his soul—"Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip

for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves." He applied these words to himself, and obeyed at once. Parting with every thing he possessed, but the coarse robe of serge drawn round him with a common cord, he went forth to wander as a pilgrim over the face of the earth, without a home, and dependent for his support on the precarious bounty of his fellow-men. He mingled with them as a mendicant, and employed himself in the most revolting duties he could select—the care of the inmates of the Leprous Hospital.

Such was the beginning of the career of St. Francis of Assisi. He proclaimed that Poverty was his affianced bride, and to the hour of death he was true to the vows of his betrothment. It was the profession ever on his lips, that he was her devoted husband, and the whole Franciscan Order their offspring. And through the wide world this union has been celebrated. Bossuet, the noblest orator of France, eulogizes it in his panegyric on the saint—Dante, in his "Divina Commedia," has composed the Epithalamium*—and Art, too, has rendered her tribute. On the walls of the Church of the *Sagro Convento* in Assisi, the traveller may still see a fading fresco which once came bright and beautiful from the pencil of Giotto. It is the picture of a marriage, and if he knows not the story, he will wonder at the dress of the bride on whose finger the ring is about being placed. She is indeed crowned with light

* *Il Paradiso*, xi.

and roses, but her apparel is sordid, and her feet are torn by the sharp stones and briers over which she is passing. These are the nuptials of St. Francis and Poverty.

But if this was the misapplication of a passage of Scripture, and perhaps a derangement of intellect which made the Father of the Mendicants apply to himself this charge of the Saviour to the seventy, yet still it had its effect. The gay revellers with whom he had once mingled could not look upon him uninfluenced, and the earnest words he uttered, coming direct from his heart, and acted out in his life, arrested their attention. The population of Assisi were moved by the sight of poverty and self-denial for Christ's sake, and others also became candidates for the same sublime self-sacrifice. Adopting St. Francis as their leader, they assumed his austere dress, and enrolled their names as members of the Order he had founded. Stripping themselves of all temporal wealth, they became voluntarily bound by vows of poverty, perpetual celibacy, and implicit obedience to their ecclesiastical superiors. They were to be public mendicants, not soliciting alms as a favor, but as a right with which Christ had endowed the poor, and seeking in the severity of the discipline they inflicted on themselves, the perfection their Lord required. A few years passed, and we may see this humble individual in the splendid palace of the Lateran, bowing at the feet of Innocent III., receiving from him a confirmation of the Order he had established, and authority to go forth as the enthusiastic missionary of Rome, by the watchwords of Poverty, Continence, Lowliness, and Self-

denial, commanding the sympathies of the multitude in her behalf. Then, renown and influence gathered around the homeless Italian friar. Processions, chanting litanies, met him—proselytes crowded around him to repeat the solemn vows which severed them from the world—and wealth flowed in to him who had abandoned it forever, that convents and churches might be erected to perpetuate his principles. Ten years from the foundation of the Order, and they met to celebrate its second General Chapter. But no building within the walls of Assisi could hold their multitude, and on the plain around the city five thousand Franciscans assembled to debate on the conquest of the world. A few years later, and amid prostrate and weeping crowds, the emaciated body of St. Francis was deposited in the Church of St. Mary of Angels; but his work had been most thoroughly accomplished. His followers were scattered over all Christendom—a mighty army of Evangelists—and every land was familiar with the emblem of the Franciscan cord. More than six centuries have since passed away, and this wide-spread fraternity has survived the opposition of its rivals—the sneers of Erasmus, and Wiclif, and Luther—and the denunciations of so many among the wise and eloquent of all Europe. At this day it claims seven thousand five hundred communities, numbering more than two hundred thousand inmates who bow to its rule. Its statutes are a living code, written in the hearts of multitudes in every land through the Christian world, and nearly three millions who have already gone to their account, shall at the last day be forced to testify

to the value of this stern law as a guide for life and a preparation for eternity.

How strange, then, this history, as we look back upon it, and then forward at the power still to be exerted over coming generations by one who has for centuries been sleeping in the dust! It seems mightier than has fallen to the lot of almost any other among the sons of men. It changed the whole course of this life with "a multitude which no man can number." But this is not all. It was a discipline and a preparation for eternity. Its moral power passes over the gulf of death—survives the shock of the archangel's trump—and is felt through the bowers of Paradise, or among the gloomy caverns of the lost. It will go on forever, world without end. Its real influence begins when its disciples have entered eternity, and the question is to be settled, whether it has led them safely through their pilgrimage here, and amid the sorrows of this life won for them a crown of glory. It was an entire subjugation of body and soul—a perfect victory and control over the whole man—which assumed, as it were, all responsibility for his welfare, both in this world and the next.

The point, then, to which we would come is this. How can we account for this influence of the Franciscan friar? Obscurely born, and putting from him wealth, and state, and every thing which wins the attention of men, whence came his mighty power over so many countless thousands—a power which induced them to break away from the chains of custom, and the things to which the heart most closely cleaves, and to

trample the dictates of nature and the ties of life beneath their feet? Where was the winning influence which caused the garb of the Franciscans to be seen in the camp of the Crusaders—in the crowded market-place—in the halls of the Universities—and even in the courts of princes? We can account for it only from the fact, that he brought the lessons of self-denial and the reality of eternal interests visibly before those whom he addressed. He was incited, indeed, by a misconception of a divine command, yet still it *was* a divine command, and he acted it out. He might have sent forth from his closet the most eloquent appeals to inculcate self-denial, and yet not even the surface of society been ruffled by his burning words; but when he stood before them the impersonation of his own system, the very depths were stirred with unwonted agitation. The sordid dress and cheerless life of the Father of the Mendicants appealed to their senses. They recognised in his obedience, mistaken as it was in its form, the impress of the Cross. It brought home to them the utter insignificance of all worldly interests, and the friendless wanderer spake to their hearts with a power which could not have been wielded by one "clothed in soft raiment."*

Now this was the principle which in the Apostles acted and

* For the idea on which this illustration is founded, we are indebted to a note to Bishop Whittingham's Matriculation Sermon before the General Seminary in 1840. For the facts in St. Francis' life, see *Histoire de St. Francis d'Assisi.* Par Emile Chatin de Malan, Paris, 1840.

wrought upon those to whom they preached. Their hearers felt that those were no idle words they uttered. They beheld men, who themselves lived only for eternal realities, and who trod the earth during their appointed days, only that they might win souls to the faith, and spread more widely the message they were commissioned to bear. Bold and fervent—nursed in vicissitudes—prepared for torments, and armed for death—they united the lofty energy of the martyr with the gentle love of the saint. Certain of their sins, but doubtful of their salvation, they felt that the crown was yet to be gained. They were men whose faith was not an abstraction, but who evidently believed that Christ had come down from heaven to die, since such was their love for Him, that they chose to be like Him in all things, even in suffering. Amid the profligacy of Corinth, this was a new revelation, and the ministers of Christianity spake with an influence with which none others had ever been gifted. The words, indeed, must have come with power from men, before whose upward gaze the Celestial gates were opened so vividly, that they were ready at any time to throw aside this tabernacle of clay, if by so doing they could rush upward to their reward—men, for whom the stake had no terrors, and who would have welcomed the fires of martyrdom with an heroic joy, when, by the baptism of blood, they could win a crown of glory—men, who, with a lofty courage, invited them to share in self-denial and sorrow, in all that could try the spirit and develop the hidden strength of the soul. All, therefore, that was left of the divine and

spiritual in their natures—all that sin had not wasted and trampled into the dust—responded to the call, and the Apostle found that even in Corinth were "such as should be saved."

Such was the antagonist our faith had to meet in the luxurious City of the Isthmus, and such were the arguments by which it startled the votaries of pleasure from their fatal indifference, and roused the profligate to higher and holier thoughts. And yet in this case, as in that of Judaism and Philosophy, the work was accomplished, and the Gospel was established amid all the sensuality of that degraded city. A single sentence, in the Epistle of St. Paul, tells the story of its success—"The Church of God which is at Corinth."* There it stood, like Milton's personification of Purity, amid "the monstrous rout" of Comus, "rolling with pleasure in their sensual stye." It was surrounded, indeed, by temptations, and too often its members may not have been entirely freed from the influence of that old idolatry they professed to abandon, yet still, as a Church, it was steadfast to the faith. And when, in his first Epistle, St. Paul had condemned them for glaring violations of the laws of the Gospel, we learn from his second letter, that these had been amended: "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent; for I perceive that the same Epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. . . For behold, this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what care-

* 1 *Cor.* 1, 2

fulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." And he concludes with the declaration, "I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence in you in all things."* And so the Church grew and strengthened as years went by; and long afterwards we find two other Epistles, written to the Corinthians, by St. Clement, in the name of the whole Church at Rome, and though he is obliged to reprove them for a renewal of those dissensions which had happened in the days of St. Paul, yet we can learn, from the general tone he adopts, how high was their stand among the Eastern Churches.

Thus it is that we trace the progress of our faith, as it went on, "conquering and to conquer." Thus we learn the lesson, that it hath weapons for every enemy, and arguments to meet every form of error and sin; yea, that it hath power even to break the chains of the slave of sensuality, and bid him come forth, renewed in spirit—a freeman in Christ Jesus.

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* 2 *Cor.* vii. 8, 11, 16.

IV.

BARBARISM.

When Xavier was preparing to go forth on that mission which stamped his influence on millions through the East, and gave him an undying name in the annals of heroic Christian daring, his friend Rodriguez, who shared his apartment in the Hospital at Rome, was awakened in the night by his earnest exclamations. He heard him tossing restlessly on his couch; and at times there came from the lips of the sleeping man the agitated appeal, "Yet more, O my God! yet more!" In the morning, he asked Xavier in vain for an explanation of "the dream which made him afraid, and his thoughts upon his bed which troubled him." It was not until months afterwards, when about to leave his native land forever, that he revealed the vision. He had seen in his slumber the wild and terrible future of his career spread out before him. There were barbarous regions, islands, and continents, and mighty empires, which he was to win to the truth. Storms, indeed, swept around them, and hunger and thirst were everywhere, and death in many a fearful form, yet he shrank not back. He was willing to dare the penalty, if he could only win the prize.

Nay, he yearned for still wider fields of labor, and with a passion as absorbing as the ambition which leads on the statesman or warrior, filling every faculty, and haunting him even in his slumber, he exclaimed, "Yet more, O my God! yet more!" The meditations of the day shaped the visions of the night, and revealed the tone and character of his zeal—its insatiate reaching unto the things that were before. Well, then, might Loyola write to him, "Eternity only, Francis, is sufficient for such a heart as yours: its kingdom of glory alone is worthy of it: be ambitious, be magnanimous, but aim at the loftiest mark."

Was not this the spirit of Apostolic times? And was it not under the influence of such feelings that St. Paul went forth to offer his life, if necessary, a sacrifice on the altar of Christian duty—"to fill up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church?"* It seems to be the truth taught us by the untiring labors of his life. We have seen him already in conflict with Judaism—with Grecian Philosophy—and with the Licentious Spirit of the Age—hastening on from victory to victory. But had not enough already been achieved—enough to satisfy the aspirations of the most ardent mind? Many years had passed as a dream—as a vapor which the wind sweepeth away, or a wave which rushes by and is broken on the shore. Yet they had left no sting of wasted hours behind—the stern requirements

* *Col.* i. 24.

of his Lord had been ever his guide—and in many lands he had recorded a testimony which should speak to every coming generation. After having endured "the heat and burden of the day," might he not rest as the twilight drew on, and the shadows of evening gathered about him? Might he not, at last, reap the full recompense of his toils, and devote the coming years to training those who looked to him as their spiritual father? Might he not sit in the shadow of the tree he had planted, with familiar faces around him, and familiar voices in his ears, whose tones of affection were to grow more kind as the end drew nigh, and the aged man was soon to be seen no more? If he could not dwell with his own countrymen, might he not with those whom, at Athens, he had led from their idolatry, or with his beloved converts at Corinth? A voice within him forbad the thought; and as he looked out over the world, and beheld countless nations still groping on in darkness, we believe the spirit of his prayer was, "Yet more, O my God! yet more!" In the East he had first lifted up his voice in behalf of the Gospel, and there had been "the beginning of his strength." Yet it was in the West that he looked for still greater triumphs, and expected to realize "the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power." And thus, making life one long day of trial and triumph, he was willing to wait for his reward in Eternity.

Hitherto we have seen the faith establishing its dominion among civilized nations, and overcoming the prejudices of the cultivated and refined. Whether men believed in the intellec-

tual philosophy of Greece, or the wide-spread mythology which in that land was moulded into forms of beauty, and had its noblest creations, or whether they lived in the dissolute City of the Isthmus, even there their minds bore the impress of that atmosphere of art and literature which surrounded them, and the intellect was trained and elevated. But now we are obliged to change the scene, and display the Apostle of the Gentiles while striving to impress the truth upon those who knew no advantages of civilization. At what period of his ministry he was first placed in such circumstances, we are not informed. By some it is supposed to have been at Melita, where, after his shipwreck, "the barbarous people showed them no little kindness."* These are conjectured to have been the remains of the ancient inhabitants of the island, who had been conquered by the Romans. Others, indeed, deny that the use of this term is any proof of want of civilization in those to whom it was applied, as nations of that day were accustomed to call all those "barbarians" whose language they did not understand.† But however this may have been, we know that as St. Paul went westward he must soon have been brought into contact with those who, strangers to all the refinements of life, were groping on in an intellectual darkness. With some of

* *Acts*, xxviii. 2.

† Thus Ovid, among the Getes, says in *Trist.* v. 10: "Here I am a *barbarian*, for no one understands me."

Barbarus hic ego sum, quia non intelligor ulli.

the other Apostles, it was doubtless at a much earlier period. When "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word,"* we learn from history and tradition that some devoted themselves to the unlettered heathen; and probably long before St. Paul met with the rude Pagans of Western Europe, prayers had been offered to Christ in many an Eastern tongue which would have sounded strange to the dwellers in Greece and Italy. We have opened therefore before us the history of the Apostolic missions, but shall endeavor to confine our view to those nations who were not believers in the Hellenic mythology, as this will be considered in the succeeding chapter. It is difficult indeed to tell what in that day constituted a want of civilization, yet the most natural division seems to be, to include in the present discussion all those who lived beyond the reach of that science and literature which shed its beams on the shores of the Mediterranean. Classical Paganism—whatever may be said of its moral tendency—certainly had an elevating and civilizing influence on those who received it.

We will look then at CHRISTIANITY IN CONFLICT WITH BARBARISM—an antagonist with whom there was no common ground on which they could meet, except those instinctive longings after spiritual life which are implanted in the heart of every one. With the other enemies of the faith it was far different. With Judaism it was only an appeal to the reason—un-

* *Acts*, viii. 4.

volling the prophecies of the past, and proving that Jesus was indeed the Christ. With the Greek, the Apostle had but to reveal to him the fact, that "the unknown God" whom he ignorantly worshipped, had come to tabernacle among men and receive their homage. And even the dissolute Corinthian could be roused by the inspiring motives of another life, and learn the lesson that he must trample on the present, would he win the glorious rewards of the future. But with a barbarous tribe it was otherwise; and even at this day we can see how difficult it is for the Gospel to win its way, or even effect a foothold among those whose minds, through countless generations, had been neglected and waste. There seems, at first, nothing to which the teachers of the faith can appeal. The reason, never before tasked to decide such momentous questions, cannot bring itself to the point to grasp the matter at issue, or to understand the course of conduct implied in yielding to it. The missionary, indeed, is obliged to awaken from its dormant state—to quicken into life—nay, almost to create, the intellect on which afterwards he is to act. He feels often, therefore, as if he were addressing mindless, soulless beings, when he beholds them turn with the most chilling apathy from truths which would have at once arrested the attention of the cultivated, even if they had produced no abiding moral influence. These endless, fruitless efforts are worse to the soul than martyrdom. They realize the fable of the stone of Sisyphus, and there is danger lest, from utter weariness, the zeal should be quenched, and the flame perish on the altar. The Jew

might revile the doctrines of our faith, but still he understood them—the astute Grecian, with his keen perception and practical atheism, had no difficulty in grasping the idea of a spiritual being, though he might ridicule the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead—and the believer everywhere in that old mythology could recognise the difference between his own system and the purer faith proposed to him, and weigh their respective merits. But the degraded barbarian, with whom the physical was every thing, the intellectual and the spiritual nothing, had not yet in his character the elements to enable him to comprehend the sublime yet often abstract truths on which our faith is founded. It required, therefore, the fervent zeal of Apostolical days—"a love which many waters cannot quench, nor floods drown"—to sustain the laborer in his wearing toils. And when the devotion of the Church began to wax cold, it turned disheartened from this field, and less has been done in the last fifteen centuries than was effected in the three which preceded them. The scattered missionaries toil on, year after year, and a few only are turned to the way of life. We never hear, as in the olden time, of "a nation born in a day." The degraded state of life of those to whom they minister—the absence of all intellect on which the truth can take hold—which now forms the barrier in their way, was from the beginning the great difficulty in impressing spiritual truths upon the heathen.

There is something to the missionary worse than the fire or the stake; and the mind which, with heroic joy could gather

up its energies to meet death in all its terrors, sinks disheartened in the contest with brutal ignorance, and obduracy, and "a darkness which can be felt." There is a recoil of the spirit which is fatal to its energies. The laborer fears that he has not counted the cost of his way, and while he was prepared for danger and hardship, he was not for miseries which more than either waste the heart. To speak to the dark and shrouded spirit of the savage, and attempt to awaken it to the lofty hopes of immortality—to spend hour after hour striving to infuse ideas into the heavy brain of one who never before attempted to reason—to weave the thoughts into the humblest, simplest words of which speech is capable—and then be met by a vacant look which shows that all within is "without form and void;" or else, to have the listener turn away with cold and derisive words—oh, this is a martyrdom of the spirit worse than any that can befall the body! And yet these were the trials which in that early day the heralds of the Cross had to expect when they went forth to inherit the earth.

Such, then, was the forbidding aspect of this portion of the missionary field. The laborers were to plunge at once into the thick shadows of an intellectual and moral darkness. They were to enter lands where "the sweet charities" which bind man to man were unrecognised, "not knowing the things that should befall them there," save that in every place they expected bonds and afflictions to be their portion. They were to work a revolution in which "old things were to pass away"—old customs, and delusions, and habits of thought—the cherished

feelings on which most the memory dwells—while "all things were to become new"—the joys and affections of this life, and the hopes which stretch onward to the next. Yet the Apostles shrank not from the task. They turned not away from the bitterness of the cup offered to their taste, nor fainted at the sight of the fearful shadows which fell upon their path. Solemn, indeed, was the scene, and one calculated to awaken an indifferent world, when they went out from their kindred and people, henceforth belonging to no earthly land, but seeking a heavenly. To them "the field was the world," and they acted in the spirit of St. Paul when he declared himself "a debtor to the barbarian" as well as "to the Greek"—when he felt that "a necessity was laid upon him" to preach the Gospel wherever man was found ; yea, that a wo was recorded against him if he made not full proof of his ministry.

In this contest he led the way. The same spirit which induced him to declare—"I am the Apostle of the Gentiles,"*—forced him to realize that he was to proclaim the truth, not only amid the learning of Athens and the splendor of Rome, but to those also who were stigmatized as barbarians. And for this conflict with heathenism of every form, his previous life seems to have well prepared him. Born in a city of Asia Minor, and trained in Grecian learning, he was probably free from many of the narrow prejudices of his countrymen in Palestine, while his education at the feet of Gamaliel had prevented his

* *Rom.* xi. 13.

faith in Judaism being weakened by this early culture of foreign philosophy and poetry. Unlike, therefore, the Jews in general, he was familiar with much which was beyond their pale, and standing on the confines of both regions, he was admirably qualified to preach to the heathen a system which was to unite all men of every clime in one broad and comprehensive faith. He felt that his business was to "plant"* the Gospel, while he left to others the duty of cherishing the tender tree, and at last reaping the fruit. "I have strived," he writes to the Romans, "to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation."† And he tells the Corinthians, that it is his wish, "to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand."‡ He did not, therefore, confine his efforts to the circle of intellectual light which surrounded the coasts of the Mediterranean, but passed Westward into regions known only to the East as the residence of tribes of savage lives and names. Spain heard his voice,§ and then he went Northward to those inclement shores which the lordly Roman "shivered when he named." The testimony of tradition indeed declares, that he preached the Gospel in that far-off barbarous isle, from which our own Church came, and therefore Tertullian wrote—"There are

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* 1 *Cor.* iii. 6.

† *Rom.* xv. 20.

‡ 2 *Cor.* x. 16.

§ *Rom.* xv. 24.

places in Britain inaccessible to Roman arms, which were subdued to Christ."*

His labors ceased not till the hour of martyrdom came, and he stood without the walls of Rome, surrounded by thousands who had gathered there to see a Christian die. But how beautiful is it to trace this solitary herald of the Cross on his way, urging forward the chariot-wheels of the Gospel, and crushing beneath them the altars of heathenism! "Hell from beneath is moved to meet him." All the chief ones of the earth—even the king upon his throne and the priest in the temple—are stirred up at his coming. They narrowly look upon him, and consider him as the man that made the earth to tremble, and did shake kingdoms.† But light and immortality attend his

* *Adv. Jud.* c. 7. The fact of St. Paul preaching the Gospel in Britain depends upon the unvarying tradition of the early Church. Clemens Romanus and Jerome speak of his travelling "to the utmost bounds of the West"—of his "preaching as far as the extremity of the earth"—and "preaching the Gospel in the Western parts"—expressions which Stillingfleet has fully shown, from other writers, were always used in that age with reference to the British isles. He has classified all the evidence on this subject. *Orig. Brit.* p. 39. A single sentence in Theodoret shows the belief in his day:—"Our fishermen and publicans, and *he who was a tent-maker*, carried the Evangelical precepts to all nations; not only to those who lived under Roman jurisdiction, but also to the Scythians and the Huns; besides to the Indians, *Britains*, and Germans." *Serm. IX. de legibus*, tom. iv. p. 619. The learned Camden, therefore, thus states his conclusions:—"From these authorities it follows, not only that the Gospel was preached in Britain in the times of the Apostles, but that St. Paul himself was the preacher of it."—*Britannia, Intro.* p. 86.

† *Isaiah*, xiv. 9, 16.

steps. The desolate stretch out their hands unto God. His voice, pointing the way to eternal glory, first breaks in upon their cheerlessness, and chases away their fears. Through all his troubles—in dangers on the land and on the deep—in weariness and painfulness—"in perils by the heathen"—his love for others sustains him. To him it is power—resistless power.

And so it was when long years had passed, and he writes himself "Paul the aged." The step may have been more slow, yet the spirit was ever renewing its strength—nay, adding to its freshness and glory as it drew nigh the goal. We may imagine him, therefore, when the evening of his days had come, and in the dungeon of Rome he felt that "the time of his departure was at hand." With the vigor of his mind unbroken, and the lofty devotion of his heart unquenched—when the shadows of this world were fading away, and the realities of the next unfolding to his sight—how must his thoughts have travelled back over the path of life's many years! And how intensely solemn must have been the memories of the aged man! All the scenes of his checkered career—the days of toil and nights of prayer—the fearful struggles and the glorious triumphs—rose from their graves in the past, and gathered around his parting soul. His lofty purposes—his ceaseless labors, protracted even when the shadows were lengthening in his path—were now to be estimated in the light of that eternity before which the dream of life was fast fading, until perhaps his spirit trembled, and would have failed within him, but for

that mercy which had ever been its refuge. But what triumphant visions rose before him! What forms of glory and consolation flitted before his eyes! The revelation on the road to Damascus—"the unspeakable words" which long years had not worn from his memory—the strife in the Jewish synagogues—the conflicts with the subtle philosophers of Athens—the splendors of the Imperial City, when first as a prisoner there he preached the Gospel—his labors among the wild tribes of the West—these in succession swept before him, as the imagination created them afresh. The dead, too, lived again. His fellow Apostles, men who had known their Lord in the flesh—the companions of his toilsome wanderings—the countless souls who had been given him for his hire—the martyrs whom he had first pointed to Heaven, and who had been faithful unto death—all these seemed to speak to him from the Paradise of God, and to be ready to receive him as the gates opened to his spirit. The aged Apostle felt that all in the long record had been mercy—that he was now "ready to be offered"—and, anticipating the hour of his departure, his exclamation might be—"Why is His chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of His chariot?"

In this Apostleship, too, St. Peter shared; and though his chief labor was among the Jews, yet when he wandered to the distant East, and planted there the Gospel, "the word of the Lord" must have "sounded out"* among the crowded

* 1 *Thes.* i. 8.

myriads around them. In his "Epistle to the strangers scattered throughout" the neighboring regions, he dates from Babylon, and sends to them, as brethren, the greetings of that Church.* As we have mentioned, in a previous chapter,

* 1 *Pet.* v. 13.—We have no room here to enter into the disputed question, whether by this the Apostle means Babylon in Mesopotamia, or the mystical Babylon—Rome. We believe that nothing but the warmth of controversy could have induced men to advocate the latter opinion. The Romanists were willing to identify Babylon with Rome, because it established the point of the Apostle's residence in the Imperial City. The Protestants also concurred in this view, because it gave them a new argument to prove that Rome was the mystical Babylon of the Apocalypse. Between these two parties, therefore, the opinion has been widely advocated.

We confess we have never been able to take this view. We do not see any thing in the context to show that the Apostle was speaking figuratively; while nothing can be more natural than that he "to whom was committed the Gospel of the Circumcision," (*Gal.* ii. 7.) should visit the great colony on the Euphrates. Nowhere else, out of Palestine, could he find his countrymen in such numbers. Philo, in his invective against Caligula, refers to the multitude of Jews in Babylonia. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Resch Glutha, or Prince of the Captivity, held there his court with much splendor; and the insurrection, in the time of Hadrian, was excited by the idea of a simultaneous rising in Mesopotamia. We believe that the earliest writer in defence of a figurative Babylon is Papias, in the 2d century, who is characterized by Eusebius as being "very limited in his comprehension, as is evident from his discourses"—believing and reporting things on common tradition, even things that were μυθιχωτερα, more likely to be fables than truths—introducing fabulous stories into the Church, which many writers after him adopted. (*Eccles. Hist.* lib. iii. ch. 39.) Bloomfield (*Greek Test. in loco*) argues in defence of the real Babylon, as do Lightfoot, Scaliger, Beausobre, Bp. Conybeare, Benson, &c. The reader will find the best statement

many of the Jews did not return from the Captivity with the successive remigrations of Ezra and Nehemiah, and their descendants, on the banks of the Euphrates, formed the most powerful foreign colony of the Hebrews. The newly transplanted captives must indeed, at first, have mourned for the sunny cliffs and rich pastures of their own land, where the olive and the vine grew spontaneously, and the secluded valleys always afforded them shelter from the noontide heat. On the wide plains of Babylon there was nothing to recall to them a familiar association; and we wonder not, therefore, that "they sat down and wept when they remembered Zion"—that they "hanged their harps upon the willows," and professed their inability to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land." But the next generation had no such memories to recall them from the East. It was a "glorious clime" in which they lived—those scenes were endeared to them as their early home—and when the permission came to return to Palestine, there were many who felt no wish to undertake the long and toilsome journey, to inherit a desolate and wasted land, and build up again a ruined city. And thus centuries went by, and the colony grew and flourished; yet still these voluntary exiles preserved their attachment to the ancient faith, and once, at least, during life, they made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem

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of this argument in Michaelis, (*Intro. to N. Test.* ch. xxvii. § 45.) The opposite side is most fully stated by Lardner, (*Hist. of Apost. and Evang.* ch. xix. § 3.) We do not see how the former view conflicts with the Apostle's visit to Rome, which might have been subsequent.

to attend its holy Festivals. Thither, therefore, came St. Peter, in the fulfilment of his mission to his own countrymen scattered abroad through all lands, and we know not a more striking picture than that which represents him in this scene of the ancient captivity. He stood amid the ruined Halls of the Scriptural Beltshazzar, and the gorgeous palaces, where once a hundred Satraps bowed their jewelled necks before the throne of Nebuchadnezzar. Yet Isaiah and Jeremiah, in prophetic words, had described "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency" as prostrate in the dust—the ceasing of the oppressor—the ruin of the Golden City; and these strains, uttered in the glory of its brightest days, had now received their terrible fulfilment. Time, in its solemn march, had changed these visions into the records of history. The Apostle saw before him a blighted city, retaining only the shadow of its former glory, while the mighty plain which stretched around it was covered with the scattered wrecks of empires—its lonely wastes "mounded with the dust of three-and-twenty centuries." Yet this dreary desolation was a witness to the truth of those Hebrew seers who had gone before him, and must have strengthened his own faith in "the sure word of prophecy."

Here, too, Daniel had wept and prayed, alternately a prisoner and a prince; and, "among the captives by the river of Chebar," Ezekiel had dwelt, when "the heavens were opened and he saw visions of God." Mighty, indeed, were the revelations of the shadowy future which they received—revelations

of fearful desolation, when the record of coming events was spread out before them, and they beheld "written therein lamentation, and mourning, and wo."* The rise and fall of empires—the fate of imperial dynasties, and wide-spread monarchies—the approaching destiny of the mightiest of the earth—all swept before their eyes in solemn pageantry. And now, every thing had been fulfilled, and in those "latter days" there stood in their place another prophet, whose

> "Spirit had strength to sweep
> Adown the gulf of time."

But even more glorious than those given of old, were the visions granted to St. Peter. Not the wreck of empires, but of worlds, is disclosed to his eyes, and as he speaks of the time when "all these things shall be dissolved," he draws a picture whose awful sublimity has never been equalled.

To the same portion of the vineyard came St. Thomas. Not only the Medes and Persians, but the warlike Parthians and the rude Bactrians, heard from him the Gospel; and so he wandered on, until he came to "India's coral strand"—those shores too distant even to have seen the eagles of Imperial Rome. An early writer tells us, that at first he shrank from those lands on account of the rudeness of their people, till a vision bade him go on, for it was his Lord's work.† And success crowned

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* *Ezek.* ii. 10.

† *Niceph. Hist. Eccles.* l. ii. c. 40.

his efforts. Many hearts bowed before the Cross, and soon there rose "hymns to Christ as God,"*

> "From many an ancient river,
> And many a palmy plain."

Thus he planted the faith, leaving the lasting tokens of his labors to preserve entwined through coming ages his Master's name and his own. And the later history of the Church he founded comes to us like a voice from the Apostolic days. For ages they lived on, cut off from the rest of the Christian world, and utterly unknown. At length, in the sixteenth century, the Portuguese visited the coast of Malabar, and found, to their surprise, a Christian nation with more than a hundred churches. The tradition among them was, that their forefathers had received the faith from St. Thomas, and they therefore still called themselves by his name. They had always maintained the order and discipline of Episcopal jurisdiction, and for thirteen hundred years had enjoyed a succession of Bishops, appointed by the Patriarch of Antioch. "We," said they, "are of the true faith, whatever you from the West may be; for we come from the place where the followers of Christ were first called Christians."

But when the Portuguese became acquainted with the purity and simplicity of their worship, they were offended. "These

* "They were accustomed, on a stated day, to meet before daylight, and to repeat among themselves a hymn to Christ as to a God."—*Pliny's Letter to Trajan, describing the Early Christians.*

churches," said they, "belong to the Pope." "Who is the Pope?" replied the natives. "We never heard of him." They refused to subscribe to the tenets of the Church of Rome, or to exchange for her form of service the pure Liturgy they had inherited. The Inquisition was therefore established at Goa, persecution invaded these tranquil churches, and some of their clergy were seized and devoted to death as heretics. At a Synod, over which the Roman Archbishop Menezes presided, they were accused of the following practices and opinions:— "That they had married wives; that they owned but two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; that they neither invoked Saints, nor worshipped Images, nor believed in Purgatory; and that they had no other orders or names of dignity in the Church, than Bishop, Priest, and Deacon." All these heretical opinions they were required to abjure. The churches on the seacoast were thus compelled to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope, but they refused to pray in Latin, and insisted on retaining their own language and Liturgy. "This point," they said, "they would only give up with their lives." The Pope, therefore, compromised with them: Menezes purged their Liturgy, and they retain their Syriac language, and have a Syriac college to this day. These are called the Syro-Roman Churches, and are principally situated on the seacoast.

The churches in the interior, however, would not yield to Rome. They hid their books—proclaimed eternal war against the Inquisition—and fled to the mountains, where they sought the protection of the native Princes, who had always been

proud of their alliance. Thus two centuries more passed by, during which time no information was received of these Christians in the interior, until the very fact of their existence began to be doubted. At length, in 1806, they were again discovered by Dr. Buchanan, in his missionary travels. He found them, as they were described by the Portuguese, preserving their purity and faith in the seclusion of the wilderness. Their Episcopal ministry was still unbroken*—their discipline was orderly—and their Liturgy pure from any corruptions. It was, too, a wide-spread Church. "I have now ascertained," writes Buchanan, "that there are upwards of two hundred thousand Christians in the south of India, besides the Syrians who speak the Malabar language."† Such are "the Christians of St. Thomas," and thus deeply did he plant the faith among those crowded millions. To this day it exists, and they who claim him as their spiritual father, still preserve traditions of

* "This is the residence of Mar Dionysius, the Metropolitan of the Syrian Church. A great number of the Priests from the other churches had assembled by desire of the Bishop, before my arrival. The Bishop resides in a building attached to the Church. I was much struck with his first appearance. He was dressed in a vestment of dark red silk; a large golden cross hung from his neck, and his venerable beard reached below his girdle. Such, thought I, was the appearance of Chrysostom in the fourth century. On public occasions, he wears the Episcopal mitre, and a muslin robe is thrown over his under-garment; and in his hand he bears the crosier, or pastoral staff."—*Buchanan's Christian Researches*, p. 80.

† *Idem.* p. 81.

his ministry, and point to the place of his martyrdom and grave.

Nathaniel departed to the Eastern shore of the Red Sea, where many of his countrymen, after desolation had swept over the city of their fathers, took refuge in the quiet regions of Arabia Felix. There, secluded from the world, and enjoying all that nature in her richest prodigality could pour around them, they might learn to forget the sorrows which had overwhelmed their land. There, too, those who had adopted the new faith, could live in the public profession of their creed unmolested by the narrow bigotry of their countrymen, who still clung to the ancient covenant. Thus the wild Arabians—tribes which had never bowed to mortal man—were taught by this Apostle to take upon them the yoke of the humble Galilean. And when a century later, another herald of the Cross went thither to proclaim the truth, "he found," says Eusebius, "his own arrival anticipated by some who there were acquainted with the Gospel of Matthew, to whom Bartholomew,* one of the Apostles, had preached, and had left them this Gospel in the Hebrew, which was also preserved until this time."† From thence he went into Lycaonia, whose people, St. Chrysostom tells us, he instructed and trained up in the Christian

* It is scarcely necessary to mention to the reader, that Bartholomew and Nathaniel are supposed to be different names for the same person. St. John never mentions Bartholomew in the number of the Apostles, and the other Evangelists never take notice of Nathaniel.

† *Eccles. Hist.* V. 10.

discipline.* At last, he travelled on to Armenia the Great, and there this "Israelite in whom was no guile," closed his days, learning, perhaps, the meaning of that solemn prophecy with which his Lord had crowned the earliest profession of his faith, for the first time when the glories of the eternal world unfolded to his view, and he "saw the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

To St. Philip was committed the task of founding the Church among the Phrygians—a duty most difficult to perform, because there, through all the days of their Paganism, the religious emotions, when not entirely dormant, seem to have developed themselves into the wildest excitement. Thence came forth at times the priests of Cybele, wrought up to a state of phrensy by the working of what they considered a divine influence—troops of frantic Orgiasts, whom the inhabitants of the West looked upon with awe, while they caught from them the same strange fanaticism. Egypt received the Gospel from St. Mark. The north of Africa claimed St. Simon as its apostle, and nowhere does the new religion seem to have taken deeper root, or been more deeply riveted in the minds of the people. The religion of ancient Carthage had perished with the city, and newly-imported forms of faith seemed to have had but a feeble hold upon the inhabitants. And they had no sympathy with the dreamy mysticism of the East;

* *Cave's Lives of the Apostles*, p. 391.

every thing about them was earnest and practical. They seized with eagerness on the grand verities of Christianity—there was something in its lofty revelations which accorded well with those highwrought spirits of the tropics—and in every page they wrote, and every conflict they engaged for their faith, we seem to trace the influence of their burning climate. The land, now so thinly peopled, was then crowded with teeming millions, and thousands of churches arose where, in our day,

"The Moslem's prayers profane
Morn and eve come sounding."

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip the deacon, carried the influence of Christianity to the court of Candace, queen of Meroe. Tradition tells us, that her treasurer, returning, unfolded to her riches greater than those of this world which she had committed to his care; and then, by her leave, he propagated the faith throughout Ethiopia, till meeting with St. Matthew the Apostle, by their joint endeavors idolatry was expelled from that country.* In this way, the Gospel was preached among those whom Homer describes as ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν —the remotest of mankind. Thus it was, that even in the first age, Christianity and Barbarism met in conflict, and many a wild and mysterious land—the very name of which the highwrought civilization of that age refused to learn—had its Apostle, who bequeathed to it the remembrance of his spiritual triumphs and his cruel death. Countries where heathenism

* *Cave's Lives of the Fathers*, p. 87.

once was dominant, were trodden by saintly footsteps and watered by martyrs' blood.

The earliest laborers in this mighty vineyard, one by one passed away to their reward, many of them receiving, at the fire and the stake, a quick release to the Paradise of God. It is said that the second generation of missionaries is rarely equal to the first—to those who, desolate of all human aid, go forth into the wilderness, and sow in tears the harvest which others came after them to reap. Yet this was not the case in the earliest ages of our faith. The successors of the Apostles evidently shared in their spirit, and in all the lofty traits of Christian character, Ignatius and Polycarp were worthy of those at whose feet they had sat. Each individual felt that he was an athlete of Christ, and gathered around the Cross every hope, and joy, and affection of his soul. They went forth like men who had ceased to have any sympathy with the fears and passions of life—who trampled beneath their feet all to which the carnal heart most cleaves—and the corrupt impulses of whose nature were scourged with a rod of iron, or quenched in their tears. And thus they fed their souls with the deep impulses of enthusiasm, until there was to them a sublime romance in battling with the kingdom of Satan, and rescuing the nations which were sitting under his dark control. They loved the conflict and the blood-bought triumph more than "the still waters and the green pastures." The earth was to them but a theatre on which were to be wrought out their spiritual triumphs. As they wandered over plains and forests, they

felt that these were to be but provinces of their empire, and this thought took away the sense of weariness, and added fire to their zeal.

And thus a century more went by, and even in distant lands, where the Apostles had left Christianity struggling for existence, it was now dominant and fearless. We see this in the glowing splendor of Tertullian's writings, when on the distant shores of Africa he sent forth his defence of the faith. The very contrast of its tone with the persuasive and deprecatory appeal of Justin Martyr, shows the change which must have taken place in the public mind. The day for apologizing had passed. Christianity utters no longer the voice of humble supplication—she does not even plead the cause of her unoffending followers, and endeavor to screen them from the rage of the persecutor—but every sentence breathes defiance and contempt of that Paganism which a few years before was trampling her into the dust. Tertullian hurls against their Pagan foes the vengeance of the Christian's God—sternly warns the Præfect Scapula by the example of Roman governors who, like Herod, had been smitten at once in their pride and power—and taunts him with the futility of his efforts to crush a kingdom, "whose duration will be coeval with that of the world."* Everywhere it was aggression in the confines of barbarism. The preaching of Frumentius carried the Gospel even beyond the bounds of Ethiopia, and won to its sway the

* *Tertul. ad Scapulam.*

wild tribes of the Nubians and Blemmyes. Gaul bowed to the Cross. The dark and inhuman superstition of the Druids faded before its gentle lessons, and even the warlike deities of the Goths were exchanged for the rule of the Prince of Peace. The symbol of our faith was hallowed on the wastes of heathenism, and thousands who lately worshipped idols, now

> "Shook the depths of the forest's gloom,
> With their hymns of lofty cheer."*

Of many of these victories of the Cross, no history has been preserved to us. Its ministers, plunging into the dark, unknown forests, were lost to sight when they mingled with its savage tribes, and as years went by, the very memory of their existence faded in their ancient homes. No record of their trials was sent to those they left behind, for they labored not for the praise of men but of God. They were alone with Him, and none others saw their struggles, but the watchers that are on high—"the holy ones" who look down upon the just as they "sound along their dim and perilous way." But who can tell how fearful must have been their loneliness of soul! They whose lives are hallowed by the joys of home—whose

* "There exists not," says Justin Martyr, "a people, whether Greek or Barbarian, or any other race of men, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished—however ignorant of arts or agrieulture, whether they dwell under tents, or wander about in covered wagons, among whom prayers are not offered up, in the name of a crucified Jesus, to the Father and Creator of all things."—*Dialog. cum Tryphon.* p. 341.

sorrows are softened by the treasure of endearing affection, and over whose day and night watch the love of kindred—can never realize that sickness of heart which at times must come upon those who have thus cut themselves off from all human sympathy. In these hours of depression naught was left them but to pray and weep till light once more broke in upon the darkness. But though they sought no discharge from their labor—toiling on in the eleventh hour as painfully as in the first—we believe they must have rejoiced in the approach of immortality, and heard with gladness "the rushing of the wings" of their last messenger. And there they died, forgotten by the world they had abandoned. No mother or sister sat by their lowly couch, and wiped the tear of anguish from the cheek, or the damp of sickness from the brow. Often they must have sunk alone in their last agony, and the shriek of the vulture, as he waited for his prey, been their only requiem. No consecrated ground received their remains—there were none to write their epitaph but the rude converts they had won from idolatry—none to transmit to later ages the memory of all they dared and suffered. Thus, after a self-denying, loveless life, they died a lonely and unheeded death.

But they had their reward. Souls had been given them for their labor. Many a spirit had been raised from darkness—many a lip breathed forth blessings on their memory, when they were beyond the reach of human praise—to many they had opened the gate of Paradise, and made the Dark Valley

beautiful by the word they preached. The faith, therefore, survived them; and when, years afterwards, the tide of barbarous invasion rolled down upon the Roman Empire, the polished Christian on the banks of the Tiber found, to his astonishment, that these wild sons of the North believed in the same faith with himself—that tribes of which he never heard had learned the story of the Incarnate Son of God—and "the yellow-haired Goth" and the fierce Vandal felt no way strange as they worshipped at the altars of the Imperial City.

Thus it was that the faith went forth to inherit the earth, and, like the leaven, silently yet surely won its way. It was at a mighty cost that the work was achieved—a cost of tears and suffering, and the blood of martyrdom—yet the price was cheerfully paid. As one leader in "the sacramental host of God's elect" fell in the contest, another at once stepped forward to fill his place, and take up the weapons of his warfare. All realized that they were "baptized for the dead." And the result was, what we have already seen. Everywhere men became familiar with the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The gathered thousands in the crowded city thronged his temples, while the distant and scattered barbarians—"the few sheep in the wilderness"—found there was a mighty brotherhood extending over the earth, of which they too were invited to be members. In many a strange tongue rose the anthem of praise, yet its spirit was the same through all its many voices, and "with one heart they desired the prosperity of Christ's

Holy Apostolic Church, and with one mouth professed the faith once delivered to the saints."*

But the effect of these triumphs of the Cross among barbarous nations was not seen in a single age. It was not confined to themselves, nor did its benefits cease with leading those who listened to a knowledge of the truth. It was to react on the shores of the Mediterranean, and exert a power to be felt through all ages of the Christian faith. Not from the venerable shrines of Egypt, where antique learning sat enthroned—or from the groves of classic Greece, the home of philosophy—or even from the sacred temple of Judea's faith, was that power to proceed which was to control the future destinies of the Christian Church. It came from the barbarous North. When, a few centuries later, the Roman Empire was tottering to its fall, and the tide of armed invasion, to which we have already alluded, swept from those dark forests and overwhelmed it in ruin, we can see that these rude warriors were the special messengers of God to promote the permanent purity of the faith. It had lost its influence amid the general depravity of morals, and was without authority to correct the growing cruelty and licentiousness. There was danger lest Christianity in Italy should degenerate into heathenism. The Pagan power, in its last struggle, seemed to have cast its mantle over the new faith, and men had insensibly grafted on their practice many of the customs of their heathen ancestors.

* From Prayer in Office of Institution.

Every association around spoke to them of the past, and of that poetic faith among whose ruined fanes they dwelt. It was necessary, therefore, to break this train of thought and feeling—to eradicate it from the Church—and to infuse a new and healthier tone into the public mind. And this could only be done by the advent of a new race, unfettered by these old associations of the past—with a faith whose vitality was uninjured by local heathen customs—and with no ties to bind them to any thing but the Living Present. The communities of Southern Europe could never, of themselves, have worked out this reform, or thrown off the chain that was rusting in upon the heart. It was an age of worn-out and effete civilization, when Rome had lost the vigor of its youth, or rather, exchanged it for the decrepitude which always marks the closing years of a once mighty nation. Life, indeed, was refined, yet without purity; and the arrow only sank deeper because its point was polished. The early simplicity of faith was gone, and society, incapable of higher and nobler influences, needed to be entirely changed by new elements and fresher impulses. While the Roman Empire was breaking up into a number of hostile states, and days of disaster and confusion were at hand, it was evident that if religion was to exist at all, it needed a complete and vigorous reorganization. A new spirit was to be breathed into the imbecile and hackneyed people of Italy. And how could this so effectually be done, as by the tribes of the North, cut off, as they always had been, from imbibing the vices of the worn-out nations of Southern Europe! They trampled

the effeminate Romans beneath their feet, and showed no sympathy with corruptions which the degenerate Christians they supplanted had ceased to regard as in any way at variance with the spirit of their faith. Not without reason, then, did Alaric the Visigoth style himself "the scourge of God;" and when he led his fiery countrymen over the Alps, and made his name a watchword of terror, he was fulfilling his mission as fully as was Cyrus, when God sent him forth against His ancient people, and employed him but as "the rod of His wrath" for the Church's sake.*

We perceive, too, from these considerations, how much the preservation of the faith in those lands depended on the fact, that the successful invaders should be at least nominal

* "Not for myself did I ascend
In judgment my triumphal car;
'Twas God alone on high did send
The avenging Scythian to the war,
To shake abroad, with iron hand,
The appointed scourge of his command.

"With iron hand that scourge I rear'd
O'er guilty king and guilty realm;
Destruction was the ship I steer'd,
And vengeance sat upon the helm.
When launch'd in fury on the flood,
I ploughed my ways through seas of blood,
And in the stream their hearts had spilt,
Wash'd out the long arrears of guilt."

Dirge of Alaric, by Hon. Edw. Everett.

Christians. Had they been still attached to their ancient heathenism, civilization itself would have been exchanged for barbarism and darkness. Christianity would have been swept away before them, and Italy shared the fate of the North of Africa, when in a later age the Crescent entirely supplanted the Cross, and the churches over which Cyprian and Augustine once ruled, lived only on the page of history. Thus the faith would have been forced back into its ancient home in the East, and the labor of centuries been lost. But as it was, the Church began to reap the benefit of her forgotten missionaries, who a century before had toiled in those northern regions. The impression the faith had already made on the invading race, softened in some respects the horrors of their warfare, and St. Augustine appeals to the mercy shown by the conqueror as an argument in favor of Christianity. He tells his readers, that had the Pagan Radagaisus taken the Imperial City, not a life would have been spared, or any place been sacred from his violation, while the Christian Alaric had been checked and overawed by the sanctity of the Christian character, and his respect for those whom he was obliged to recognise as his own Christian brethren. St. Augustine therefore taunts his adversaries with their inability to produce a similar example of a city taken by storm, in which the gods of heathenism had been able to protect either themselves or their deluded votaries.* The skeptical Gibbon, too, is obliged by the facts

* *De Civit. Dei*, lib. i. ch. 1–6.

which history had recorded, to acknowledge in the same case the controlling influence of Christianity. "The proclamation of Alaric," he says, "when he forced his entrance into a vanquished city, discovered, however, some regard for the laws of humanity and religion. He encouraged his troops boldly to seize the rewards of valor, and to enrich themselves with the spoils of a wealthy and effeminate people; but he exhorted them, at the same time, to spare the lives of the unresisting citizens, and to respect the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, as holy and inviolable sanctuaries. Among the horrors of a nocturnal tumult, several of the Christian Goths displayed the fervor of a recent conversion; and some instances of their uncommon piety and moderation are related, and perhaps adorned, by the zeal of ecclesiastical writers. While the barbarians roamed through the city in quest of prey, the humble dwelling of an aged virgin, who had devoted her life to the service of the altar, was forced open by one of the powerful Goths. He immediately demanded, though in civil language, all the gold and silver in her possession; and was astonished at the readiness with which she conducted him to a splendid hoard of massy plate, of the richest materials and the most curious workmanship. The barbarian viewed with wonder and delight this valuable acquisition, till he was interrupted by a serious admonition, addressed to him in the following words: 'These,' said she, 'are the consecrated vessels belonging to St. Peter: if you presume to touch them, the sacrilegious deed will remain in your conscience. For my part, I dare not keep

what I am unable to defend.' The Gothic captain, struck with reverential awe, dispatched a messenger to inform the king of the treasure which he had discovered; and received a peremptory order from Alaric, that all the consecrated plate and ornaments should be transported, without damage or delay, to the Church of the Apostle. From the extremity, perhaps, of the Quirinal Hill, to the distant quarter of the Vatican, a numerous detachment of Goths, marching in order of battle through the principal streets, protected with glittering arms the long train of their devout companions, who bore aloft on their heads the sacred vessels of gold and silver; and the martial shouts of the barbarians were mingled with the sound of religious psalmody. From all the adjacent houses, a crowd of Christians hastened to join this edifying procession; and a multitude of fugitives, without distinction of age or rank, or even of sect, had the good fortune to escape to the secure and hospitable sanctuary of the Vatican."*

There was, therefore, some degree of sympathy between the rude barbarians and the cultivated Romans whom they overthrew. The clergy of southern Europe had a hold upon their invaders which enabled the two nations ultimately to blend together into one people. Religion was indeed obliged to accommodate itself somewhat to the spirit of the times, and while it softened in some degree the rude martial temper of the North, it underwent itself a desecrating change. Losing

* *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxxi.

something of its purity, and certainly much of its gentleness, it became what we see it in the middle ages, splendid and imaginative, warlike, and at length chivalrous.* It assumed the form which was afterwards developed into the wild excitement of the Crusades. Yet still it made a community of interest and a similarity of feeling between the master and the slave. It was a link, and the only one, which bound together the conquerors and the conquered, and prevented the latter—like the Saxons of England—from being crushed into a state of actual servitude. It averted the utter and hopeless prostration of the feeble nations they overran. These had among them the order of the ministry, whose authority was acknowledged by the invaders, and who extorted their respect by the commanding attitude they assumed. The rude warrior, who cared for no earthly authority, had been taught to shrink from ecclesiastical censures, and while he feared no temporal power, he bowed in reverence before the Bishops of the Church. In this way they were enabled to subdue their conquerors, and cast around their minds those spells which are more potent to enslave than triple bands of iron to the body. Before a new tide of barbarism rolled over the land, the former invaders had been partially civilized by mingling with those whom they had dispossessed, and a sympathy had grown up which checked the adverse influences brought to bear upon them, and saved the elements of society from rushing into ruinous conflict. They

* *Milman's History of Christianity*, v. ii. p. 162.

all worshipped the same God, and knelt in the same church, and thus by degrees other differences were forgotten, and merged in the common tie of Christian brotherhood. We see, then, how it was that the labors of the early ministers of our faith, when they toiled among barbarous and strange tribes, were destined to act upon the heart of Christendom, long after they had gone to their reward.

Thus the Church triumphed over barbarism, and won the heathen to a knowledge of the faith. And one secret of success was the fervent spirit of those who were engaged in this work. They renounced every thing in this world, in the hope of receiving that eternity which had been revealed to them in the next. The evident destiny which was before them formed and moulded their characters. It gave a direction to their lives, and a tone to their whole nature. They entangled not themselves with the affairs of this life, that they might have no impediment in their warfare. Separated from all they had ever loved—crushing in their hearts every reminiscence of childhood, with its faith and hopes, its creed and customs—their earthly ties seemed to be utterly severed.* They passed

* Bede thus describes their manner of life:—"They lived like Apostles; frequent in prayers, watchings, and fastings. They preached the Word of Life to all who were ready to hear it, receiving from their disciples so much only as was necessary for a bare subsistence, and in all things acting in strict conformity with their profession and doctrine. In truth, they seemed to put aside the good things of this world, as property not belonging to them. They bore disappointments and hinderances with

not their lives in cloistered seclusion, or in the spiritual delights of holy meditation, thus forestalling their heavenly repose, but in wrestling with the evil around them; and when at last they met death, it found them covered with the dust and blood of battle. They chose their career, and identified with it every desire, and hope, and passion; and waking or sleeping, had before them the same undying object. Life often to them must have been but a lingering death, when every day brought fresh mental or bodily anguish. Yet they awakened every energy of their spirits to the struggle, rushing forward to it with joy, even when it led them to the grave. Theirs was the high-wrought enthusiasm which works changes in the world, because, with a reckless hardihood, it tramples all obstacles beneath its feet. It forces itself into men's hearts, and kindles the passions, and thus each step of its progress is urged on by a more potent motive. It inspires others with the fervor of its own belief, and wins its victories by the contagion of its own sincerity. These were men formed for conquest, because resolute to suffer—men who were repulsed by no discouragements, and disheartened by no defeats—men who felt themselves inspired, and whose very zeal inspired those whom they addressed. They spake with the burning eloquence of those to

a calm and cheerful spirit, and would readily have died, had such been God's will, in defence of the truth they preached." And this, he adds, was the result:—"Many believed, and were baptized, won over by the simplicity of their blameless lives, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine."—*Lib.* i. c. 26.

whom the world of retribution was ever open—who had looked upon the agonies of the lost, and listened with mortal ears to the glorious anthems of the blessed. Their very intolerance furnished them with the means of victory. They felt too deep a horror of every other creed to look upon it with the least allowance. Its gods were demons, and eternal ruin was the portion of its worshippers. Their own faith held out the only hope of safety, and all they loved in this world must embrace it, or the separation at death was one forever. They had, therefore, every motive to widen the circle of the faithful, and to nerve themselves with sternness for the perilous task of encountering the bitter opposition of the Polytheist. Each soul on which they poured the light of truth was an immortal being, saved from the fires of hell. Each accession to their ranks was a lamb gathered into the one true fold—another heir of the kingdom of Heaven. And the heathen were attracted by this zeal—so stern and unwavering—which, while it forced itself upon them, proclaimed that it was for their own sakes alone—and which, to win a proselyte, would scarcely count as obstacles the torture and the stake.

And thus the early Christians went forth, with nothing here for which to live, but the thought of serving Him whose heralds they were. Everywhere they were animated by the same lofty spirit, which neither danger, nor sorrow, nor death itself, could quench. On the most distant savage shores—in the midst of the mighty forests of the North—in the dungeon and the mine—on the scaffold, or amid the fires of the persecutor—

every thought of self was merged in the sublime conflict they were waging, and the influence it was to have on the countless generations who were to come after them. Not pilgrims, but palmers,* they traversed the remotest corners of the earth, proclaiming those solemn truths which first their Master preached among the hills of Galilee and through the streets of Jerusalem. They passed through heathen tribes like the wind, none knowing "whence they came or whither they were going," yet everywhere, like the wind, sowing the seed that was to enrich the world, and one day wave with an abundant harvest. They were a devoted band, and though they fell fast, yet there was no pause in their warfare. Others followed on in the steps of the slain, and they pressed on from wo to wo, until it seemed as if the price of suffering had been paid, and then their career was one leading on from victory to victory. And these were they whom the Church commemorated, when at an early age it chanted in the Cathedral at Milan, the sublime anthem—"The noble army of the martyrs praise Thee."

* In ancient times this was the difference between a pilgrim and a palmer. A pilgrim had a home to which he returned when his vow was performed; a palmer had none. A pilgrim went to a certain place in particular; a palmer went to all. A pilgrim renounced his profession after a time; a palmer never did, until he had won the heavenly palm of victory over the world.—*Fosbroke on Pilgrim.* ch. viii.

V.

THE PAGAN MYTHOLOGY.

Among the solemn ruins of Rome is one which for nearly two thousand years, by its faultless proportions, has commanded the admiration of the world. The rude Goth and Vandal spared it—the scarcely less barbarous Roman of mediæval times held back his desecrating hand—and we now gaze upon it with perhaps a greater delight than those who saw it in the glory of its early day. It presents to the view a circular temple, lighted by a single opening above, through which every change of atmosphere, from the first flush of morn to the purple hue which fills the air of an Italian sky at evening, is successively reflected from the antique marble within. We see, indeed, this relic of the past only when it has been stripped of all that once shed a grace and beauty about it. The statues on which ancient art had exhausted its skill—the bronze which covered the roof—and the silver which lined its compartments within, have long since been the prey of the spoiler; yet time has not destroyed its matchless symmetry, while each passing age has shed around it a softer and mellower tint. This is the Pantheon—once the home of

Roman Paganism. Here, in the days of Augustus, were gathered the statues of the gods, in gold and silver, in bronze and precious marbles, and every faith might have found its representative and its tutelary deity.

The Pantheon is now a Christian temple. The niches which once were filled with the gods of the old mythology, are occupied by the busts of those whose genius has won for them an immortality even on earth. We recognise the sculptured forms of Metastasio, Poussin, Annabal Carracci, and Raphael—the divinest painter of his age—while below us are their tombs. We tread, indeed, on the same marble pavement over which once Roman Emperors walked, yet a new spirit has been breathed into the edifice, and it has received a nobler consecration than when of old the gods of Paganism were gathered within its walls. White-robed priests now minister there in the rites of Christian worship—incense floats around the lofty dome—and no sounds are heard but the voices of those who chant the solemn anthems of the Church. And thus this relic of the past, of which Byron speaks, as the

> "Shrine of all saints, and temple of all gods
> From Jove to Jesus"—

remains an enduring monument of the triumph of our faith. Its transformation shows the result of the CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND THE PAGAN MYTHOLOGY.

There was nothing proscriptive in the ancient Paganism. It waged no war of aggression with other forms of faith. Each

tribe and nation had its own deities, and while it worshipped them, it cared not to interfere with the creed of its neighbors. It added perhaps to the pride of the conquerors, to have the conviction that their gods were more powerful than those of the vanquished, and thus the contest was extended from the earth to the rulers of the invisible world; yet even in this case they did not question the right of those whom they regarded as weaker deities, to possess some place in the heavenly hierarchy. It was in this spirit that the exulting King of Assyria inquired, —"Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the King of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?"* Yet never do we find any attempt to impose their own faith upon the conquered, nor was it regarded as a matter of any moment which of the crowded hosts of Olympus they had chosen for their tutelary deities. These, too, were often looked upon as having only a local power, and when therefore men abandoned their own country, they often gave up also the gods they had worshipped there, and adopted in their place those of the nation among whom they dwelt. It was this feeling of a restricted and territorial dominion which dictated the advice the King of Assyria received from his servants, after his defeat by the Israelites—"Their gods were gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but

* 2 *Kings*, xviii. 33.

let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."* A persecution of the religion of a country had generally some ulterior object, and was directed against their faith because it was interwoven with some popular feeling of a political nature. Such was that terrible persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, when he desecrated their temple and slew their priests, because they would not conform to the rites of idolatry. He cared nothing for their faith, except that he recognised in it the foundation of a fierce fanaticism, which would lead them to throw off his yoke, and therefore he endeavored to crush it.† But the idea of a deliberate warfare against any form of faith, for the purpose of supplanting it by another system, with any reference to the spiritual interests of those who were to be affected by the change, was something utterly at variance with the loose and tolerant notions of the ancient Pagans.

And in this feeling the Romans fully shared. It was the policy of the Imperial City, as the head of a universal empire, to collect within her walls the representatives of every faith, and to give to all their gods a place within her Pantheon. "All were considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful. . . . . It was customary to tempt the protectors of besieged cities by the promise of more distinguished honors than they possessed in their native country. Rome gradually be-

* 1 *Kings*, xx. 23.

† 1 *Macc.* i. 42, and 2 *Macc.* vi.

came the common temple of her subjects, and the freedom of the city was bestowed on the gods of all mankind."* Thus she bound the foreign nations to their allegiance by the ties of superstition, and riveted their chains more firmly than could have been done by the force of her armies. Worship was offered on the banks of the Tiber in many a strange tongue. The Greek could bow before the statues of Jupiter and Apollo, and find his own faith transplanted from the groves of Academus and the classic fountains of Hymettus. The Egyptian, too, encountered here the solemn and typical worship of his burning clime, and as he wandered through the streets he met the priests of Isis, and saw upon the temples the familiar emblems of the ox Apis and the dog-headed Anubis. The dusky Indian from the distant Ganges, discovered there his own misshapen idols, and fellow-worshippers in the creed he had always professed. The philosophers of Greece taught their atheistic creed, and sneered at the popular superstition as something intended only for the mental childhood of the human race —while the strange rites of the Phrygian priests—the Isaic and Serapic worship from the Nile—and, at a later day, the Mithriac mysteries—had each their followers. The Jews, when peacefully obeying the laws, practised the rites of their faith unimpeded by persecution, and one of their race, Alituras, was even for a time the favorite of Nero, yet without forsaking his religion. And if we look at still more distant

* *Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, ch. i.

Oriental creeds, we might find in Rome the followers of the Babylonian Mylitta, and see the obsequious senate gather around Elagabalus, while he celebrated the Syrian worship of the sun. Thus, every form of faith was there, side by side, and to all was extended the same toleration.

On these terms Christianity too might have been introduced, and the sculptured image of Jesus of Nazareth have taken its place by the side of many a heathen deity, without any being found to object. But this could never be. The faith could form no alliance with error. It could not tolerate a divided worship. It claimed the whole field to itself. It demanded the entire dominion of the human mind and heart. It waged a war of extermination with every thing which professed not the same creed with itself. It was the first time in the annals of the world that any religion had gone forth to acquire a universal and permanent conquest over every other belief. The Apostles proclaimed, that when they built up the fabric of the new faith in its severe and solemn beauty, the structure must be founded on the wrecks of all existing religious systems. The very announcement, therefore, of the Advent of Christianity, arrayed against it every form of Paganism. It was at once encircled by countless enemies. It stood alone to wage a warfare against the faith of the earth. Every man's hand was raised to smite the arrogant intruder; and the only voice heard from an infuriated populace was the cry—"To the lions with the Christians." We feel, therefore, that St. Paul was giving a noble proof of his courage, when he wrote to the

converts in the Imperial City—"I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also."

In considering, then, the conflict of Christianity with Paganism, we would assume as its general representative, that beautiful mythology which, originating in the forgotten ages of elder times, had before the Advent of Christianity been refined into a poetical system, which even now, when exploded as a form of faith, exercises its influence over the imagination and the intellect. It is the Ionian mythology to which we usually refer, when we speak of the classical Paganism. To us it is identified with the remembrance of Greece, for there was its chosen home, and amidst her groves and temples it reached its highest glory. Her poets first gathered up the primitive traditions of those Eastern lands, and then, moulding them in their songs, brought forth those lofty poetical creations which come down to us in the verse of Homer and her tragic writers. It had its origin in their fertile imaginations; and what at first was a religious fable, sank into the hearts of other generations and became a worship of faith. The fanciful allegory was looked upon by the men of after ages as veritable history, and the wild legend which once appealed only to the imagination, was moulded up at last into a solemn creed.

And yet everywhere the elements of Pagan worship were the same. The gods of Egypt were those of Greece, under different names; and could we now decipher the mystic characters on their obelisks, and thus interpret their system, we should find that the sacred animals were to them only a kind

of living ritual, each one so consecrated being a mystical type.* This was only their form of expressing truths which they held in common with many other nations. The same attributes which they worshipped in Serapis as the regenerating principle of the universe, and lord of the regions beyond the grave, we can trace in the Æsculapius and Hades of their Hellenic neighbors; while in the symbolic three-headed animal which stood by the side of his colossal statue in the sanctuary at Alexandria, the Greeks saw the type of their own poetic Cerberus. The Baal and Ashtaroth from whom the Jews shrank in horror, found their counterparts among the groves of Athens; while the cumbrous and multiform idol, like that in the shrine of the Ephesian Diana, which by its innumerable heads, or arms, or breasts, represented wisdom, or power, or fertility, was obliged to be transformed to suit the polished taste of the Greeks. When introduced among them, it was refined into a being free from the deformities it exhibited in its Asian home, and only distinguished from human nature by a fuller development of the noblest physical qualities of man.† There the fierce war-god of the Northern tribes is invested with the more heroic traits of Mars; while in the Minerva who had become the tutelary deity of Athens, we can recognise the ancient Onca of the Phœnicians.‡ Thus there was no wide

* *Faber's Foreign Peoples and Churches*, p. 539.

† *Milman's Hist. of Christianity*, v. i. p. 9.

‡ In the "Septem contra Thebas" of Æschylus, the chorus invoke Minerva by this name.

gulf which separated the creeds of the Athenian and the Syrian—the Egyptian and the Persian. Their outward developments may have varied, but when their general principles are examined, all important differences vanish away. And in this way we may trace a family resemblance between all the religions of antiquity, countless as they seem to be. All possessed originally the same traditions, though as ages went by they necessarily received additions which gradually destroyed their early likeness to each other. Yet it was the same Paganism everywhere, changing only its form to suit the genius of each particular nation. In taking up, therefore, that popular mythology which has come down to us, we are bringing forward a representation of the Paganism of the world.

Let us look, then, at the hold which this faith had upon its votaries. It appealed to them by its beauty; and never, as we have shown in a former chapter, were a people formed so susceptible to all that was refined and graceful, as those who had adopted and moulded into an enduring system this imaginative creed. Their religion came from the dim traditions of the earliest ages; but these were shaped into form by their poets, who colored the superstitions they had inherited. These with them constituted the union between the visible and the unseen. Yet, in every land, the popular mythology was to receive its character, not only from the genius of the people, but even from the forms in which nature around was presented to their eyes, and those thousand associations which acted on their daily life. The inhabitants of the dark primeval forests

of the North could not portray to themselves a deity invested with grace and beauty. Amid the wild and gloomy scenes about them, the superstition to which they bowed assumed the same character, and the spiritual beings to whom they paid their homage were clothed with a terror which gave them all the attributes of demons. Far different, however, was the case with the refined and polished Grecks, whose home was in an enchanting clime—bright skies above them—bright waters gushing from each fountain and sparkling in the sunlight—and every scene around one of cheerfulness and beauty. There the genius of Homer had called forth from the shadows of Olympus those lifelike creations which other generations were to worship as gods—beings clothed in the fairest forms, and whose ministrations on earth were those of kindness to the children of this lower race.

And the peculiar character of their deities appealed most strongly to their hearts. They were each represented with the distinctness of a living man—their attributes portrayed—their traits delineated—until Apollo or Mercury stood out in bold relief to the view of an Athenian, and each was individualized with a distinctness which prevented his image from being in any way confused with that of others in the crowded court of Olympus. Their characters were not left to be uncertain and unknown—realized only by the exertion of their infinite power. And then, too, they seemed to possess the attributes of our nature, only carried to a higher point of excellence. They were half human, half divine—uniting

the lofty power of a god with the warm affections of a man—sharing in the loves and hates of those who worshipped them. There were, therefore, associations and sympathies which bound them to earth, and the Greek felt this, even when he looked upon the Father of gods as clothed with the ineffable splendor of an inhabitant of heaven, and shaking the universe with his nod. The supernatural world was not removed far away from him, nor were the feelings of those who directed its agencies incomprehensible even to the dwellers on this earth below.

And can we not perceive the influence exerted by thus bringing their deities near to themselves—investing them with human attributes—and connecting them with the affairs of this lower world? We see it in our own creed. We can bow in reverence before a God, shrouded in the darkness of His own incomprehensible nature. Yet there is something in this too sublime and shadowy to be grasped by our feeble minds—there is a want of that connection which can interest the heart, and awaken all those touching associations to which we in our weakness cling. But if we believe that He put on mortality and walked among human habitations, bearing our sorrows, like unto us in form, then a new tie has been created to bind us to Him. The Christ who tasted the bitterness of death and suffered on the cross—who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"—is the Being before whom our hearts bow, and at whose shrine we offer up our holiest affections. We feel that there is something

here within the reach of our comprehension—the imagination can dwell upon the solemn scenes of His pilgrimage—while we shrink in awe from the contemplation of that Dread Being, of whom prophets speak as "the High and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."* It was the want of this intimate union between Divinity and Humanity which age after age drove the Jews into idolatry, as they sought in sensible emblems for something on which the mind could rest; and it is the possession of this which has always invested Christianity with so much of tenderness and love, and adapted it to all the wants of our frail and erring nature. This dark and sinful world has been brightened by the Lord of Hosts, and the very earth on which we now tread been fragrant with His footsteps. The confiding heart, therefore, has pictured before it, Infinite and All-embracing Love assuming a visible Form.

And it was something of this feeling of the humanness of their faith, which imparted to the religion of Paganism—if we may be allowed the comparison—all the vitality that it possessed. In those poetical legends, which, as we have said, gave form and system to their mythology, the powers of Olympus are represented as descending to the earth and sharing in human passions and human labors. Remove from the Iliad the agency of the Homeric gods, and you destroy the poem. Many, too, of their deities had once been men, and partaken even of the sorrows of those with whom they lived; and

* *Isaiah*, lvii. 15.

was it to be supposed that their translation to a seat among the celestial powers would destroy their interest in the nations among whom had once been their home? While on earth they had been the dispensers of blessings to men, who looked back to the golden age of their sojourn here as the period from which they must date the origin of every benefit of social life. Thus the heroic son of Alcmœna had spent his days in travail and labor for the human race, and therefore it was that his temples rose in every land, and incense ascended for him from thousands of altars wherever the creed of Paganism was recognised. The Dorian Apollo, too, had shared our nature, when to expiate a sin he descended to this lower world, and while he passed years in servitude, showered benefits on his earthly master. And this debt of gratitude owing to an Immortal is what gives its interest to the Prometheus of Æschylus, when the suffering deity recounts the blessings he had conferred upon man, and refers to these as the cause of the enmity of Jupiter and the fearful doom to which he has been subjected. Therefore the sympathy of all created beings is excited for the vanquished Titan, and when amid fragrant odors and the rushing of approaching wings, the Daughters of the Ocean come to console him, it is for this reason, they tell him, that

> "The wide earth echoes wailingly,
> And from the holy Asian dwelling-place,
> Fall for a godhead's wrongs, the mortal's murmuring tears."

Thus it was that this faith not only appealed to the imagination of men by its beauty, but also to their hearts, by being

associated with the affairs of their daily life. It was indeed not only lofty and august, elevating that spirit of poetry to whose breath it owed its own influence, but also household and familiar. And although when we look back to it, we do so as if in a Platonic cave in which we are entranced in a dream, while shadowy forms move before our eyes, yet to the Greek it had a living reality. It was all that connected him with the world of spirits. It was the only ray of light which shot athwart the Dark Valley, and gilded the clouds which had gathered on the Mount beyond.

And we much mistake the feelings of the Greeks, and the manner in which their faith acted on their daily lives, if we confine our view of their religion to the light thrown on it by those fables which not only endowed the gods with the attributes of our nature, but also degraded them to all the weaknesses and vice of fallen humanity. These bore the same relation to the faith itself, as in our day the tales of sprite and fairy do to the solemn verities of Christian doctrine. There was a religion of imagination and another of faith; and while to the poets the gods were beings who held their shadowy thrones on Olympus, to the multitude their existence was a solemn article of their creed—something actual and palpable. While, therefore, they laughed in the theatre at the ludicrous pictures which Aristophanes drew of Hercules and Bacchus, they could pass from thence at once to the temples of these deities, and offer sacrifice there with reverence unimpaired and faith unweakened.

And we may add, too, that it was this characteristic of the religion of the Greeks—this connection between the divine and the human—which in art gave its highest inspiration to genius. They drew their subjects from the old ancestral faith—from the legends of a dim traditionary age—and these, being the offspring of Poetry, elevated and refined their conceptions. We never find them forming the grotesque images by which in the East men endeavored to shadow forth the attributes of their gods. If the Greeks attempted to delineate the typical and mystical, the conception was redeemed by the impress of beauty stamped upon it. The artist who would create with his chisel a representation of Apollo, took for his models the noblest human forms, and then endeavored to surpass them, and throw around his statue something more majestic and beautiful than he could find on earth. He struggled to ascend beyond the Visible and to reach the Ideal. He lost sight of the sensual and the earthly in the Imaginative and the Divine. Therefore it is that now, at the distance of two thousand years, crowds still gather in speechless admiration around the Apollo Belvidere in the Hall of the Vatican, and the testimony of every generation has been, that here

> "are express'd
> All that ideal beauty ever bless'd
> The mind with, in its most unearthly mood,
> When each conception was a heavenly guest—
> A ray of immortality—and stood
> Star-like around, until they gather'd to a god!"

But let us look at another consideration—the universality of

this faith—and we will see the difficulty of rooting out a system so entwined with every department of life. With the Jew, the adoption of the New Faith—if he had rightly understood his own—required no violent transition. For ages his nation had been preparing for this "fulness of time," and when it came, he passed at once from the dimness of a multitude of types, to a perception of the unclouded reality. In the new creed he was required to adopt, he recognised only the perfection of his own undeveloped system. He worshipped the same God as before, only he now approached Him through the mediation of His Son; and in Jesus of Nazareth he beheld "the brightness of His glory and the express Image of His person." But with the Pagan it was not so. In the wreck of his former creed, there was nothing remaining to which he could cling. The change to Christianity was one which was thorough and radical. It extended to every part of his being. It swept away his cherished views in every department of religion and morals, and in their place built up a new system utterly at variance with all in which he had formerly believed. When, therefore, he avowed the faith of the Nazarene, the future was to have no sympathies with the past. He had entered an entirely new world of thought and feeling. "Old things had passed away; all things had become new."

We cannot read the writers of that day without feeling that the whole life of the heathen was directed and regulated by the spirit of Polytheism. It threw its chains around him in a way in which no other faith has ever done. He could not es-

cape from its all-pervading influence. It met him, wherever he was, and whatever he was doing. Nothing was too lofty to be within its reach—nothing too insignificant to admit of its regulation. All the grave affairs of state were ushered in by its ceremonial. The Senate—whose meetings were always held in a temple or consecrated place—commenced its deliberations with sacrifice, and each senator, before he entered on business, dropped some wine or frankincense on the altar. The gods were appealed to as the arbiters of battle, and in the centre of the camp was always erected a consecrated shrine. In the same way it entered into all the circumstances of domestic life; and St. Augustine, in his "City of God," has devoted page after page to showing this intimate connection, and how some fabulous deity was ready to preside over each minute act the heathen could perform. When he travelled on the land he was under the protection of one divinity, and on the sea, of another. The public games, which constituted the amusements of the ancients, were often regarded as offerings in honor of particular deities, and were at all times thoroughly imbued with the spirit of their faith. Therefore it is that the Christians were entirely debarred from them, and Tertullian denounces them with such unsparing severity, consigning to the same condemnation the combats of the gladiators, and the lofty tragedies of Euripides.* When, too, the heathen entered his home, he passed at once into the protection of his household divinities,

* *De Spectaculis.*

and the ancestral gods of his family or tribe which presided over his domestic hearth. Around him, in the ornaments of his house—the paintings which adorned its walls, and the furniture of its rooms—were interwoven representations of the gods, and allusions to those poetic fictions, which with him were matters of faith. Even the commonest household utensils and implements were often cast into forms which had some relation to their mythology. Thus, it not only pervaded and animated the compositions of their genius, and was, as we have already seen, the source from which poetry, and eloquence, and art drew their inspiration, but its influence was felt in the most trifling events of every-day life.

We see, then, the contest which the early Christians had to maintain, when they came out from all these old associations. It was one which was waged everywhere—in the city and the country—not only in Imperial Rome, but even in the most retired village of the distant provinces. They were to look with feelings of abhorrence upon each temple and shrine—each sacred grove and hallowed fountain—for all had been polluted as the abode of demons and the scene of abominable idolatries. Each glorious representation of their ancient gods, on which the sculptor had lavished all his skill, was to be to them but an unmeaning mass of stone. They were to flee with trembling fear from their old familiar festivals, for these were founded on the legends of idolatry. The laurel branch they bore was sacred to the lover of Daphne, and the garland of flowers, though frequently worn as a symbol either

of joy or mourning, had been dedicated in its first origin to the service of superstition.* And so it was in all those scenes where kindred are accustomed to meet and recognise the bond of relationship. They could not listen to "the dirge-note or the song of festival." They could not be with the bride when, struggling with affected reluctance, she was borne over the threshold of her husband, or partake in any part of the hymeneal pomp. In dread of idolatry they shut their ears to the nuptial hymn—"O Hymen, Hymenæe Io!"—for to them it sounded like an invocation of evil spirits. And so it was when the mourning relatives bore the dead in sad procession to the funeral pile. There, too, every rite was one of heathenism—the blood of victims was offered in idolatry, and the lustral water which was sprinkled on the attendants, was to them "the baptism of devils." They could not be present at a social feast without seeing a libation made to the gods; and they shrank even from the blessing of love, since it was framed in the name of those whom they looked upon as demons. Their whole language, indeed, had to be remodelled, for the phrases of common life were filled with allusions to their popular religion, and the words of affection and worship were so entwined, that it seemed impossible to banish the one and retain the other. The good wishes they endeavored to express became chilled and unmeaning, when they dropped the customary allusions to the gods of their faith. The adoption of Christianity, therefore, alienated

* *Gibbon.*

them from all to which the heart most clings, and severed the dearest bonds of life. The ties were broken which united them to the tender reminiscences of youth, and to the love of those whose faith and hope, creeds and interests, were separated from their own by "a great gulf," which none could pass.

It was, however, away from the noise of the busy city, and amid the quiet retreats of Nature, that the spirit of Paganism was most felt, and there it longest lingered when elsewhere its influence was gone. The old Heathen ritual was bound up in the course of agriculture, and the population of the country, watching with trembling anxiety the frequent vicissitudes of climate, learned to look to their local deities for the success of seedtime and harvest, and the plenty which was to reward their labors. To the influence of these capricious deities they referred the drought and the mildew, which blighted their fields—the murrain which swept away their cattle—and the swarms of locusts, which, in an hour, destroyed the hopes of the husbandman. In every field and garden, therefore, were found their statues—their shrines were erected in every grove and by every fountain—and even when converted to Christianity, the peasant trembled at the consequences of his own apostacy.*

Infuse into this belief a spirit of poetry, and we have what gave its charm and its wide-spread influence to ancient heathenism. To its votaries, the golden age of fable had not yet

* *Milman's Hist. of Christianity*, v. ii. p. 171.

entirely faded into the dreariness of common day. When the poets sang of the melodies of invisible spirits haunting the air in the vale of Tempe, or amid the luxurious glades of Paphos, they were but announcing the existence of a faith which for them was everywhere. To their excited imaginations, Naïads were sporting in every fountain, and they heard the voices of the Dryads in the echoes of the woods. When the leaves trembled on the branches, as the winds swept by, to them they seemed shaken by the Invisible god; and with hesitating step they entered the silent grotto, or trod the aisles of the dark forest, because there, they felt, were especially the homes of those who ruled these sylvan scenes. "Ipsa silentia," beautifully says the elder Pliny, "ipsa silentia adoramus." And still more eagerly did they recognise everywhere the creative energy of their divinities. When the blossom delighted them with its fragrance, Aurora had nourished it with her tears, and Zephyr expanded it with her breath. The rich clustering grapes were the gift of Bacchus; and for the bending harvest and the golden fruits of autumn they were indebted to the benignity of Ceres and Pomona. The very lights of heaven were but the radiance of the gods. In the revolutions of the sun they saw the path of Phœbus, as, seated in his car of fire, and borne along by immortal steeds, he daily circled round the world, and poured light and joy over the universe. The sea, too, had its rulers. In its coral palaces, Thetis and her nymphs celebrated their mysterious revels; while, through the blue waters, the long-haired Triton

floated in his car of pearl, and guided some favored bark from the whirlpool or the rock.* Thus, over the whole face of the land, brooded the spirit of Paganism; and to the believers in this ancient creed it was not only a matter of poetic imagination, but of actual faith, that

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep."

Can we wonder, then, that the heathen shrank from Christianity, when it called him to give up those graceful superstitions which were never silent—which were so entwined with the actions of his life as to become a part of the life itself? To him, the sublime faith of the Nazarene was a melancholy one, because it swept away the countless deities whose altars filled the earth. "What? should all this beautiful world be made only human?—the mountain disenchanted of its Oread—the waters of their Nymph—that beautiful prodigality of faith, which made every thing divine, consecrating the meanest flowers, bearing celestial whispers in the faintest breeze—should he deny this, and make the earth mere dust and clay? No; all that was brightest in their hearts was that very credulity which peopled the universe with gods. . . . So abundant was belief with them, that in their own climes, at this hour, idolatry has never thoroughly been outrooted; it changes but its objects of worship; it appeals to innumerable saints, where once it

* *Alley's Vindiciæ Christianæ*, p. 18.

resorted to divinities; and it pours its crowds, in listening reverence, to oracles at the shrines of St. Januarius and St. Dominic, instead of to those of Isis or Apollo."*

The belief, too, of the ancients, in divination, constantly brought their faith before them. It seemed to have strongly impressed upon their minds a consciousness that the spiritual world was around them and nigh them, and therefore they were ever striving to realize it—to behold, in the incidents of this lower world, and even in the patient lives and instincts of the brute creation—some manifestation of what was passing in the Invisible, or what was yet to take place in the shadowy Future. There was among the nations of antiquity a widespread Pantheism, which made them bestow a kind of worship on the earth itself, and look upon her as a treasure-house of knowledge, and the vehicle of revelation to man. The exhalations which streamed up from her depths, as at Delphi, inspired those who breathed them, and to the awestruck spectators, their wild ravings seemed the oracles of the gods. The Greek heard not only the whisper of prophecy in the quivering of the Dodonæan oaks, and read its tokens in the sportive forms in which the wind strewed the fallen leaves, but, to his eye, in every thing there were signs and warnings. When the spirit of the earthquake was abroad, as the Titan, moving on his burning couch, sent his convulsive throes through the upper world—or the storm swept by—or the comet and the meteor

* *Last Days of Pompeii*, v. i. pp. 200, 201.

glared upon the heavens—he felt that they bore with them their mystic warning, "presaging wrath to nations." The clustering of bees—the direction in which birds winged their flight—and the motions of serpents—came to him with a message from the spiritual world. The victims at the altar were not merely offerings to the gods, but each was a volume in which the ministering priest read prophecies of the future. The interpretation of dreams, too, was a science, in the study of which the learned spent their lives; and each strange fancy which flitted through the brain of the unconscious sleeper, was treasured up in his waking hours, and deemed an augury of evil or of good. The world around was filled with omens. No event, indeed, was so trifling as to claim exemption from this mystic interpretation. An accident—a hasty word—an unexpected meeting—any thing which varied, in the slightest degree, the course of ordinary life—was registered, as if only the shadow of some reality soon to be developed. Thus it was that they were ever on the watch for tokens from the land of spirits.

We can see, then, how the ancient heathen lived in an atmosphere of religion. It was with him, not only in the temple and the solemn festival, but in the camp and in the market-place—in times of joy and sorrow—in the gay nuptial rite, and in the funeral solemnity. There came no time when he could put away from him the remembrance of his faith, but its solemn sanctions and its varied rites ever encircled him, and in his daily life he was forced to carry out that injunction of the an-

cient lawgiver to his people—"Thou shalt talk of these things when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."*

Nor, must we believe that in the age in which Christianity appeared, this faith had entirely lost its hold upon the minds of the people. Skepticism had, indeed, been spread abroad, and the lesson inculcated was, that the old mythology was only intended for the mental childhood of the human race. Yet, this was a teaching suited only to the loftier thinkers, and common minds could not be thus weaned from the popular religion. It was philosophy which made the first attack upon this ancient shrine in which so many generations had worshipped, or rather which first commenced undermining its foundations. Cicero, indeed, could say—"It is marvellous that one soothsayer can look another in the face without laughing"—and Plutarch declared, that when the ministering priest departed from the temple, he did so repeating the line of Menander—"I have sacrificed to gods in whom I have no concern." Polybius and Strabo, too, might think it necessary to apologize to their readers for quoting the sacred legends which they believed to be only fabulous tales, yet still the reverential feelings of the multitude for their national worship might have been unaffected. When the reasonings of the enlightened have proved an ancient creed to be but a collection of fables, it is long be-

* *Deut.* vi. 7.

fore the conviction of its emptiness will sink into the hearts of the common people. And so it was in this case. The ceremonies of their faith still went on—the temples were thronged —and whatever doctrines might have been taught in the narrow circle of the philosophical few, it would have taken ages for them to overthrow a popular superstition so entwined with the life, and so jealously guarded by the crowds whose interests depended on its perpetuity. Had its only antagonist been the coldness of skepticism, it would have retained its life and energy; nor did it at last yield, until expelled by the overmastering power of a new affection.

And even among those who boasted their exemption from the terrors of the gods, we can detect at times a gleam of superstition, which shows that still they were in bondage to the fears they ridiculed. If Pompey, and Cæsar, and Crassus, turned from the shrines of their household gods, they yet consulted the Chaldeans, while their miserable fates sadly belied the promises they received, that death should overtake them in their ripe old age, in glory in their homes.* Even the Epicurean Horace, when he hears thunder at noonday, yields to an evident dread of the supernatural powers, and leaves in his verse the traces of his fear.†

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* *Milman's Hist. of Christianity*, v. i. p. 23.

† "Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens,
Insanientis dum sapientiæ
Consultus erro, nunc retrorsum
Vela dare atque iterare cursus

But this skepticism, fashionable as it was among some in the latter days of the Roman republic, soon passed away. Lucian indeed wittily satirized Polytheism, but we find he had few to imitate him. An age of belief seems to have succeeded his times—a season of reaction in which even Epicureanism lost its advocates. The writers who in the third century pretended to treat of religion, abandoned the careless tone of contempt which prevailed in the days of Cicero. There came again a time of reverence, when they endeavored to reanimate the fading superstitions, and to infuse fresh life and energy into the ancient legends of their faith. This was the Pagan school of Alexandria, which strove to mould into a new shape the poetic fictions of ancient Greece, and to give them vitality by means of a mystic and dreamy enthusiasm. It answered its purpose, however, to connect the invisible world with the visible, and enabled the old mythology to retain its hold upon the mind.

There was, therefore, a soul in Paganism; and he but little comprehends its true spirit who looks upon it with scorn, as only an array of gross and unmeaning superstitions. Still less in this case does he understand the magnitude of that contest which Christianity was obliged to wage with it. False as the ancient mythology was, it supplied a want which man must

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Cogor relictos. Namque Diespiter
Igni corusco nubila dividens
Plerumque, per purum tonantes
Egit equos volucremque currum."—*Carm.* xxxiv.

ever feel, of something on which the spirit can rest as being higher than this world. Each fair temple proclaimed that there was in the faith a divinity to its worshippers—setting forth truths, veiled, indeed, yet still disclosing beneath these old forms of heathenism, the impress of their purer origin. We feel, therefore, that we can look beyond these outward developments, and that the shattered remains of ancient beauty which still give a melancholy interest to the land of Pericles, speak to us of a departed faith which once had a meaning and a moral power to guide the consciences of thousands.

"Triumphant o'er this pompous show
Of art, this palpable array of sense,
On every side encountered; in despite
Of the gross fictions, chanted in the streets
By wandering rhapsodists; and in contempt
Of doubt and bold denials hourly urged
Amid the wrangling schools—a SPIRIT hung,
Beautiful region! o'er thy towns and farms,
Statues and temples and memorial tombs;
And emanations were perceived; and acts
Of immortality in nature's course,
Exemplified by mysteries that were felt
As bonds, on grave philosopher imposed
And armed warrior; and in every grove
A gay or pensive tenderness prevailed,
When piety more awful had relaxed!"*

And this faith—perhaps by the very dimness with which it portrayed another world—incited to cheerfulness and pleasure

* *Wordsworth's Excursion*, book iv.

in the present life. There was no bright picture of the reward hereafter, and therefore, hemmed in by darkening shadows which the eye could not penetrate, they clung to this existence, and endeavored to crowd into its narrow limits all the enjoyments which the brief day of life could furnish. They shrank from the gloomy Hades, and used their fleeting hours as if they expected nothing beyond. We see this trait particularly in the Greeks, who hesitated not to avow their love of life, and their deep regret when they felt that the Angel of Death was at hand and the shadow of his wings rested on them. The same men who broke the array of the Mede at Marathon, and at Platæa "jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field" against the Persian force—men who would have gladly sacrificed every thing for home or country—yet thought it no shame to weep when they were called to part from this existence which they had invested with all that was beautiful. That stoicism which learned to count life as nothing and to despise death, was the product of later days of philosophy and doubt. The heroes of Homer, while they fought terribly, did not think it unworthy of their manhood to weep bitterly, and to deplore the coming of that inexorable foe whose power no arm of flesh could resist. Life to them was precious, as a season of enjoyment, and they made the most of it. They suffered not the thought of the future to sadden, but it seemed rather to exhilarate and incite to pleasure.

We see, therefore, that their faith spread over life a glad and

joyous aspect. It had no features of austerity—it taught no self-denial—it held up no Cross to be borne—but was comprehended in one round of festivals and cheerful holydays. In the Calendar of the Greeks, indeed, every thing was elevating, and the worship of their gods was entwined with the loftiest associations. Sometimes they celebrated the achievements of those who, after "doing exploits" on earth, had departed to join the starry hierarchy of Olympus; and sometimes, at the shrines of their presiding deities, they commemorated the changes of the seasons, tracing them on from the first bursting flowers of Spring to the gathering of the vintage in the Autumn, when

> ————"the showering grapes
> In Bacchanal profusion reel to earth
> Purple and gushing."

They circled round the altar with wild and exulting songs, which stirred their hearts like a trumpet's sound, and every strain was heard, from the rude hymn of the peasant to the solemn and lofty chorus which proclaimed the deepest mysteries of their faith. There might be seen the stately procession which celebrated the triumphs of the Dorian Apollo, and where every thing was invested with a splendor worthy of his majesty—or ceremonies in which they had preserved the remembrance of the primal dynasty of gods and the rites of early creeds—and then perhaps came the Dionysiac revels, and scenes from their own legendary mythology—the story of Endymion as he slept upon the mountains, or the wild adventures of Eros and Psyche, "the youngest born of the Olympians,"

until they ended in that union which shadowed forth the attainment of the destiny for which humanity is sighing. Even the stern Spartans at such times relaxed their austerity, and the antique hymns which had come down to them were gradually softened into harmony and beauty. Graceful and stately indeed was the measure in which the Laconian maidens moved in the Carytic dance, while one crowned with a wreath of sedge stood motionless in the centre, bearing aloft a basket full of flowers, and her young companions circled around her as if they were twining a garland; and majestic was the sword-dance by which the brave soldiery roused their courage, as they chanted the praises of the noble dead, and amid the clashing of steel vowed to follow in their footsteps. And there were also festivals of a more homely and jovial character, when they celebrated the praises of Bacchus as the "Unbinder of galling cares," and license was given to sport and jest, and even wild buffoonery. Then they threw aside all remembrance of the troubles of life, and arrayed in the skin and horns of "the vine-browsing goat," they acted over the legends they had inherited of the sports of the faun and satyr. Such were the scenes in that land of sacrifice and song, and everywhere there seemed a joyous spirit in their faith, whether on the banks of the classical Cephissus, or in the distant Macedon and Bœotia, which the Greeks of Attica scarcely acknowledged as a part of the Hellenic nation.

It is curious, too, to notice the different hold which this faith had upon different countries, in proportion to their ad-

vance in civilization. We see traces of this in the account given of St. Paul's preaching, and the philosophical inquirer can thus easily account for the varied manner of its reception. Their degree of faith seemed to be in proportion to their distance from the centre of the world's literature and refinement. For instance, when the Apostle came to Lystra—an inland and comparatively barbarous district, into which the Greek language had scarcely penetrated—we find that the miracle wrought in the cure of a cripple awakened the reverend wonder of the multitude, and they at once concluded that Jupiter and Mercury "had come down to them in the likeness of men." Preparations were therefore made to sacrifice to these celestial visitants, and they were with difficulty withheld by the earnest declaration of the Apostle, that they were only "men of like passions with themselves."* Here, then, belief must have been unimpaired in the fabulous appearance of their deities, and the old poetic faith have existed in all its original force. But at Athens there could have been no such illusion, and we doubt whether miracles themselves would not have been set down as the skilful deceits of some of the usual traders in human credulity. The ancient creed still had its influence over the mind, but it was held in a philosophical spirit; and the cultivated Grecian, priding himself on his intellectual advancement, would have ridiculed the idea of an actual appearance of the gods of his mythology. He

* *Acts* xiv. 15.

believed, indeed, in the creed of his fathers, for it embodied all his ideas of beauty; but the discussions in which he delighted, and the inquiring tone he had adopted, developed a spirit widely different from the simple-hearted faith of less polished tribes.

But all traces of this religion, in whatever way held, were to be swept away. The followers of the new faith were to divorce themselves from all reverence for the sanctity of old opinions—they were to uproot from their hearts all love for hereditary rites. Wrestling against the influence of every thing they had formerly cherished, they were not to be stopped in their path by "the solemn plausibilities of custom." Christianity proclaimed against every development of Paganism a rigid and uncompromising hostility. And we learn from the Epistle to the Corinthians, the extent to which this was carried. It entered into every arrangement of domestic life, and the more scrupulous even entertained doubts whether meat purchased at public sale in the market, but which had formed part of a sacrifice, might not be dangerously polluting to the Christian who partook of it. This sensitiveness induced them to appeal to the judgment of the Apostle, and in the Epistle he gives his decision on this point.*

Again—the faith which Christianity came to overthrow was interwoven with all that was lofty in the literature of the ancients. Uproot the former, and the latter became at once

* 1 *Cor.* chap. viii.

stripped of its meaning. Take, for instance, their tragedies, all founded on their mythology, and we can see that to their eyes they must have been invested with a degree of sanctity. Unlike the Drama of modern times, which resorts to the basest passions of our nature, the spirit of their religion pervaded them. "The characters were demigods or heroes; the subjects were often the destinies of those lines of the mighty which had their beginning among the eldest deities. So far, in the development of their plots, were the poets from appealing to mere sensibility, that they scarcely deigned to awaken an anxious throb, or draw forth a human tear. In their works, we see the catastrophe from the beginning, and feel its influence at every step, as we advance majestically along the solemn avenue which it closes. There is little struggle; the doom of the heroes is fixed on high, and they pass, in sublime composure, to fulfil their destiny. Their sorrows are awful—their deaths religious sacrifices to the powers of Heaven. The glory that plays about their heads is the prognostic of their fate. A consecration is shed over their brief and sad career, which takes away all the ordinary feelings of suffering. Their afflictions are sacred, their passions inspired by the gods, their fates prophesied in elder time, their deaths almost festal. All things are tinged with sanctity in the Greek tragedies. Bodily pain is made sublime—destitution and wretchedness are rendered sacred. All the human figures are seen, sublime in attitude, and exquisite in finishing; while, in the dim background, appear the shapes of eldest gods, and the solemn abstractions

of life, fearfully embodied—'Death the skeleton and Time the shadow.' Surely there was something more in all this, than a vivid picture of the sad realities of our human existence."* Nowhere, indeed, do we learn so much of the true spirit of the ancient faith as in these productions of Grecian genius. In the stern and lofty scenes of Prometheus, with its dark allegories and its lessons of a terrible fatality—as we have already remarked—we trace the outline of some older and almost forgotten creed; and in the choral odes of Euripides we read the doctrines of a faith—the providence of the Supreme Ruler, the immortality of the soul, and the future state of retribution—which was believed by those who then thronged the temples of Athens.

We can readily conceive, therefore, how difficult it must have been for them to sever their minds and affections from these old associations. In all ages this literature has retained its hold even upon those who believed not in the faith on which it was founded, and to whom it offered no higher claim than that of mere poetic beauty. When Julian the Apostate endeavored to degrade the intellect of the Christian teachers, he closed against them these storehouses of the past, and prohibited all instruction in Hellenic learning. And it was in vain that they endeavored to supply the want. A Christian Pindar and a Christian Homer were written, with the sentiments and views of the new faith interwoven with the words of the original

* *Retros. Review*, v. i. p. 12.

poets; but the expedient was fruitless. There was too sad a contrast between the life and spirit of Homer and the weariness of his labored copy. Christian thoughts and images would not blend with the language of classic authors, and these parodies retained their place no longer than the student was debarred from the perusal of their great models. At the death of Julian, they were thrown aside even in the Christian schools; and in the words of the historian of that day—"The works of these men, [the two Apollinares,] are now of no greater importance than if they had never been written."*

How impressive, then, must they have been to those who were from childhood devout believers in the old mythology! For if, in these later days, our poets are obliged to resort to supernatural influences to give a charm to their verse, summoning the fairy from the forest—the gnome from the mine—and the fiend from his abode of darkness—though no teaching of our religion warrants the use of such agency—we can imagine how much higher must have been the inspiration of the ancient legends which, with those who used them, were matters of absolute faith. It gave a solemn interest to their theme, and invested it with a reverence as something half divine. It was this which endowed Homer with such power over the minds of his ancient hearers. There was something higher than the mere excitement of his stirring descriptions, for he had embodied in his verse those stories from their mythology which

* *Socrates' Eccles. Hist.* l. iii. ch. xvi.

to them were more than fables. The ground on which they trod was sacred.

And so it was at Rome, when the conquerors of the world had inherited the faith of the Greeks, and in another tongue offered that worship whose true home was on the heights of Phyle, and among the olive-groves of the Ilyssus. On this her historians based their narratives; and when Livy collected the ancient heroic traditions which had come down with the ballads of the early Romans, and bequeathed them as veritable chronicles to later ages, we can trace everywhere the poetry of their mythology. On this, too, Virgil founded his poem, and it gave a new interest to the distant Alban Mount, that he represented the Queen of Heaven as watching from thence the changing fortunes of the fight, when the Latin and Trojan armies were contending on the plain below. Her orators, too, invoked the aid of the gods when called to address their countrymen, and the patriot appealed to them in confirmation of the truth of all he uttered. Even Cicero, whatever philosophical doubts he might elsewhere express, when pleading for Milo, turned to the magnificent temple of Jupiter Latiaris, in full view from the Forum where he stood, and burst forth into the eloquent apostrophe: "Tuque, ex tuo edito monte, Latiaris Sancte Jupiter, cujus illa lacus nemora fines que," &c. Thus, the Hellenic mythology became interwoven with all their intellectual life, and there was no department of learning in which its influence could not be discerned. And yet, Christianity aimed a blow at all this lofty literature. By prostrating

the faith on which it was built up, it stripped the labors of the poet of all their sanctity, and instead of a religious lesson, reduced them to fictions of the imagination.

Again—another difficulty in the way of the new faith was, that at Rome Paganism was supported by the whole power of the state. "It was a state religion, guarded and fought for by the armed strength of the most powerful government of the greatest of all empires. Thousands and tens of thousands owed their daily bread to their connection with that religion. Millions on millions had identified it with all their conceptions of life, of enjoyment, and of that obscure hope in which the heathen saw a life to come. The noble families of Rome owed to it a large portion of their rank and influence. . . . . There is indeed no instance on record of a religion so strongly imbedded in the passions, prospects, and general influence of a government and nobility. The connection between the Church and State was at once of the most extensive and the most intimate nature. . . . . The Emperor himself was the High Priest. . . . . The noble might be a priest, without relinquishing the sternest prizes of ambition. He might on one day lead the procession to the temple of Jove as a pontiff, and on the next as a consul and conqueror. Emolument, influence, the sanctity attached to the official rank, all bound the nobles to the Pagan establishment. There was no worldly penalty to repel the union. The ensigns of political power were not to be laid down by the hand that took up the Augural staff: the armor might be worn under the sacrificial robe. The bloodshed of civil war—

the ambition which usurped the state—even the deepest excesses of the luxury of Rome, were not incompatible with the exercise of the priesthood, by the long succession of fierce rivals to the throne. The rank of the Chief Pontiff was for life, and his power was worthy of all but Imperial envy. He commanded the whole religious ministry. So, too, the apparent trifling of the Augurs included the material of great public power. The Augur hostile to the newly-elected Consul could drive him from the ivory chair, by the simple declaration that the heavens were unpropitious.* This formidable influence rendered a seat in the College of Augurs of the greatest importance to all who contemplated the high offices of the state. . . . . Thus the priesthood of ancient Rome was cemented into the state. The nobility, instead of looking with envy at its wealth—with contempt at its pacific pursuits—or with hostility at its power—felt an interest in the security of the great Hierarchy, in whose honors they were to possess the principal share, and in whose strength was to consist so large a portion of their own. It was a gigantic growth of policy and power, rooted in the very centre of the Roman constitution—shooting its fibres through every corner of the Empire—and towering to a height and expansion beneath which all other idolatries were at once sheltered and thrown into eclipse."†

From this mighty system, which had thus gathered into

* *Plutarch in Marcello.*

† Altered from *Croly on the Apocalypse*, pp. 210, 213, 216.

itself every hope and interest, Christianity alone stood apart as something distinct and separate. It had no sympathy with this proud monument of Roman greatness. The new converts seemed to merge their interest in whatever was national, in that bond of brotherhood which bound them to their fellow-believers over the whole earth. They even held lightly the ties which united to family and country, and their gloomy and austere aspect rendered them everywhere different from the rest of mankind. Against that Paganism which was the life of the Empire, they avowed the most relentless hostility. And these separate societies were springing up in all parts of its widely-extended dominion—obeying their own rulers, governed by their own code of laws—and renouncing all obedience to Rome, where the Imperial edicts conflicted with the regulations of that new system which they had adopted. And this fraternity was banded together by the closest interests, exhibiting an unbroken front, which alone constituted strength. It was a mighty army, which "covered the face of the whole earth." It spread through every rank of society, winning its proselytes among both high and low. It included all, from the inmate of Cæsar's palace to the captive in the dungeon. Persecution could not turn them from their belief, but they were gifted with principles whose steadfastness faltered not in view of the fire and the stake. Is it wonderful, therefore, that the adherents of the old faith looked upon this wide-spread fellowship with suspicion and distrust?

There had, indeed, always been a feeling in the Roman mind

which connected the permanency of his country's glory with the preservation of its religion. He looked upon this as a pledge of safety to the Empire, and old tradition had impressed the lesson, that when faith decayed the day of Roman dominion would pass away forever. For ages the god Terminus, whose altar never receded, might be regarded as the tutelary deity of Rome—her ambition deified and brought visibly before the people. The religious Calendar, too—a half-year of which has been preserved in the Fasti of Ovid—remains a record of the manner in which the services of religion were made to advance political ends. It is not intended to bring before the minds of the worshippers those solemn events which concern their spiritual interests, for but a single ceremonial only is devoted to the doctrine of another life, but it seems intended to minister to Roman pride—mingling with the ancient legends of Greece, a commemoration of the old heroic deeds in their early day, when the state was struggling for existence, or else some act of the reigning family, which was thus embalmed for posterity. And around them in the city were countless temples, many of which were votive offerings for national deliverances. Above the Capitol itself towered in majesty fifty shrines or temples, the very names of which—Janus, Romulus, Cæsar, and Victory—reminded the dweller there of something in the annals of his land, while to many of them ages of glory had attached a sanctity which associated them with all he reverenced in the majesty of Rome. Connected, therefore, as their faith was with all in which they felt

a pride, from the stern days of the republic down to the splendors of the Imperial sway, they contended for it on account of their veneration—

> "For the ashes of their fathers
> And the temples of their gods."

And we trace this feeling through all the ages of the conflict between our faith and Paganism, until the final triumph of Christianity over the pride and power of its foe. The Romans ever clung to the remembrance of older and more glorious times; and when, therefore, the horizon darkened and clouds began to lower, they naturally turned to the neglect of their ancient faith as the cause of these impending evils. The gods, through whose protection they had grown to power, had been estranged, and the forsaken city was now to reap the reward of its ingratitude. They beheld around them deserted temples, and altars on which the fire of sacrifice was extinguished, and to this they ascribed the crisis of terror and calamity which had overtaken them. As, therefore, the Christian faith advanced, and each year beheld greater multitudes estranged from their ancient worship, and avowing their contempt for the rites of their fathers, it is no wonder that the feeling also gathered strength that the progress of the new religion and the downfall of Roman glory were linked together. They, of course, could not comprehend the nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom, and listened with a vague fear to prophecies half understood, which set forth the future triumph of His cause. They heard of the establishment of His throne on earth, and

they expected it to be visibly erected, while the glory of the Empire should fade away before it. And perhaps the very tone adopted by the Christian writers increased this apprehension. It was with unsparing severity that they denounced the popular idolatry, and uttered their threats against that gigantic power which was then overshadowing the earth. Rome was to them the prophetical Babylon of the Apocalypse, and when the heathen tyrannized, they muttered predictions of the plagues which were to overtake her, and the fearful ruin which was at hand. They felt, therefore, no sympathy for her misfortunes, and from the lips of the more fanatical or the unguarded, expressions of triumph may have burst, as they recognised in these tribulations the hand of the Son of Man taking vengeance on their persecutors.

When, therefore, the last days of the Imperial City drew nigh, and her enemies gathered more closely around her, superstition awoke, and crowds, in the agony of their fear, rushed once more to the long-deserted shrines. As the aspect of the times grew more dark, they looked around for some victims to propitiate the offended gods, and who could they select but those apostates from their worship, whose blood must now repair the evil and avert the indignation of the deities they had estranged? These were the days of martyrdom, when the Christian host was called to furnish its sacrifices to the flames, as often as the multitude in frantic terror wished to show their devotion to their national gods. The superstitious, who really believed in the deities whose shrines were around them—the

patriotic, who looked to the past with passionate regret, and grasped at any thing which they vainly supposed would restore the ancient glory of the Empire—and the countless thousands, whose taste for blood, maddened in the amphitheatre, made them eagerly welcome any victims—all were ready to unite in the cry—"To the wild beasts with the despisers of the gods!"

And so it continued until in the fifth century the long agony was closed by the capture of Rome by the Goths. In this day we can scarcely conceive of the shock which this event gave to the whole civilized world. It was striking a blow at its very heart, and all who bore the Roman name, even in the most distant provinces, started up wildly, as if some dream of security had been rudely broken. It was a disastrous consummation to which they appear never to have looked forward. When barbarians broke through the frontier, and province after province fell before them, they still seemed never to imagine that the torrent could overwhelm the Imperial City. Rome to them was invested with a shadowy power, as the inheritance of long ages of glory—a mysterious existence with which they had identified the life of the Empire. But now these illusions were suddenly dispelled, and she had ceased to be the Mistress of the world. And thus was deepened and confirmed the feeling which ascribed this destruction to the loss of the ancient faith under which they had once expanded into greatness, and everywhere among the scattered exiles murmurs of indignation were heard against the religion which had wrought this alienation of their gods.

Then it was that St. Augustine came forward, and in his great work, "The City of God," replied to these impeachments, and silenced the arguments against the new faith. With a masterly hand he sketched the influence of ancient heathenism, and arraying before his readers its vices and superstition, uttered his loud gratulation that its day was over, and with the fall of the mystic Babylon the reign of idolatry had passed away forever. And then, with the glowing imagination which characterized the African mind, he portrayed the true "City of God" which was to rise upon its ruins, and become the reality of what that had only been the type and shadow. It was to be a new dynasty, without limit and without end—the realization of the prophet's dream—the Empire of Empires. Thus before his eyes floated the glorious vision which after ages were to see embodied in the Church of Christ, as it went on to fulfil its lofty destiny, spreading peace and purity through this world, and becoming in the next, the City of the Children of the Resurrection. This was his solemn requiem over the dying throes of Paganism.

We have thus seen the difficulties there were in preaching the Gospel at Rome—how stupendous the system to be overthrown, sustained, as it was, by old hereditary reverence—entwined with every action of daily life—and guarded by a widespread hierarchy, and the power of the most powerful Empire which ever existed. Yet this mighty fabric was smitten to the dust. The antagonist, who once threatened to crush the rising faith, became a captive, bound to the chariot-wheels of its

triumphant conqueror. Rome, it is true, was purple with the blood of martyrs, and three hundred years of suffering were to be endured; yet the price was paid and the end attained. It was only step by step that the victory was won, and it is a singular fact, that Paganism is the only religion whose gradual decay has been chronicled, so that we are now able to trace its progress, from the palmy days of its power, to its last expiring struggle. Other systems have passed away, and, from the advance of civilization or the changes which were going on in the world, lost their influence over their votaries. We know that they once existed, but the human mind began at last to tire of their superstitions, or they were only adapted to the days of its childhood, and it therefore outgrew them. Thus they faded from the earth, and looking back to the dim ages of the past, we see that they have gone. But this is all we know. We are unacquainted with the interests and passions which struggled in their favor, or how they were repressed. We are ignorant of the successive stages of their progress, as they waned into extinction, or at what precise time their dissolution took place. History has condescended to assist at the funeral of Paganism alone.*

It was at Rome that this battle was chiefly fought, because there it was in eye of the whole world—an arena, as it were, surrounded by countless millions. There the Pagan interest

* *Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme en Occident. Par A. Beugnot*, t. i. p. 2.

rallied its strength, and offered the only long-protracted resistance. In the East, it was often a war of intellect, in which sophists wrangled for systems, which really had but little hold upon their affections; and at Athens, was a philosophy which had already enfeebled their attachment to the ancient faith. In Rome alone was the seat of its power, and there its strength was concentrated, and a jealous power watched around its departing energies till the struggle was closed in its extinction. The Church, in the Imperial City, was founded long before St. Paul wrote his Epistle, for it is addressed to those who are already established in the faith, and the visit he proposed was merely to take them on his way to Spain.* It had grown up unmarked, under teachers whose names are now lost to us. In the days of Nero, the Roman Christians had already outgrown all feelings of contempt, and become formidable in the eyes of the ruling power, or they would not have awakened so fully the indignation of the people, or been selected as the victims of persecution. In a time of general distress, when the flames had desolated the city, and popular fury sought some object on which to expend itself, no small and obscure sect would have been a sufficient or acceptable offering. And thus, gathering strength in the home of Paganism, the leaven gradually spread through the whole Empire; and while men woke and slept, and ambition ran its career, and none thought of the mighty influence which was growing up among them,

* *Rom.* xv. 24.

the new faith was laying broadly its foundations, and undermining the lofty temple of heathenism.

For the first century, the outward face of society seemed unchanged. The temples and shrines, undiminished in number, were still open to their worshippers, and the services went on as usual. It was long even before the decreasing attendance at the games and festivals could be noticed; or the heathen priests began to murmur at the waning devotion of the age, and at the scantier offerings which rewarded their ministry. It was far beneath the surface that the change was going on—in silence and secrecy the Christian faith was maturing its strength, before it came forth publicly to claim the dominion of the earth. Its proselytes dwelt apart by themselves—"a peculiar people"—and it was only by their rigid seclusion, and their sullen absence from the popular amusements, that their neighbors knew they had become believers in the new and unsocial creed. They alone abstained from the games and the amphitheatre, partly on account of the sanguinary character or licentious tendency of some of the exhibitions, and partly because they were all founded on some fables of the old mythology—were often performed in honor of particular deities—and had the temples themselves been closed, would have preserved alive, in the minds of the people, a remembrance of their ancient faith. But the Christians knew that the hour of their triumph was at hand, and they were willing to bide their time. They were confident that each year would find the courts of the heathen temples trodden by fewer worshippers,

till silence reigned where once thronging multitudes were seen—the daily sacrifice cease—and the air be no longer polluted by the smoke of victims, where formerly hecatombs were offered. And so it proved: and before the last of those who had seen their Lord in the flesh had sunk to his rest, throngs passed the deserted porticoes of the temple on their way to the secret worship of the Christians.

It was in the reign of Trajan, that Christianity in the provinces seems first to have expanded from its safe obscurity to a prominence—proof, indeed, of its growth, yet dangerous to its followers. The former persecutions had been confined to the Imperial City, or else were mere local outbreaks of popular fury. But now, at length, a cry of distress is heard—complaints are made of diminished sacrifices and deserted temples—and the strength of the civil power is invoked to sustain the failing energies of Paganism. We see this in the memorable correspondence between Pliny and the Emperor. Yet still no general edict condemned the Christians to punishment. And so it was through the reign of Hadrian, who seems to have tampered with all religions, and cared for none. At one time avowing the principles of a stern philosophy, and then, in his luxurious villa, whose massive ruins near the Alban hills, even now excite the wonder of the traveller, giving way to all the pleasures of an Epicurean—at Rome, the upholder of the national faith—in the East, an inquirer into the secrets of magic, and an initiated votary of the Eleusinian mysteries—and even receiving, without mark of disapprobation, the works

of the Christian Apologists—his reign was characterized by a general toleration, which gave a breathing time to the rising faith, and enabled it to present its arguments where formerly its voice was never heard. And the effect of this was seen under the mild and parental reign of his successor, Antoninus Pius, in the loftier tone assumed by the Apologists of Christianity, and the boldness with which they preferred their claim to supremacy over the human mind, in opposition to the old and still dominant faith.

But this truce could not last. Christianity was rapidly growing into a rival power, and assuming a stand which naturally arrayed against it the jealousy and hatred of Paganism. It was becoming a foe not to be despised, and the heathen power seems at last to have awakened to a consciousness that the struggle on which it was entering was one for life or death—that the faith on which it had always looked down must now be crushed, or it would uproot their ancient and time-honored system. In the reign, therefore, of Marcus Aurelius, the Philosopher, we witness the first general persecution of our religion. Those under Nero and Domitian, as we before remarked, did not extend beyond the City of Rome, and that under Trajan was confined to a particular province. But now edicts were to go forth, through the whole wide-spread Empire, to vindicate the insulted majesty of the ancient faith, and to authorize everywhere the cry which the multitude were so ready to raise, "Away with the godless!" Perhaps, we should have looked for a different result from the liberal

studies and philosophical mind of the Emperor. We might rather have expected that he would have regarded with contemptuous indifference, these aberrations from the prevailing belief. But there were other causes at work to influence his conduct. The very position which Christianity had assumed may have produced alarm. Its gathering thousands, to be found everywhere, in the city and the camp—the increasing opulence and power of its members—and the bold and lofty tone in which they arraigned the popular idolatry—may have startled even the occupant of the throne with the idea, that a dangerous enemy was rising up. Its voice could not but reach even to Cæsar's palace, for it was rapidly creating a literature of its own ; and while, in the West, Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, attacked the errors which were prevalent among the Orientals, on the shores of Africa the fiery Tertullian hurled his defiance, not unmingled with scorn, at their ancient Pagan foes. Perhaps, too, the pride of authorship may have had some influence, for the Emperor himself had advocated before the world the doctrines of the Porch, and, instead of the respectful deference for which he looked, found his arguments were treated with contempt by men, who, unable to appreciate the elegance of the Greek in which they were written, denounced the entire system as "the doctrines of devils." But, more than all, was the influence of those troubles, to which we have before alluded, as gathering around the falling Empire. There were "wars and rumors of wars, famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places; upon the earth distress of nations, with per-

plexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which were coming on the earth." The Emperor himself was obliged to leave his Lanuvian villa and the quiet studies of philosophy, and in the field of battle, on the distant Danube, contend for the honor of his tottering throne, with the rude and barbarous foe which poured like a torrent from the North. It is not strange, then, when popular fury loudly demanded the punishment of the Christians, and the priesthood promised, with returning reverence for the forsaken gods, there should also be a return of the golden days, that the philosophy of the Emperor gave way, and he yielded to that superstition from which even the most skeptical can never free themselves.

Then came the edict which surrendered up the Christians tc the violence of their enemies, and that persecution arose which has given to the annals of the Church its brightest examples of lofty heroism and unfaltering faith. Then died at Rome, Justin, the eloquent apologist of Christianity—at Smyrna, the aged Polycarp, whose martyrdom furnishes one of the most striking narratives in Christian history—and in the West, "the martyrs of Vienne," when the rage of the adversaries, foiled by a courage stronger than death, vented itself on the mangled remains of their victims, which were flung into the Rhone, in mockery of their hopes of a future resurrection.

But the palmy days of Rome had now passed away, and during the disastrous period between the death of the last Antonine and the accession of Diocletian, the clouds which had

overspread the Empire gathered more darkly around. While without, the barbarians were pressing on the provinces, and each year narrowing the circle which separated them from the Imperial City—within, the throne was seized by a rapid succession of rivals, often foreigners from Africa and Thrace, and the people were the unresisting victims of their imbecility and vice. The short reign of Alexander Severus could not atone for the miseries inflicted by the brutal Commodus, the effeminate Elagabalus, or the savage Maximin. Yet, during all this time the faith steadily advanced; and it is probable, indeed, that the sufferings which on every side pressed upon the people, accelerated its progress. Men looked around for something to compensate them for the inevitable troubles of life, and with nothing to hope for in this world, they eagerly grasped at those joys of the next which the faith held out to them. The insult, too, which Elagabalus offered to the ancient religion, must have still further broken down all reverence in the minds of men, and aided to undermine the already tottering edifice of Paganism. A Syrian by birth, and at one time a priest of the Sun, he introduced into Rome those ancient rites of Baalpeor which once excited the horror of the Jews. The nuptials of this deity with Astarte, the Queen of Heaven, were celebrated with bridal festivity, and the trembling senators were forced to follow in the Emperor's train, while he danced with frantic gestures before the car of the god.* Every lingering

* *Gibbon*, chap. vi.

feeling of Roman decency was outraged by the foreign licentious rites thus forced upon them, while it made the purer morals of Christianity stand forth with a contrast which must have awakened the attention of many who before had been indifferent. The simple faith of the Nazarenes must have furnished a welcome refuge to those who were revolted by the degrading sensuality of the East.*

The last public conflict between Christianity and Paganism was now to take place—the last at least which deserves the name—when for a series of years the whole strength of the civil power was vigorously exerted to suppress the faith, and to quench it in the blood of its martyrs. But the growth of three hundred years had gifted it with a might which no human power could crush. It was prepared, therefore, to meet once more the ancient Polytheism, even though it had lately leagued itself with the party of the Platonic Philosophy, and to engage in a contest which was to be final in its issue. Thus stood the contending parties when the fatal crisis came. After long hesitation Diocletian issued his edict, commanding all churches of the Christians to be levelled with the ground,

* We learn from a passage in Eusebius, the strength of the Church in the city of Rome at this time. He speaks of one bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acoluthi, (clerks,) exorcists, readers, and janitors—in all, fifty-two; widows, with the afflicted and needy, supported by the Church, more than fifteen hundred. And in the next sentence, he refers to the laity as "the innumerable multitude of the people."—*Eccles. Hist.* lib. vi. ch. 43.

and aiming at the annihilation of the hostile faith through the whole Empire. In every part of the world death awaited those who dared to profess their reverence for the Cross—one rescript after another was published, each more barbarous than the last—and everywhere the faithful found themselves committed to desperate strife with those who sought their utter extermination. And if at any time the Emperor seemed inclined to relent, his associate Galerius was ready to infuse suspicions into his mind, and to madden it with the hostility which inflamed his own. But all was in vain. The prisons were filled—the mines were crowded with their victims—thousands died in the flames and at the stake—new torments were invented to gratify the rage of their enemies—and yet, when six years of persecution had passed, the vigor of Christianity seemed undiminished, and thousands more were ever ready to press forward in place of those who had died.

But the hour of triumph was at hand, and the victory of Christianity was not to be that of unbending endurance alone. Galerius was smitten with a deadly disease, and in the agonies of his repentance turned to the faith he had persecuted. From his dying bed he issued an edict repealing the severe statutes against Christianity—permitting to its adherents the free exercise of their religion—and even urging them to intercede for him in their supplications to their God. Thus it was that Paganism was forced to acknowledge its defeat, when the confession wrung from the dying Emperor was published to the world. Christianity came forth once more from its retreat—in its reno-

vated temples the anthems of praise were heard from countless thousands who had maintained their faith—and from the persecution of Diocletian the Church inherited some of her noblest examples of martyrdom to animate the courage of all succeeding ages.

A few years later, and the Emperor Constantine professed the faith, and appeared before the world as the head of that religion against which his predecessors had been arrayed. Then came one decree after another, smiting the ancient heathenism—closing its temples—depriving its priesthood of their honors—till it gradually lost its influence over the public mind. The Empire naturally followed by degrees the example of its Imperial ruler, and thus the once despised Cross became a badge of honor and glory. But among all the acts of Constantine, the most fatal to the ancient religion was his removal of the seat of Empire to the banks of the Bosphorus. Amid the venerable temples of Rome, heathenism must have lingered on for ages, for these scenes were connected with all the glories of the past, and here were performed those solemn pomps in which were blended the fables of the old mythology and the historical recollections of their city's nobler days. It seemed, therefore, the home of their national gods—gifted with an hereditary sanctity—and a latent superstition would have rested in the minds even of those who believed not in their divinity. Here Christianity could not stand forth prominent, or the modest churches, hid in the Transteverine region, contrast with the stately temples of heathenism, which towered above the Capi-

toline Hill in all the splendor which art could bestow upon them. But the new city was free from all these associations. It had no venerable temples or time-honored customs—no consecrated spots—no ancient superstitions. There the Christian churches rose in a splendor unknown before, and men learned to recognise the faith as the religion of the Empire, while the ancient images of Paganism, if transferred from their former seats, lost their sanctity, and became only works of art. There was but little conflict on the part of expiring Paganism. Its end was mournful and undignified—not gilded by the gorgeous sunset with which Gibbon has endeavored to color its closing scenes. It had no martyrs, for it had no creed.

Once, indeed, a half-century later, it rose for a brief interval, and struggled feebly for dominion. Julian the Apostate was on the throne of the Empire, and lent his influence to revive the ancient and exploded faith. And yet, though he endeavored to restore the forms of this antiquated system, it was something far different from the Paganism of ancient Rome. It was mingled now with the tenets of philosophy, and thus he attempted to fill once more its empty urn, and to infuse a new spirit into its failing rites. But it was too late—the vitality and life were gone. The chill of death was already on the old mythology, and all the art of Julian could only arouse it to that brief and impotent struggle which is the precursor of dissolution. The city of Eleusis rose again into splendor, but he could not restore the spirit of that idolatry which there had once its seat. In Constantinople every thing reminded the in-

habitants of its Christian founder, and they had no sympathy, therefore, with the change which was attempted to be forced upon them. And even when the Emperor visited Antioch, and endeavored to revive the Oriental worship of the Sun, he was forced to listen to the maledictory Psalm which the excited Christians chanted, as they passed in procession—"Confounded be all they that worship carved images and delight in vain gods." The contest was, therefore, a brief one; and when Julian perished on the field of battle, and flinging up to heaven his blood, exclaimed in his parting agony—"Galilean! thou hast conquered!"*—that was the knell of Paganism. In that hour it fell, never to rise again. The flickering light which had been rekindled among the dying embers of its altars, was quenched forever.

For a while, indeed, its spirit lingered, particularly in places consecrated by old associations, yet it never again appears in alliance with the civil power. It is curious, too, to mark its changing tone—to read the elaborate oration—"For the temples"—which Libanius addressed to the Emperor Theodosius, when the fears of the heathen had been awakened by an Imperial command which directed the demolition of a stately

* This rests on the testimony of Theodoret, who thus describes the death of Julian:—"It is said that directly after he had received the wound, Julian took some of the blood in his hand, and threw it up towards heaven, saying, 'Galilean! thou hast conquered!' (Νενίκηκας. Γάλιλαιε.) So great was his stupidity, that thus, at one and the same instant, he acknowledged his defeat, and gave utterance to blasphemy."—*Eccles. Hist. lib.* iii. ch. 25.

temple at Edessa. Paganism had now become a suppliant, and was pleading in vain for its existence with the power on which once it trampled. Its latest refuge was naturally in the Imperial City, and there its last voice was heard, when Symmachus presented his plea in its behalf to the young Valentinian. But through the veil of his eloquence, we see that he writes with the consciousness of one who knows he is pleading a hopeless cause, and his oration contrasts most strongly with the bold and impassioned tone which marked the reply of St. Ambrose. The Bishop of Milan pours out his bitter sarcasm on those venerable traditions which once were the glory of Rome, and scarcely condescending to argument, he appeals to the passions of his audience, and strives to rouse them by all the lofty themes which their faith supplied. He seems to rejoice and triumph over their prostrate foe, whose earnest plea he dismisses with contemptuous scorn. Thus slowly the pageant of the ancient religion faded away, and the last feeble remains of this once mighty system were buried beneath the ruins of the Western Empire. The lines of a Christian poet describe the closing scenes of its history, when the victory of Theodosius had made him master of Rome, and after solemn debate the Roman senators passed over to the Christian cause with all the influence of their old hereditary names. If, therefore, St. Augustine's "City of God" may be regarded as the solemn requiem of expiring Paganism, we may characterize the poems of Prudentius as the proud anthem of triumphant Christianity.

Thus fell the ancient Classical Mythology. It was consecrated by all that was venerable in antiquity, and the genius of many ages had lavished upon it their costliest treasures, yet its destruction was entire. It was a ruin, which Gibbon pronounces "perhaps the only example of the total extirpation of any ancient and popular superstition."* It now lives only on the page of history or in the illustrations of the poet, or it points the argument of the philosopher as he reasons on the changes through which the human mind has passed.

> 'The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
> The fair humanities of old religion,
> The Power, the Beauty, and the Majesty,
> That had her haunts in dale, or piny mountain,
> Or forest by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
> Or chasms and wat'ry depths; all these have vanished.
> They live no longer in the faith of reason!"†

Fourteen centuries have rolled away since the power of Paganism was broken, and Rome still sits upon her "Seven Hills;" but what a change has passed over her since she was the centre and home of that old mythology! The landscape is indeed unaltered, for yonder are the purple Alban Hills, clothed in the rich verdure of which Horace spoke and to which Propertius paid his tribute—the wide-spread Campagna is there as of old—and we trace the Claudian aqueduct as it goes sweeping on with its countless arches, until it is lost to sight among the distant mountains where once stood the stately

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* *Gibbon*, ch. xxviii.

† *Coleridge's "Piccolomini."*

palaces of Domitian. But still the outward aspect of every thing proclaims the mighty revolution which has taken place. As we stand upon the Capitoline Hill, we see around us the mouldering relics of a departed faith. No smoke of sacrifice ascends from this height—no altars are seen—the temples which once crowned it are gone, and their columns and precious marbles have been used to erect the Christian churches. Beside us is the church of S. Maria d'Ara Cœli, built on the foundation of the old Roman temple of Jupiter Feretrius, in which the Spolia Opima were deposited; and if it is the hour when the shadows of evening are beginning to gather, the Vesper Hymn of the monks will be borne plaintively to our ears. Below, by the side of the deserted Forum, are the ancient temples of Antoninus and Faustus, of Venus and Rome, now consecrated by Christian names to the use of that faith which has supplanted heathenism, while beyond, grand and solemn rise the massive ruins of the Flavian amphitheatre. There Ignatius died, and the blood of countless martyrs enriched its sands, as they were "butchered to make a Roman holyday." But now, the once despised Cross stands in the middle of the arena, and often the voice of some humble monk may be heard on that spot, as he preaches the faith of the Crucified, and his earnest appeals send strange echoes through those galleries, which once rang with the shouts of infuriated thousands, who were feasting their eyes on the torments of the expiring Christians. And there is the old monastic house from which St. Gregory sent forth St. Augustine, now occupied by the white-robed

Camaldolese—the church of St. Clement, where the Pelagian heresy was formally condemned—and on the hill, that solitary palm rises from the Garden of the Passionists. To the right, covering the whole Palatine Hill like the wreck of some mighty City, are seen the ruins of the palace of the Cæsars; and amid crumbling walls and prostrate columns—where the trees twine their roots through marble floors once trodden by the masters of the world, and the tall grass and rank weeds wave in wild luxuriance—rises the monastery of the Capuchin monks, and prayer and praise are now heard where once Nero held his sensual revellings. We turn away from these scenes, and the Imperial City is before us in all her solemn and venerable magnificence. Yet she has put off all trace of her heathen origin. A wilderness of towers, and domes, and columns are there, rising in the deep blue of an Italian sky—yet each pinnacle is gleaming with its cross—each edifice is devoted to the worship of Him, whom once it was death here to name with aught of reverence. And towering above all—on the very spot where once were Nero's gardens, and which witnessed the martyrdom of countless Christians—swells forth that miracle of art, St. Peter's dome, surmounting the noblest structure the world has ever seen, yet now the shrine of a faith before whose resistless march the ancient Paganism of Rome was trampled into the dust.

We have thus seen the progress of our faith, as in succession it met every foe, and bowed itself to none. We have traced it from the hour of its weakness in Judea until it triumphed over the superstitions of the world, and amid the frail memorials of earthly pomp and temporal dominion, founded that dynasty which is without limit and without end—the substance, of which all other dominions are but the shadows. And the narrative carries with it its own solemn lesson. It is the truth, that this faith is divine, or what was sown in weakness could never thus have been raised in glory. A mere peasant of Galilee could not have originated a system, which thus was to go on from conquering to conquer, until it overthrew the profound Philosophy of Greece and the deep-seated Paganism of Rome. The eloquent historian who wrote the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, has in vain endeavored to account for this phenomenon from natural causes. But the five which he enumerates could never have produced such a revolution. Not the intolerant zeal of the Christians—or the clear development of the doctrine of another life—or the miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive Church—or the pure and austere morals of its members—or even the union and discipline of the new Christian community*—could alone have prostrated the pride of human reasoning, and won men from luxurious vices which it required the genius of Juvenal to delineate, persuading them

* *Gibbon* chap. xv.

everywhere to learn the lessons of self-denial and take up the Cross.

We feel that we must look higher for a solution of this difficulty. We feel that God was with His Church, and its risen Head was aiding it, or it could never have survived the storm, and come down to our day with its strength unimpaired. We feel, too, that the past is a pledge for the future, and that time, in its solemn march, shall bring before us as glorious realities, the yet brighter things which the voice of prophecy has announced. We will plant our faith, then, on this cause which has already stood the test of centuries. We will not be dismayed, though the darkness gathers, and the hearts of men are failing, but ask the question: "Watchman! what of the night?" well knowing that the answer will be: "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." And when that morning dawns, and in the hour of the Church's glory she stands upon the Holy Mountain, and uplifts the anthem of triumph which the redeemed shall sing forever, then they who have followed the Lamb in the time of His conflict, shall share with Him His crown and kingdom.

THE END.